

**A conceptual framework for social media brand
communication in non- profit organisations in South
Africa: An integrated communication perspective**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, *A conceptual framework for social media brand communication in non-profit organisations in South Africa: an integrated communication perspective*, is my own work and that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



19 February 2018

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Date

ABSTRACT

Propelled by increased competition with the private sector and other similar organisations, the non-profit sector increasingly faces challenges to create meaningful interactions with stakeholders which, among other benefits, allow for differentiation and the creation of favourable and lasting impressions of the corporate brand. The main research aim of this study was to *propose possible elements for a conceptual framework for the integration of non-profit organisations' social media brand communication*. The point of departure was that the achievement of a favourable corporate brand in the non-profit sector could, *inter alia*, be realised by following an integrated communication approach when utilising social media to communicate with stakeholders. The study is different from prior studies because of its specific interdisciplinary focus on the corporate brand, social media and integrated communication (IC), and the fact that it is merged into one study.

The research into the main contribution of the study was based on a thorough literature review focusing on the following objectives: to explore corporate branding and social media; and to describe elements that could constitute an integrated approach to social media brand communication. During the investigation into the topic, the social media focus of the study was framed on the basis of classical theoretical views, and the theory of and perspectives on human action, symbolic interaction and social presence. The absence of a single set of theoretical assumptions of social media necessitated an inductive reasoning process based on identified key elements of social media.

Subsequent to the literature review, the empirical research gathered invaluable insights from communication professionals in South African non-profit organisations, and who are responsible for communication by means of social media. Finally, and following the measurement of the proposed elements, the objective of proposing possible elements for the integration of social media brand communication and presenting it in a conceptual framework was achieved. The conceptual framework was based on three foundational principles, namely a *corporate brand* focus and a *philosophy* of communication integration, underpinned by *social media*.

The proposed conceptual framework should provide new insights into and contribute to the existing body of knowledge on organisational communication.

Key terms

South African non-profit organisations; social media; social media brand communication; corporate communication; a corporate brand; integrated communication

OPSOMMING

Toenemende mededinging in die privaatsektor en tussen ander soortgelyke organisasies, rig 'n grotewordende uitdaging aan die niewinsgerigte sektor om betekenisvolle wisselwerking met belanggroeppe te bewerkstellig, iets wat dit onder andere moontlik maak om te differensieer en om gunstige en blywende indrukke van die korporatiewe handelsmerk te skep. Die belangrikste navorsingsoogmerk van hierdie studie was om moontlike elemente aan die hand te doen vir 'n konsepsuele raamwerk vir die integrasie van niewinsgerigte organisasies se kommunikasie in sosiale media. Die vertrekpunt was dat 'n gunstige korporatiewe handelsmerk in die niewinsgerigte sektor onder andere gerealiseer kan word deur middel van 'n geïntegreerde kommunikasiebenadering wanneer sosiale media gebruik word om met belanghebbendes te kommunikeer. Die studie verskil van vorige studies weens die spesifieke interdissiplinêre fokus op die korporatiewe handelsmerk, sosiale media en geïntegreerde kommunikasie, asook die feit dat dit in een studie geïntegreer is.

Die navorsing vir hierdie studie se belangrikste bydrae was gegrond op 'n deurtastende literatuuroorsig, toegespits daarop om die gebruik van korporatiewe handelsmerke en sosiale media te verken; en om elemente wat 'n geïntegreerde benadering tot handelsmerkkommunikasie in sosiale media sou kon daarstel, te beskryf. Gedurende die ondersoek na die tema het die studie se sosialemediafokus gerus op klassieke teoretiese sienings en die teorie van en perspektiewe op menslike aksie, simboliese wisselwerking en sosiale teenwoordigheid. Die gebrek aan 'n enkele stel teoretiese aannames van sosiale media het 'n proses van induktiewe redenering, gegrond op geïdentifiseerde sleutelelemente van sosiale media, genoodsaak.

Voortspruitend uit die literatuuroorsig het die empiriese navorsing uiters waardevolle insigte bekom van kommunikasiekundiges in Suid-Afrikaanse niewinsgerigte organisasies wat deur middel van sosiale media moet kommunikeer. Laastens en na afloop van die meting van die voorgestelde elemente is die oogmerk om moontlike elemente vir die integrasie van kommunikasie van 'n handelsmerk in sosiale media en die aanbieding daarvan in 'n konsepsuele raamwerk, bereik. Die konsepsuele raamwerk is op drie beginsels gegronde, naamlik 'n fokus op die korporatiewe handelsmerk en 'n filosofie van kommunikasieintegrasie, ondersteun deur sosiale media.

Die voorgestelde konsepsuele raamwerk behoort nuwe insigte in en bydraes tot die bestaande kenniskorpus oor organisasiekommunikasie te bied.

Sleutel terme

Suid-Afrikaanse niewinsgerigte organisasies; sosiale media; kommunikasie van handelsmerk in sosiale media; korporatiewe kommunikasie; korporatiewe handelsmerk; geïntegreerde kommunikasie

OKUFINYEZIWE

Ngokugqugquzelwa ukwanda kokuncitisana kwemikhakha ezimele nezinye izinhlangano ezifanayo, umkhakha ongenzi inzuzo uyaqhubeke njalo nokubhekana nezinselelo zokwenza ukuthi ukuxhumana kahle nabanye ababambe iqhaza okuwukuthi, phakathi kokunye okungazuzwa, kuvumele ukwahlukanisa kanye nokwakhiwa kwezimpawu zemifanekiso yenkompani ezikahle futhi eziyohlala isikhathi eside. Injongo enkulu yocwaningo Iwalesi sifundo kwakuwukuhlongoza *imikhakha engaseyenzeke yohlaka olungakapheleli lokuhlanganisa kophawu lokuxhumana ezinkundleni zokuxhumana zezinhlango ezingenzi inzuzo.* Iphuzu elalisemqoka kwakuwukufeza umgomu wokuthi kwakhiwe uphawu olufanele Iwenkompani emkhakheni ongayenzi inzuzo, *phakathi kwezinye izinto*, ufezeke ngokulandela indlela edidiyelwe yezokuxhumana uma kusetshenziswa izinkundla zokuxhumana ukuxoxisana nababambe iqhaza. Lesi sifundo sihlukile kwezinye eseziphezenziwa ngaphambilini ngenxa yokuthi sigxile ngokukhethekile ekusetshenzisweni kophawu Iwenkompani, izinkundla zokuxhumana kanye nezindlela zokuxhumana ezididiyelwe, i-integrated communication (i-IC), kanye nephuzu lokuthi kudidiyelwe kwaba ucwaningo olulodwa.

Lolu cwaningo kulokho okusemqoka okuwumthelela walesi sifundo Iwalugxile kakhulu ekubuyekezweni okujulile kwemibhalo kubhekwe kakhu kulezi zinjongo ezilandelayo: ukuhlaziya uphawu Iwenkompani nezinkundla zokuxhumana; nokuchaza amaphuzu angase akhombise indlela edidiyelwe ekuxhumaneni ngophawu Iwezinkundla zokuxhumana. Ngesikhathi kuphenywa ngesihloko, ukugxila ezinkundleni zokuxhumana kulesi sifundo kwabalulwa esizinden semibono yezinto ezingaphathei, kanye nethiyori nemiqondo yokwenza komuntu, ukuxhumana ngezimpawu nokubakhona kwabantu basempifikathini. Ukungabibiko kweqoqo elilodwa lokucatshangelwa ngokwenzeka emiqondweni ngokwezinkundla zokuxhumana kwenza ukuthi kube nesidingo senqubo yokuqala ukucabanga ezinze emaphuzwini asemqoka ezinkundla zokuxhumana.

Ukulandela ukubuyekezwa kwemibhalo, lolu cwaningo oluphethe ubufakazi obuphathekayo luqoqe ulwazi olusemqoka oluvela kosolwazi bezokuxhumana ezinhlanganweni ezingenzi nzuzo zaseNingizimu Afrika, futhi ezinomsebenzi wokuxhumana ngokusebenzia izinkundla zokuxhumana. Ekugcineni, futhi ngokulandela izilinganiso zamaphuzu ahlongozwayo, yafezeko injongo yokuhlongoza okungase kube amaphuzu okudidiyela ukuxhumana ngokusebenzia uphawu Iwezinkundla zokuxhumana kanye nokuluveza njengohlaka lokusemqondweni. Uhlaka lokusemqondweni Iwalugxile emigomeni eyisisekelo emithathu, okuwukugxila *kuphawu Iwenkompani nenzululwazi* yokudidiyelwa kokuxhumana, nokusekelwe *yizinkundla zokuxhumana*.

Uhlaka olusahlongozwa olungakapheleli kumele luhlinzeke ngemiqondo emisha futhi lube nomthelela esakhiweni solwazi esikhona ekuxhumaneni ngokwenhlangano.

Amatemu Asemqoka

Izinlangano zaseNingizimu Afrika ezingenzi inzuzo; abezokuxhumana komphakathi; uphawu lokuxhumana kwabezinkundla zokuxhumana; ukuxhumana enkampanini; uphawu Iwenkampani; ukuxhumana okudidiyelwe

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Technological advances impact on all business levels and functions, including the way organisations communicate with their stakeholders. The challenges and opportunities that are thus generated demand that organisations familiarise themselves with new technology and adjust their communication endeavours accordingly (DiStaso, McCorkindale & Wright 2011). In view of the continued progression and use of new technology, it is thus fair to expect organisations to regard technological developments and the subsequent impact thereof on communication as a constantly evolving process, and hence acknowledge the significance of “keeping up” (DiStaso et al 2011).

It therefore stands to reason that non-profit organisations should incorporate contemporary technology, especially social media, in their existing communication activities. This is of particular significance because organisations are increasingly required to differentiate themselves, to be recognisable and to achieve favourable reputations with stakeholders, which might be attained through unique connections with stakeholders (Alizadeh, moshabaki, Hoseini & Naiej 2014:14; Cornelissen 2011:59; Martin & Hetrick 2006:73). Social media affords organisations multiple opportunities to create unique connections with stakeholders, which, if exploited, might contribute to favourable perceptions of the corporate brand. Besides other factors, this compels organisations to know where their stakeholders gather and to be present in the spaces where they communicate about the organisation. As Daw, Cone, Erhard and Merenda (2011:20) assert, positive perceptions of a brand are key to attaining value for the non-profit organisation.

The point of departure in the study was the achievement of a favourable corporate brand and the notion that all touch points with stakeholders in the non-profit sector could impact on the corporate brand, predominantly the organisation’s communication with and from stakeholders. The broad aim of the study was to explore possible elements for a conceptual framework to accomplish an integrated approach to social media brand communication, and to ultimately attain a strong corporate brand for non-profit organisations. Although these organisations do not mainly focus on profit generation as do their commercial counterparts, they are required to operate in the commercial environment and compete with other non-profit organisations in an attempt to build beneficial long-term relationships, to generate the needed funds to ensure their survival and to promote their causes. Considering the value of an integrated communication (IC) approach to ensure a competitive advantage, it is likely that non-profit organisations would benefit by coordinating their communication with stakeholders when opting for such an approach (cf. Holtzhausen 2008; Niemann 2005).

The researcher's main intention in conducting this study was to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of communication studies, and thus yield insights into the integration of social media by non-profit organisations in South Africa through which a strong corporate brand could be attained.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the background to and explain the rationale for the study by means of the following: defining important and recurring terms used in the thesis; explaining the context of the study; conceptualising an integrated approach to social media brand communication in context and the focus on external stakeholders of non-profit organisations; explaining the research, theoretical and empirical approaches followed; dealing with ethical considerations; and operationalising the study.

Throughout this study, there are many concepts that are often assigned different meanings, depending on the unique foci in various disciplines and concepts that require clarity. Section 1.2 provides definitions of prominent terms as they manifested in this study.

1.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.2.1 Non-profit organisations

In South Africa, the Department of Social Development defines a non-profit organisation as follows:

“In terms of Section 1 of the NPO Act, as a trust, company or other association of persons established for a public purpose and of which its income and property are not distributable to its members or office bearers except as reasonable compensation for services rendered” (All about nonprofit 2011).

The definition above includes non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and community-based organisations (CBOs) that are collectively referred to as non-profit organisations. In some instances, non-profit organisations are also referred to as civil society organisations (CSOs) (All about nonprofit 2011). This study does not distinguish between the different types of organisations, and the term *non-profit organisation* is used when referring to organisations that qualify as such based on the above definition. The definition clearly stipulates that profit or financial gain is not distributed to “anyone with a beneficial interest in the organization” as opposed to the “profit sector” in which owners and/or shareholders do benefit financially (Courtney 2002:46).

1.2.2 Social media (SM)

Although there is no single definition of “social media” in the literature, the term is often used to describe the “various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users” (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:61). Based on the varied definitions and descriptions of the

social media concept in extant literature, for the purposes of the current study, social media is defined as “*an interactive online platform that enables organisations and stakeholders to readily connect and interact in various ways*” (see section 3.2.1, chapter 3).

Despite the availability of a wide array of types of social media, the primary question is what set of elements could assist non-profit organisations with the integration thereof to ultimately achieve the strategic IC goals of the organisation?

1.2.3 An integrated approach to social media brand communication

The concept of *integrated communication* (IC) and its associated elements are debated in chapter 4 (Cornelissen 2013; Johansen & Andersen 2012; Smith 2012a; Torp 2009; Ouwersloot and Duncan 2008; Van Riel & Fombrun 2007). It considers the focus on social media, social media brand communication and corporate branding as adopted in the study. Following a rigorous investigation, the following definition of an integrated approach to social media brand communication was formulated (section 4.3.1, chapter 4):

A philosophy of integration to achieve synergy and consistency of the communication endeavours of non-profit organisations on social media platforms.

1.2.4 Corporate brand

The attainment of a favourable corporate brand served as a main emphasis of the study. A favourable corporate brand is deemed vital to achieve strong reputations or brand equity that allows a non-profit organisation to achieve its strategic objectives. In this study and based on views in the literature, corporate brand was *the point of interaction between the organisation and its stakeholders, with communication fundamental to create positive associations and impressions* (section 2.6, chapter 2; Urde 2013:744; Buckingham 2008:12; Gibbons 2009:45; Aaker 2004:10; Argenti & Druckenmiller 2004:369).

1.2.5 Corporate brand communication and social media brand communication

Chapter 2 deals with the elements of *corporate brand communication*, and concludes that it encompasses all the ways in which an organisation communicates with stakeholders, *inter alia*, its corporate identity, image, reputation and corporate stories (Hestad 2013:47; Gronlund 2013:75; Kapferer 2012; Ouwersloot and Duncan 2008:65; Van Rooyen 2010:39; Hestad 2013:47). Corporate brand communication refers to *the numerous ways or touch points whereby non-profit organisations emotionally connect with stakeholders*.

Based on the above conceptualisation and literature, *social media brand communication* is understood as *the communication endeavours of the organisation by means of social media*. It comprises a dual focus on *social media* and the *corporate brand* in the non-profit context,

and for purposes of this research, refers to the collective use of social media by organisations to communicate about the brand as a whole on social media.

1.2.6 Social media conversations

As discussed in chapter 3, conversations refer to *dialogue or dialogic engagement on social media platforms with the organisation and between stakeholders*, which suggests the exchange of messages between the organisation and stakeholders or between themselves, over time, as opposed to the distribution of one-way messages (Kent 2013:343; Markos-Kujbus & Gáti 2012; Nair 2011:50; Pieczka 2010:117; cf. Freberg 2013; Onete et al 2011:738 Bortree & Seltzer 2009:317).

1.2.7 Online word of mouth (eWOM)

As widely suggested in literature, stakeholders express their experiences and opinions about an organisation at will, either in traditional ways (for example word of mouth – WOM) or on social media platforms (eWOM), with or without the involvement of the organisation (Tsao & Hsieh 2012:821; cf. Moriarty, Mitchell & Wells 2015:83; Hajli, Lin, Featherman & Wang 2014:674; Barreto 2014; Rakić & Rakić 2014:193;. The concept “eWOM” is defined as *all statements and mentions about the organisation that are expressed between various stakeholders on social media*.

1.2.8 Stakeholders

The traditional definition of a stakeholder by Freeman (1984:6) as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s purpose and objectives”, is often used by scholars as the point of departure in further research studies on this concept (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010; Fontaine, Haarman & Schmid 2006; De Bussy, Watson, Pitt & Ewing 2000; Donaldson & Preston 1995). The stakeholder concept is used when referring to the prominent groups who influence or are influenced by the activities of South African non-profit organisations.

1.3 THE NON-PROFIT CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This study was framed within a non-profit context that necessitates a brief demarcation thereof. It is evident that various types of organisations exist in the public, private and non-profit sectors (Beck, Lengnick-Hall & Lengnick-Hall 2008). The public sector is generally deemed to include those organisations that form part of government and that serve the public good, whereas the private sector includes those organisations that operate for for-profit purposes. Unfortunately, no general agreed-upon definition exists for the non-profit sector – also referred to as the *third sector*. Common terms include non-profit, non-governmental, not-for-profit, charitable, voluntary, and civil society (Sargeant 2005). Nonetheless, it is agreed

that non-profit organisations are generally set apart from their private counterparts on account of their non-profit nature.

The non-profit sector is generally viewed as a collection of entities that functions as “organisations”; is “private” (as opposed to governmental); “self-governing”; “not-for-profits” (Carter & Goh 2014:2); and involves “a degree of voluntary participation” (Salamon 1999:10; Salamon & Anheier 1998:216).

Non-profit organisations are governed by controlling members or management boards, employ paid staff, including management or volunteers and, in some instances, even executives who work with or without compensation and do not share in the organisation’s profits or losses. In South Africa, the Department of Social Development (DSD) encourages non-profit organisations to adhere to good governance principles, yet it apparently fails to provide an enabling environment for these organisations to thrive (Wyngaard & Hendricks 2017).

As mentioned by Beck et al (2008:153), and despite apparent parallels to the private sector, non-profit organisations are set apart and challenged in terms of their *unique nature* amid pressure to adopt business perspectives and solutions from the private sector to their benefit. Though the study did not aim to compare the communication on social media between non-profit organisations and their counterparts or to reveal particular insights, this assertion by Beck et al (2008) could be an indication that differences between social media brand communication in these sectors are likely to exist.

This study was prompted by specific motives associated with the non-profit context in South Africa, which is discussed in section 1.3.1 and section 1.3.2 below.

1.3.1 The South African context

The origins of non-profit organisations in South Africa are rooted in the history of and identification with the anti-apartheid struggle. The first democratic elections in 1994 urged these organisations to uncover alternate ways to engage with their stakeholders (Podems 2004). At that time, the sector faced challenges relating to a decline in donor funding, strict reporting requirements and heightened expectations about their impact (Podems 2004; Nefdt 2003; Swilling & Russell 2002). Considering this background, combined with the definition in section 1.2.1 above, it is evident that a non-profit organisation mainly serves a public or mutual cause as opposed to merely generating profit for the organisation (cf. Hansmann 1980). This consequently implies that these organisations face unique challenges in achieving their main objectives, which comprise strategic and tactical elements relating to their communication activities, as was revealed in the empirical part of the study.

According to the register of non-profit organisations in South Africa, which is managed by the DSD, 185 077 organisations are registered in this country (Department of Social Development [sa]). The register indicates a steady increase in registered non-profit organisations from 82 248 in 2011/12 to 155 367 in 2015/16 (State of South ... 2015/16). This said, registration is voluntary, and although the statistics confirm the substantial size of this sector, they cannot be completely confirmed. This apparent proliferation of non-profit organisations seemingly corresponds with international trends (Daw et al 2011:3).

According to the literature, there is no uniform scheme to classify nongovernmental or nonprofit organisations. The South African classification comprises 11 categories, namely Social Services, Religion, Education and Research, Business and Professional Associations, Environment, Health, Culture and Recreation, Law, Advocacy and Politics, Philanthropic Intermediaries and Voluntarism Promotion, Development and Housing, and International Associations (State of South ... 2015/16). This attests to the diversity of organisations operating in this sector.

The significant contribution of non-profit organisations to the economic and social welfare of South African citizens should not be underestimated and is emphasised in a study by Statistics South Africa (2017). This perception thus underscores the importance of the current study to identify possible elements for a conceptual framework, and in this way sanction non-profit organisations to integrate their communication efforts on social media. Such integration could strengthen stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation and thus increase support for their causes.

Attempts to employ business practices by non-profit organisations and the associated challenges and opportunities are apparently not novel. This is specifically true of the adoption of new information technology, which is closely related to the focus of this study. There are indications that non-profit organisations experience difficulties because of a lack of skills, knowledge and abilities (Schneider 2003). The unique challenges that non-profit organisations generally face, together with their unique character when using social media to communicate with stakeholders, were largely corroborated in this study. The empirical research revealed that non-profit organisations in South Africa lack resources, mainly in respect of budgetary constraints, in terms of inadequate numbers of communication professionals and the reality that they fulfil multiple roles, often in positions that are not typically associated with communication. The above-mentioned challenges are also deemed to impact negatively on the management and operationalisation of social media brand communication in these organisations.

The status of access to social media was not explored in this study, but the importance thereof was recognised. Recent statistics present a broad view in this regard. To date, no research

study in South Africa has been conducted to investigate non-profit organisations' or their stakeholders' access to social media platforms. A recent study in South Africa, in 2017, revealed that the use of social media in this country has significantly intensified (SA Social Media Landscape... 2017; Social media deepens ... 2017). Statistics on the social media platforms relevant to this study, indicate that Facebook is used by 16 million users, followed by Twitter with eight million users. A total of 6.1 million users utilise LinkedIn and 3.8 million South Africans use Instagram. These statistics to a certain extent support the notion that the challenge specifically concerning the level of access to social media is largely being reduced.

Although the above discussion highlights the need for and value of this investigation, specific reasons for this undertaking are outlined in the next section.

1.3.2 Rationale for the study

Internationally, research in the non-profit sector has revealed the value and adoption of social media (Lovejoy, Waters & Saxton 2012; Lovejoy & Saxton 2012; DiStaso et al 2011; Curtis et al 2010; Cho & Huh 2010; Ingenhoff & Koelling 2009; Greenberg & MacAulay 2009; Sweetser & Chung 2009; Porter, Sweetser & Chung 2009; Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser 2008; Seltzer & Mitrook 2007; Hallahan 2003). Nonetheless, in South Africa, the limited research regarding an IC perspective in the non-profit sector is possibly the most important motivation for the study at hand. This, combined with the paucity of research studies on the use of social media by non-profit organisations furthermore underlines the importance.

Table 1.1 below summarises earlier South African studies relating to the non-profit context of the study. This information underscores the dearth of research on the topic under investigation.

Table 1.1: Summary of South African non-profit research studies relating to this study

	TOPIC	FOCUS
Anon (2015–2016)	South African non-profits and social media survey	The use of social media platforms
Holtzhausen (2013)	Non-profit organisations bridging the communication divide in a complex South Africa	Public Relations Relationship management Stakeholder management Corporate identity
Tindall & Holtzhausen (2012)	Toward an integrated model of communication: the case of South Africa	Strategic communication Integrated marketing communication Public relations and advertising
Wiggil (2011)	Strategic communication management in the non-profit sector: a simplified model.	Strategic communication Relationship management NPOs, government institutions and small-to-medium companies
Aquino (2010)	NGOs of inspiration: affect and creativity in non-profit organisations	Business administration
Fourie & Froneman (2009)	A critique of social marketing in the non-profit development sector	Development communication Social marketing
Wiggill, Naude & Fourie (2009)	Strategic Communication Management by NPOs in the adult-literacy sector in South Africa	Strategic communication
Schutte (2009)	Strategic integrated communication on South African non-profit organisation websites	Strategic integrated communication NPO websites Communication management
Abrahams (2009)	Social media as a means of communication with external stakeholders	Social media Stakeholders (fourth-year communication students at Cape Peninsula University of Technology) Communication Education
Coetzee (2007)	The characterisation of an effective nonprofit organization	Sociology
Berry (2005)	Distinguishing features of visionary non-profit organisations	Visionary organisations and their characteristics
Niemann (2005)	Strategic integrated communication: towards a South African conceptual model	Business management Marketing management Communication management
Podems (2004)	A monitoring and evaluation intervention for donor-funded NPOs in the developing world: a case study	Emergence and development of a youth service programme Donor funding

Smith (2004)	A working framework to facilitate strategic relationships between non-profit and donor organisations	Business administration Relationships between the organisation and donors
Inman (2004)	The development of a business model for a non-profit organisation in Port Elizabeth: a case study	Business administration/business leadership Business management and policy
Naude, Froneman & Atwood (2004)	The use of the internet by ten South African non-governmental organizations: a public relations perspective	Public relations Internet NGO websites Two-way communication
Nefdt (2003)	The transforming roles of management boards in non-profit social welfare organisations	Social work Welfare organisations and services
Naude (2002)	Interactive public relations: the World Wide Web and South African NGOs	Public relations World Wide Web
Swilling and Russell (2002)	The size and shape of the non-profit sector in South Africa	Development and management challenges of NPOs
Ehlers (2000)	The development of a framework for structuring integrated communication in South African organisations	Public relations Marketing Private sector organisations

Equally important as the scarcity of research studies on the particular focus of this study, as indicated in table 1.1, are investigations into possible elements to *integrate* social media brand communication in the non-profit sector. The contribution of this research would be to provide insights into the value and application possibilities of social media, and operational guidelines on the practice of social media brand communication, particularly in non-profit organisations in this country.

A corporate brand focus was adopted on the basis of a theoretical view of corporate communication. The contention is that a corporate communication philosophy, and especially an IC view, that strives to achieve communication consistency and unity, provides a suitable foundation for the non-profit organisation to, among other goals, attain a favourable perception of the corporate brand. The focus of the study on a corporate brand is fully debated in chapter 2.

The rationale for this study was four broad factors that justify and endorse its significance. Firstly, and probably most pivotal is the limited research from an IC perspective in this sector that indicates a restricted understanding or appreciation of the basic elements of such a view when using social media to communicate (cf. Markos-Kujbus & Gáti 2012; Divol, Edelman & Sarrazin 2012; Bonsón & Flores 2011:46; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre 2011:242; Jue, Marr & Kassotakis 2010:9; Mangold & Faulds 2009:358). The philosophy of IC is presented and conceptualised in chapter 4. The proposed framework propounds specific elements at both a strategic and tactical level that should be considered to achieve the integration of social media brand communication.

Secondly, limited information exists on the business practices of South African non-profit organisations, not to mention their approaches to communication planning and management. A study by Berry (2005) highlighted the need for South African non-profit organisations to formulate organisational goals and adapt commercial business practices exclusively for this sector. It can be concluded that non-profit organisations face a twofold challenge, namely to build organisational capacity by adopting appropriate business models and management practices to ensure they stay true to their mission and values; and to gain an understanding of the “business needs and objectives of their corporate partners” (Rumsey & White 2009:303). Consideration of the availability and adoption of social media in the private sector, combined with the view that communication management is considered to be a strategic element, justified conducting a study to explore how the use of this media could assist the non-profit sector to achieve its organisational goals. This study was not intended to be based on the practices of the private sector, but the dearth of research on the use of social media in an integrated way in the non-profit sector underscored the likely value of research studies and

available literature in the private sector, combined with theoretical insights of communication integration. Therefore, the proposed elements would ultimately be verified empirically in context, to allow their application to the non-profit sector.

Thirdly, research into the communication orientations or practices, and the management thereof by non-profit organisations in South Africa is scarce. Insight into existing communication practices and knowledge of the traditional and social media would be deemed valuable when aspiring to formulate elements for the integration of communication, particularly for social media brand communication. The lack of knowledge on the current communication practices of these non-profit organisations could potentially be regarded as unfavourable to this study, but was outweighed by the envisaged contribution of this study to the overall practice of communication that would eventually play a part in non-profit organisations achieving their organisational goals.

Fourthly, despite the wealth of research studies on the value, adoption and types of social media, as stated at the beginning of this section, the scarcity of research into the topic under scrutiny consequently indicated a lack of understanding of social media and its application potential to advance the non-profit brand if approached in a coherent way. This might include a lack of knowledge on the nature, the different types and individual benefits and the effective use of social media to benefit the organisation. Hence, despite knowledge of the fact that social media permits unrestricted communication that promotes the creation and sharing of information with many, it is evident that organisations are unable to effectively apply this media to connect with and engage with stakeholders, mainly because of a lack of knowledge of its potential to boundlessly interact in two-way communication (Berthon, Pitt, McCarthy & Kates 2007; Mayfield 2007:8–9). Social media as the focus of the study is comprehensively explored in chapter 3.

Based on the reasons explained above, the overall aim of the study was to address this shortfall by proposing a conceptual framework for integrating non-profit organisations' social media brand communication that could serve as a comprehensive guideline on how to use social media in an integrated fashion, and to promote awareness of the apposite issues.

Having outlined the non-profit context, and considered the purpose of and main motivations for investigating social media brand communication, it is necessary to clarify the boundaries of the study.

1.4 DEMARCTION OF THE STUDY

In line with the broad aim of the study to investigate possible elements in order to achieve an integrated approach to social media brand communication, it is necessary to set and justify the boundaries of the study. Two distinct considerations that merit attention are, firstly, clarity on the IC approach that was adopted, secondly, the reasons for the particular focus on the external stakeholders of non-profit organisations.

1.4.1 An IC approach to social media brand communication in the context of a non-profit organisation

The main impetus of this study was the integration of social media brand communication in a non-profit organisational context. The point of departure was the assumption that the perceptions stakeholders have of a corporate brand are influenced by all communication touch points when social media is used to communicate. Owing to varied views of IC, it was deemed imperative to frame the concept in the context of the study.

There are wide-ranging definitions of and perspectives on the integration of communication, with different concepts used to describe this phenomenon. These definitions and perspectives appear to depend on the contexts and viewpoints of researchers (see section 2.3, chapter 2). Niemann (2005:10, 28) supports the idea that IC qualifies as such, on condition that an organisation's communication is holistically integrated – hence the integration of the internal and external communication of all management functions of the organisation such as business management, marketing management and communication management. This perspective supports the notion that communication is regarded as integrated provided that it uniquely considers the broader environment of the organisation's communication – hence the inclusion of all internal and external communication. Notwithstanding and contrary to this view, it is argued that communication integration might adopt a narrower focus – for example, in instances where the integration of communication does not necessarily concentrate on the holistic integration of an organisation's communication only, but focuses instead on specific and strategic parts, such as communication campaigns or either internal or external communication (Angelopulo 2013a:56). This assertion underscored the focus of the present study, which mainly considered the stakeholder communication of non-profit organisations in South Africa. The study would therefore endeavour to carefully examine the integration of social media for external communication with and from stakeholders (Angelopulo 2013b:450; Ehlers 2002). To this end, and with due consideration of the approach of this study essentially from a communication perspective with limited research to direct the integration of social media brand communication by non-profit organisations, a comprehensive overview was provided of historical IC models, IC models in a South African setting and IC models with a

focus on digital communication. These models, in conjunction with theoretical views from the literature review, would serve as the basis to ultimately identify possible elements and theoretical aspects that the non-profit sector could consider to integrate social media brand communication (see sections 4.7 and 4.8, chapter 4). Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells's (2015:71) contention that *integration* refers to those brand messages that are focused and work together, was deemed particularly relevant to the approach adopted because the use of social media to communicate with an organisation's external stakeholders should be a concerted effort.

A reflection on the non-profit context here provides additional reasons to support the emphasis mainly on the external communication of organisations that operate in this setting. The above justification for a narrow focus on communication with external stakeholders raises issues that equally serve to endorse the need for this study. The next section explains the additional reasons.

1.4.2 The logic for the focus on the external communication of non-profit organisations

In light of the non-profit nature of the sector as the context of the study, it stands to reason that effective communication with external stakeholders is paramount to the survival of non-profit organisations. Thus, the increased importance of external stakeholders for the financial survival of these organisations, coupled with the perceived value of an IC approach to create positive perceptions of the organisation, validated the focus of this study on the use of social media to communicate with organisations' external stakeholders. The logic behind the emphasis on external stakeholders specifically was conceptualised and defined in the preceding section by explaining the integrated approach to social media brand communication.

Although the study did not specifically focus on the internal communication of the non-profit organisation, it was concluded that employees could act as ambassadors for the organisation (chapter 7). The quantitative research findings did not confirm that non-profit organisations involve their employees (cross- functional integration) in social media planning and initiatives and for this reason, the topic did not receive in-depth investigation. However, employee's use of social media platforms to communicate about the non-profit organisation in their personal capacity ought to be recognised and appropriately addressed, as their communication on social media platforms could negatively influence the brand's reputation if unregulated. Therefore, possibilities do exist for employees to share corporate brand messages and participate in conversations about the non-profit organisations (Russel 2017; Hyman 2016). Future studies should explore this issue.

The rationale for the focus on external communication with the groups and individuals connected with non-profit organisations was as follows:

- Non-profit organisations mainly serve a public or mutual benefit that is not profit driven, as opposed to profit generation in formal businesses (Hansman 1980). Hence, these organisations are highly dependent on support from their external environments in order to achieve their goals. This underscores their dependence on how they are viewed by their external stakeholders. Moreover, the non-profit organisation depends on the support of external stakeholders to promote its cause.
- The focus and nature of the non-profit sector and fact that the hierarchical structure of these organisations is not the same as those in the private sector, highlight the importance of external stakeholders. Non-profit organisations are mainly governed by controlling members or management boards that "control the interests of the organisation" (Nefdt 2003:1, 9). These organisations employ paid staff, including management or volunteers and, in some instances, even executives who work with or without compensation. This considered, the different domains of communication practice, such as corporate communication, management communication, public relations, marketing communication or organisation communication, are not typical of the private sector. This therefore underlines the need to involve stakeholders who fulfil different roles, say, as active promoters of the corporate brand such as ambassadors, donors, volunteers and the like (cf. Dosemagen 2011:163). According to Dosemagen (2011:163), communication is essential to connect stakeholders to the corporate brand, which can be achieved by following an integrated approach to social media brand communication, as proposed in this study.
- Research into the use of external communication, particularly in non-profit organisations and in the South African context is scarce (cf. Schutte 2009). In light of the premise of integrated communication to present the organisation as a unified unit by "harmonising" all communication, one would expect this to be of value to this sector (Christensen & Cornelissen 2011:386; Van Riel 1992a:162). Expressed differently, IC provides a fitting framework for exploring the external communication of non-profit organisations because of its focus on portraying the organisation as a unified unit through the integration of its communication activities and the opportunity it provides to draw on different communication disciplines. Although this sector does not involve the traditional management functions, the main purpose, namely to advance a corporate brand, should be aligned with the premise of IC in order to portray the organisation as a whole. The

only two related studies on this topic in South Africa are those by Ehlers (2002) and Niemann (2005), as mentioned in section 1.3.2 above.

- The focus only on external communication was further justified in a study by Ehlers (2002), which focused on two functions of corporate communication, namely public relations and marketing, which are generally considered to be external functions (cf. Angelopulo 2013a:56). Similarly, the aim of the current study was not to holistically explore IC in non-profit organisations, but rather to focus on the use of social media for external communication in a communication context and with a corporate brand perspective that, *inter alia*, calls for the integration of those communication efforts. The focus would be on how non-profit organisations can portray a unified "picture" through their social media brand communication, by following an integrated approach to their external communication. In line with the idea that IC pertains to the overall interaction between the organisation and the stakeholders, the importance of internal communication and the organisations' employee are appreciated and by no means disregarded.

Having explained the context and focus of the study, the research approach used to investigate the topic needs to be clarified. The sections below outline the philosophical worldview of the study, the research approach and the demarcation and operationalisation of the study.

1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopted a pragmatic research approach, which, despite prominent alternative orientations such as the positivist and interpretivist paradigms, was deemed best suited to achieve the research objectives. A pragmatic approach gives the researcher the freedom to consider the limitations and strengths of different quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods and techniques to achieve the objectives of a study. The indistinctness of concepts such as social media and integrated communication, combined with a lack of social media theory and research on this topic, supported the adoption of a pragmatic stance in this study.

In the proposed research approach, the significance of inquiry is thought to be embedded in a desire to thoroughly understand a certain phenomenon rather than being concerned mainly with research designs and data collection methods that are typically associated with other prominent paradigms (Duemer & Zebidi 2009:166; cf. Morgan 2014:1046). Expressed differently, the emphasis falls directly on the research problem and the information required needed to address it as precisely as possible. Pragmatism as a research approach is comprehensively debated in section 5.3.1, chapter 5, and is broadly based on the perspectives

of Morgan (2014), Lichtman (2014), and Van Grinsven (2014). In brief, pragmatist researchers are permitted to combine the application of both quantitative and qualitative research methods that could best achieve the research objectives; they acknowledge the existence of multiple realities; and they are concerned with practical solutions to real-life problems. Hence the research method used in this study could be described as *survey research*. Of significance, and in support of the selected research approach, is the assumption that non-profit organisations may be broad in scope, for example, focusing on a global issue, or they may have a more restricted focus on, say, a local community (Agard 2011:163). These distinct foci as such suggest that non-profit organisations face different realities, depending, *inter alia*, on the context in which they exist.

This inquiry was based on a pragmatic research approach that broadly guided the study in terms of the ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological and philosophical rationales. It is maintained that these beliefs guide a research study in the following ways, (1) the researcher's beliefs about the phenomenon; (2) the ways in which a topic can be investigated; (3) the appropriate practical ways in which a topic can be studied; and (4) the researcher's set of values and the merit of a particular study. Chapter 5 explores these rationales in more detail. It can thus be assumed that these aspects to some degree influence a research study, and although not directly expressed in a study, warrant some consideration.

Another principle pertains to the merit or usefulness of a research study. The present study set out to investigate and uncover certain elements that could benefit the integration of social media brand communication. The reasons justifying the value of the study by identifying specific research and knowledge gaps, were discussed in section 1.3.2 above. These reasons and the envisaged contribution of the study to formulate suitable elements that could be empirically assessed and verified, validated the value and merit of the study.

1.5.1 The research problem

To address the need for possible elements to guide the integration of social media brand communication, the general research problem of this study was formulated as follows:

A cross-sectional quantitative and qualitative study to propose elements for a conceptual framework for the integration of South African non-profit organisations' social media brand communication

The broad goal or aim of this study was to conduct *applied research* representing the broad aspiration of the study. Applied research focuses mainly on “application and solving problems in practice” (Fouché & De Vos 2011:95; Neuman 2006:25), and thus, in accordance with the topic under investigation, the aims was to find a solution to the existing need for guiding points in the non-profit sector to allow the practical application thereof (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport 2005:105). This was moreover in line with the pragmatic stance of the study that would focus on the real-life situations of non-profit organisations.

In light of the above, the objective of the present study was both *exploratory* and *descriptive*, which is generally the case with qualitative and quantitative studies (Fouché & De Vos 2011:96). *Exploratory* research refers to actions that are taken to gain an understanding of the basic facts of a certain phenomenon (cf. Blaikie 2000; cf. Fouché & De Vos 2011:95; Neuman 2006:33). *Descriptive* research aims to describe the specific details of a phenomenon as accurately as possible (Fouché & De Vos 2011:96; Neuman 2006:23).

The basic premise was that in the context of the study, the communication discipline would benefit from an understanding of the possibilities that social media presents, not only in offering new ways to communicate, but also the dynamic nature of communication and how a coordinated application thereof could advance a corporate brand (cf. Goneos-Malka, Grobler & Strasheim 2013).

Hence the overall aim of this study was to explore and develop a framework comprising guiding elements to use social media brand communication coherently.

1.5.2 Research objectives (ROs) and research questions (RQs)

Considering the scope of this proposed study, and to set the limits for the problem, exploratory and descriptive research objectives, together with research questions, were formulated as follows:

RO1 To explore the corporate brand founded on corporate communication

RQ1: What aspects does the corporate brand founded on corporate communication comprise?

RO2: To explore social media (in terms of its definitions, historical development, foundational elements and key features) in the context of non-profit organisations

RQ2: What are the key elements of a social media focus in non-profit organisations?

RO3: To describe the elements that could constitute an integrated approach to social media brand communication

RQ3: What elements could an integrated approach to social media brand communication comprise?

RO4: To explore the proposed elements of an integrated approach to social media brand communication

RQ4: In what ways are the proposed elements appropriate for an integrated approach to social media brand communication?

RO5: To propose elements for the integration of social media brand communication for use in the non-profit sector

RQ5: What are the elements for integrating social media brand communication in the non-profit sector?

1.6 THEORETICAL APPROACH OF THE STUDY

On the basis of the background to and rationale for this study, no single theory was uncovered to serve as foundation for a framework to guide social media integration from a communication viewpoint. This was because the requirements of the study with regard to the corporate brand perspective, the social media focus and the aim to achieve integrated social media brand communication, related to different disciplines that are not typically combined into a single research study. Hence, the key elements of social media for non-profit organisations uncovered during the literature review in chapter 3, guided the selection of theories by inductively relating it to broader theories. In this approach, the chronological development from classical to contemporary theories was followed. Social media was framed on the basis of classical theoretical perspectives, and the theory of and perspectives on human action, symbolic interaction and social presence, in an attempt to reveal the theoretical preconditions of social media brand communication.

The key theoretical perspectives on corporate communication, a corporate brand perspective and IC are discussed in the chapters devoted to these aspects as depicted in figure 1.1. The primary aim of these chapters is to promote an understanding of distinct theoretical concepts linked to the topic and context of the study, and ultimately identify possible elements for the integration of social media brand communication.

1.7 THE EMPIRICAL APPROACH OF THE STUDY

As stated previously, this study was both exploratory and descriptive. Owing to the exploratory nature of the study, the literature review followed a qualitative approach that could mainly be ascribed to the pressing need to gain insight into and an understanding of the corporate brand perspective, the social media focus and IC (cf. Fouché & De Vos 2011:96; Fouché & Delport 2011:64). The empirical part of the study followed a quantitative approach in order to investigate specific details concerning the proposed elements in a descriptive way. In the empirical part of the study, qualitative and quantitative methods were intentionally combined to gain a holistic understanding of the ways in which communication professionals in non-profit organisations operationalise social media. Through the implementation of an exploratory and a descriptive perspective, pertinent issues were identified and a comprehensive understanding of the topic gained. Table 5.1, chapter 5, summarises the secondary research objectives, research questions, research methods and research design.

The selection of the different approaches compelled the researcher to consider the *type of data* needed to answer the research questions. The data was *primary* because it was mainly collected by the researcher. Moreover, decisions had to be made on the methods for the collection and analysis of the data, specifically their suitability and the respondents' access to the required technology, such as SurveyMonkey for the quantitative research (cf. Blaikie 2009:23).

Since pragmatic philosophy involves solving practical real-life problems, it was deemed crucial to gain the insights of communication professionals responsible for social media brand communication into the actual approaches to and management of social media brand communication. To this end, the empirical approach of the study deliberately included multiple methods by combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to complement each other (cf. Bryman et al 2014:62; Pinto 2010; Neuman 2006:151). As stated in section 1.5, survey research was applied and an online survey and semi-structured interviews used as the methods to gain the required insights from the communication professionals.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As stipulated in the Policy on Research Ethics of the University of South Africa (Unisa), ethical clearance was obtained to conduct the empirical part of the study to ensure that the research activities of this study were guided by scholarly integrity and ethical behaviour. In so doing, the researcher was required to reflect on and address a number of ethical issues that might emerge from the study. The researcher moreover considered the rationale for the said policy to ensure the application of ethical research practices, and, in particular to protect the rights

and interests of the human participants that formed the unit of analysis of this study and from which the empirical data was gathered.

In general terms, the ethical policy of Unisa deals with all research activities in the research process, such as the gathering, interpreting, reporting, and publishing of the information gathered. In the context of this study, this involved all the actions taken during the planning and execution of the online survey and interview.

Specific ethical issues were considered because the information was collected directly from the participants. Hence their rights and interests, informed consent, autonomy, and potential risks and benefits were considered. Firstly, the researcher realised that the privacy and dignity of the participants would be affected, specifically in the semi-structured interviews. Participants were thus invited to participate and allowed to indicate the most convenient time and location for them. Moreover, any potential harm to the participants' self-esteem or possible stress were not anticipated because of the nature and topic of the interviews. Secondly, by obtaining the participants' informed consent prior to the commencement of the research, the researcher endeavoured to protect their autonomy by informing them that their participation was completely voluntary, and they could withdraw before or during the study, without any repercussions. All the participants and respondents consented in writing after the researcher had disclosed the nature of and procedures to be followed in the study. Specific issues about the study were also explained to them. Their signing of the consent form indicated that they would participate of their own free will. Lastly, the risks and benefits of the study were considered and no physical, psychological or social harm was envisaged because the study would not require the participants to perform any acts or activities other than engaging in conversations on the research topic. The researcher also informed the participants that they would not receive any financial rewards or compensation for their participation.

The study did not include any vulnerable groups, such as young people under the age of 18, persons with cognitive disabilities or mental impairments, elderly people or people with little or no education. All possible measures were taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality by refraining from using names and those of the organisations employing them during this research. This was done by renaming each recording and removing any references to individuals in the transcriptions of the interviews. The online survey did not request the names of the respondents or their organisations. All data gathered in the online survey was securely stored by SurveyMonkey and the recordings and transcriptions stored in a safe location.

1.9 OPERATIONALISATION OF THE STUDY

The study involved five phases, arranged in three sections, which allowed for an in-depth study of the topic. Figure 1.1 below depicts the approach adopted to achieve the research objectives, including the demarcation of the chapters by indicating the respective focal points of each chapter and the operationalisation of the study.

The comprehensive literature review in phases 1 and 2 (chapters 2 to 4) highlights the proposed elements of a conceptual framework that would be measured and verified in an empirical investigation. Phases 3 and 4 entailed the empirical part of the study, including the implementation of the data collection methods, and the analysis and interpretation of research findings. The subsequent findings and the insights were contextualised, and the conceptual framework refined in phase 5.

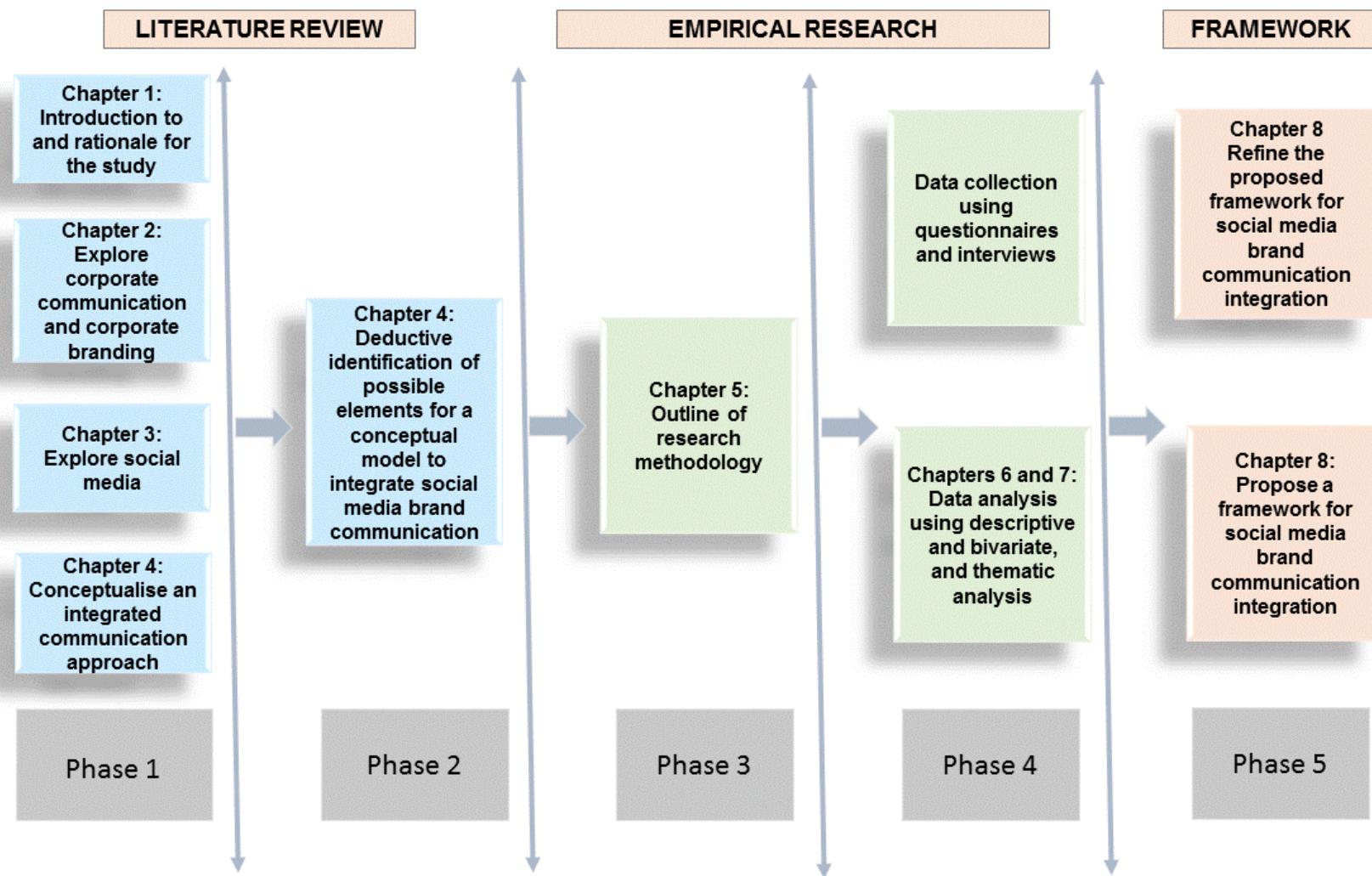


Figure 1.1: The demarcation and operationalisation of the study

1.10 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY TO THE EXISTING BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

This study sought to develop a conceptual framework with elements to guide the integration of social media brand communication for the non-profit sector in South Africa. It differs from prior studies because of its interdisciplinary focus on the corporate brand, social media and IC, combined into one study. The initial framework comprised proposed elements drawn from existing literature that were further refined on the basis of the empirical research and through inputs specifically obtained from communication professionals responsible for social media management in the sector. The framework distinguished between factors that need to be considered at both strategic and tactical levels, and centred on the key findings of the empirical research.

It was envisaged that the proposed elements with accompanying theoretical aspects, as contained in the final conceptual framework, would enable non-profit organisations to effectively combine their social media brand communication and types of media with traditional media into their existing communication endeavours, to ultimately create positive perceptions of the corporate brand.

The proposed conceptual framework was based on *three* overarching principles, namely a *philosophy* of communication integration and a *corporate brand* focus, underpinned by *social media* and its elements (summarised in figure 1.2 below). These foundational principles are comprehensively dealt with in separate literature chapters, and the overall framework is extensively elaborated on in sections 8.3 and 8.4, chapter 8. Specific theoretical perspectives on these foundational principles are summarised in table 7.5, chapter 7.

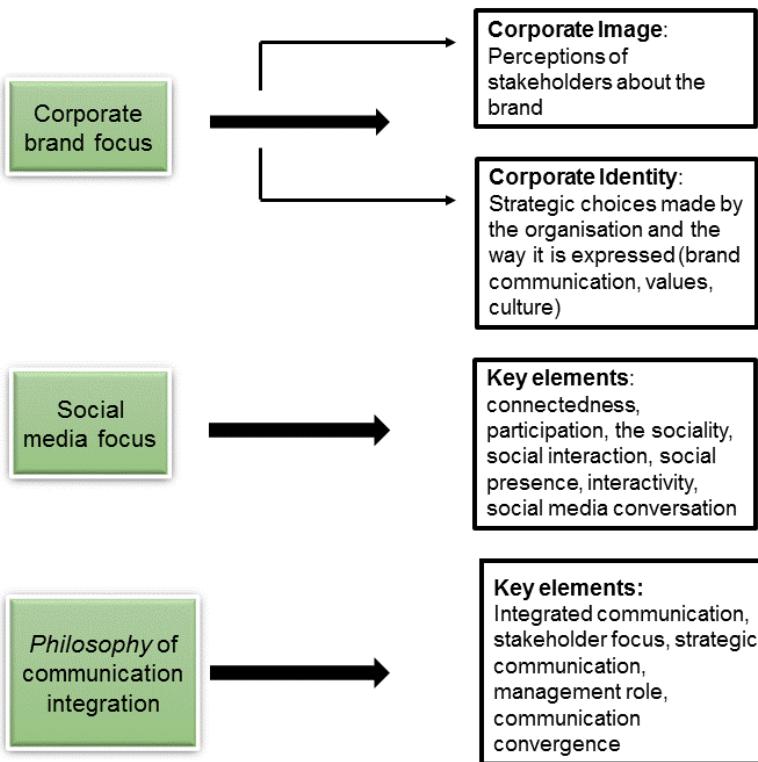


Figure 1.2: Foundational principles underlying the study and the conceptual framework for social media brand communication integration

1.11 SUMMARY

Calls to transform and reposition business and communication approaches at all organisational levels and in all functions of the organisation are certainly not new. However, it is clear that organisations are aware of their reliance on effective communication for beneficial relationships with their stakeholders and survival. Nonetheless, one of the pressing challenges facing organisations worldwide is the need to continuously adopt the most current technological developments to achieve the ideal communication situation. The advent of social media presents not only unique challenges to non-profit organisations in this country, but also opportunities to maximise the communication efforts of an organisation towards attaining a favourable brand.

The communication practices and adoption of social media by non-profit organisations in South Africa has yet to be fully explored. The current status of non-profit organisations in this country is unknown, and there is no clear understanding of how communication and social media are used and managed, or even whether there is recognition of the importance and value of new technology to create positive perceptions of the corporate brand and serve its causes. What is required is an exploration of how this sector could operationalise social media to ensure favourable exploitation in favour of organisations.

CHAPTER 2: THE CORPORATE BRAND FOCUS OF THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was on the integration of social media brand communication and to ultimately highlight elements for non-profit organisations to facilitate such communication. The focus on the corporate brand and social media brand communication necessitated an explication of the theoretical foundation thereof for the study. This is of particular importance because of the multidisciplinary nature of social media, which can be applied in different contexts.

This intention required consideration of the external communication to and from the organisation's stakeholders, which is facilitated by social media, as explained in the conceptualisation of an integrated approach to social media brand communication in chapter 1.

Corporate communication, with its philosophy of communication consistency and unity, was suggested as a suitable foundation for organising the communication efforts of non-profit organisations in South Africa. Moreover, a corporate brand focus was adopted, based on indications that it would be a more contemporary way to ensure that the organisation was favourably presented, that would aptly refer to the collection of perceptions on the brand (Daw et al 2011:7). The suitability of this perspective that would be achievable through the integration of all communication endeavours was underpinned by a thorough literature review of corporate communication, its components and historical elements and the corporate brand concept. The ideal of a positive corporate brand is, *inter alia*, to create differentiation, visibility, transparency and consistency for the organisation, that will afford it more prominence, and to ultimately achieve its strategic objectives.

Against this background, this chapter explores the underlying perspective of this study by addressing the following research objective:

To explore the corporate brand founded on corporate communication

The chapter is structured as follows: Firstly, it explores corporate communication in order to delineate it as the foundation of the corporate brand, by describing its guiding philosophy and different components, and identifying the historical corporate communication elements to ascertain how it is currently viewed (known in contemporary organisations). Secondly, a more contemporary approach from corporate communication to a corporate brand is underlined by

investigating concepts associated with a corporate brand, differentiating between the types of brand and branding techniques, and exploring the proposed corporate brand perspective.

Figure 2.1 below provides a graphic outline of the reasoning adopted in this chapter, and highlights the different elements that contributed to the focus on a corporate brand perspective for this study.

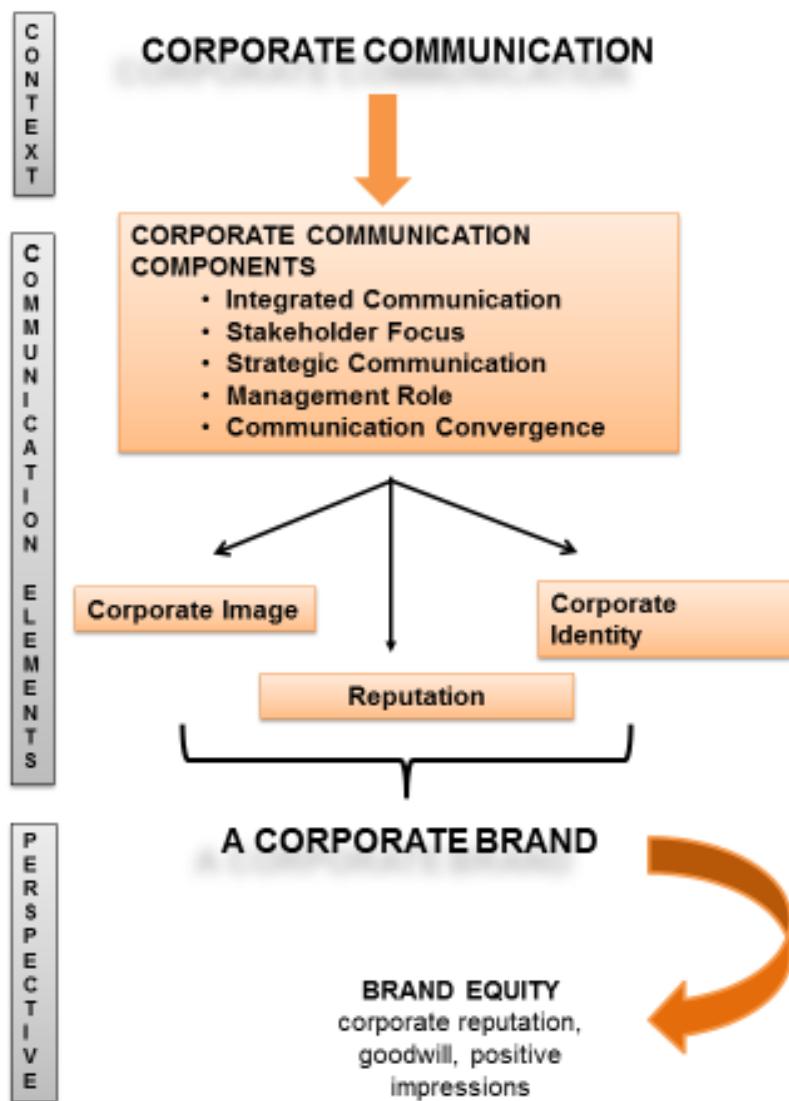


Figure 2.1: Approach towards a corporate brand focus

2.2 CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Corporate communication is described as a “broad and somewhat diverse field” characterised by an explicit outlook of the organisation on the achievement of “unity, wholeness, and totality” and the consistency of its total communication messages (Christensen & Cornelissen 2011:387). Cornelissen (2011:4) justifies this overarching approach towards unity in terms of the meaning of the word *corporate* in the concept of corporate communication, which metaphorically refers to unity and totality. Since its meaning originates in the Latin word, *corporare*, or “forming into a body” (*ibid*:4; cf. Christensen & Cornelissen 2011:387; cf. Harrison 1995:67), it would be fair to say that corporate communication therefore simply refers to the efforts made by the organisation to communicate as a whole body by aligning its internal and external communication activities (Mazzei 2014:222; Christensen & Cornelissen 2011:387). It is not limited to corporations *per se*, but is equally relevant to the private, public and non-profit sectors.

Contemporary views of corporate communication indicate different ideals about the perceived outcomes corporate communication should achieve, and signify a broader consideration of aspects such as the coordination of all communication and the linking of stakeholders to the organisation (Cornelissen 2011:25; Christensen & Cornelissen 2011:25; Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:14). Despite the views of these scholars, namely that corporate communication could provide a context (or organising framework or structure) in which the total communication message is incorporated (cf. Van Riel 1995:1; Kitchen 1997), they have different ideas about the ultimate *goals* of corporate communication. Cornelissen (2011:5), for example, sees its sole purpose as serving as a framework, as also suggested here, to coordinate the broader spectrum of communication activities in order to achieve favourable reputations (cf. Franklin, Hogan, Langley, Mosdell & Pill 2009). Christensen and Cornelissen (2011:386) support this somewhat ambitious view, by stating it could be understood as the management of all “communications under one banner”, whereas according to Van Riel and Fombrun’s (2007:14), it serves to link or connect stakeholders to the organisation through the strategic organisation of all communication. On the strength of the above views, one could conclude that corporate communication can be distinguished from other communication management functions merely on the basis of its aspiration, which is primarily to consolidate all communication endeavours and portray the organisation as a whole through coherent communication messages (Cornelissen 2011; Christensen & Cornelissen 2011:386; Christensen, Morsing & Cheney 2008b). Pertinent to this study, the connection between corporate communication and a corporate brand is based on the views of Christensen et al (2008b), who formulate the ultimate goal of corporate communication as follows: to “develop and present the organization as one unified brand: a *corporate brand* [own emphasis]”. By

drawing a direct link between corporate communication and a corporate brand, it can be assumed that a unified brand can possibly be achieved through effective corporate communication aiming to portray the organisation as a single corporate brand (cf. Christensen et al 2008b).

Furthermore, corporate communication is a concept that describes an array of strategic management functions, the mix of which depends on the type of organisation and its dedicated communication functions. These might include, but are not limited to, advertising, crisis communication, public affairs, media relations, community relations, reputation management, government relations, public relations, marketing communication, corporate branding and image building, and employee communication (Cornelissen 2011:25; Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:3; Goodman 2006:197). These functions are also termed specialist disciplines (Cornelissen 2011:5) or “multiple specialized senders of information” (Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:3). The existence of these multiple management functions concerned with stakeholder communication resulted in varied opinions about the positioning of corporate communication in the hierarchical structure of the organisation. Also, when referring to corporate communication, various concepts are used, mainly because of the wide-ranging views and disagreement about the boundaries, relationships, differences and similarities of the different communication functions (Mazzei 2014:217–218). Added to this perplexity are existing conceptions questioning whether corporate communication should be viewed as an all-encompassing communication discipline consisting of different types of communication, or as a separate discipline alongside other management disciplines (cf. Cornelissen 2004:47). In this respect, scholars like Van Riel (1995) and Christensen et al (2008b) support the view that corporate communication comprises different forms of communication (management, marketing and organisational communication), or subfields of corporate communication and domains of practice (public relations, marketing, organisational communication and human resource management), respectively (cf. Lindheim 2008). Mazzei (2014) regards corporate communication as a separate business-related discipline, which, according to Angelopulo and Thomson (2013), is a prominent communication discipline of the organisation. This study used the concept *communication function* to refer to the different management functions in the organisation that engage in communication with stakeholders. Owing to the unique nature of the non-profit sector and the dearth of research on this sector in South Africa, it is postulated that non-profit organisations do not have the same hierarchical structures as the private sector (cf. Brown & Iverson 2004: cf. Hurwit & Associates [sa]). The different views of the position of corporate communication in the private organisation were therefore noted, but the researcher realised that these views would probably not typically be of primary concern to the study.

In addition to the prevailing uncertainties surrounding corporate communication, there are inconsistencies in the scholarly marketing literature as a traditional external communication discipline that directly opposes the philosophy of corporate communication. Instead of aspiring to achieve consistency in the organisation's total communication efforts, marketing scholars outwardly adopt a narrower perspective on corporate communication. It is deemed to be one of the *6C elements* of the corporate marketing mix that mainly fulfils a promotional function of marketing through outbound communication channels, along with character, culture, constituents, conceptualisations and covenant (Balmer & Greyser 2006:735, 736; cf. Pérez & Del Bosque 2014:3; Balmer 1998:964). According to Pérez and del Bosque (2014), Balmer and Greyser (2006) and Balmer (1998), the most comprehensive function of corporate communication is to focus on the behaviour of only certain internal stakeholders, products and the ensuing communication effects. In light of claims that the corporate communication context allows for the inclusion of a broad range of communication activities, and involves a broad stakeholder base across formal organisational boundaries, such thinking arguably reduces corporate communication to a mere tactical role, that is not refuted but is deemed irrelevant to this study. It is argued that the survival of businesses is increasingly dependent on successful communication and interaction with a wide range of groups and individuals (Malmelin 2007:298; see section 2.3.2; section 4.4.1, chapter 4).

At this juncture, *corporate communication* is considered to be *the comprehensive communication framework of the non-profit organisation that coordinates a broad spectrum of communication activities to achieve a positive corporate brand*. In light of the above background, it can be assumed that corporate communication is based on a particular philosophy or idea that serves as a guideline on unity and wholeness in the organisation. The next section conceptualises the corporate communication philosophy as the point of departure in this study.

2.2.1 The corporate communication philosophy

As posited in the above discussion, the underlying premise of the corporate communication philosophy is to ensure a uniform manifestation of the organisation that will result in a favourable reputation (Van Riel 1995:3; cf. Lindheim 2008; Schultz 2008; Burke 1998:8). Early views hold that such a projection can be achieved by standardising or "harmonising" all internal and external communication in such a manner as to portray the organisation as a single unit (Christensen & Cornelissen 2011:386; Van Riel 1992a:162). Such a perspective on the achievement of communication consistency is also expressed as an *approach* to, or *philosophy* or *vision* of the role of communication within the organisation and in its relationship with its environment (Van Riel 1995:21).

Christensen and Cornelissen (2011:388) argue that all existing perspectives and views of corporate communication can be explained on the basis of *metonymy*. Metonymy is defined as an understanding that “certain parts (for example buildings) can directly stand in for the larger idea or conceptualization (for example the corporation)” (ibid:388). The vision of unity and the projection of the different parts (such as employees, managers or campaigns) of the whole (organisation) are accordingly illustrated by metonymy. Thus, in agreement with the corporate communication philosophy, *metonymy* is a presupposition needed by the organisation to be perceived by all the stakeholders as a whole or a single unit and to communicate as such. Although the organisation is made up of several parts such as, *inter alia*, employees, managers, buildings and marketing campaigns, the aim is that the organisation should not be perceived as comprising individual parts, but that both the whole and the parts should be “compressed” into a single unit that is seen as the whole (ibid 2011:388). Besides, fundamental to corporate communication, metonymy emphasises the fact that all parts, without exception, should be representative of the whole (organisation) and appreciated as such. In line with the guiding philosophy of corporate communication and this view of metonymy, it can be assumed that stakeholders should perceive the organisation and every part of it as a single unit.

Regarding the non-profit sector, such collective perceptions of stakeholders about the organisation and its total communication, interaction and action are said to directly affect the corporate brand – hence the view they hold of the non-profit organisation – and this enables the organisation to attain vital benefits at social, financial and emotional levels (Daw et al 2011:20).

For the purpose of this study, *social media brand communication* was defined as *the communication endeavours of the organisation by means of social media*.

Corporate communication consists of strategic theoretical components that are outwardly closely related to and often regarded as equivalent – hence the need for clarification in the context of this study.

2.3 KEY THEORETICAL COMPONENTS OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

The lack of a uniform definition and a clear demarcation of corporate communication and most of its concepts is evident in literature. This section explores communication integration, a stakeholder focus, strategic communication, the management function and communication expansion as key components of corporate communication that arguably all contribute to creating a communication environment conducive to coordinating communication and building strong corporate brands. This said, the integration of communication is possibly the most

prominent component because corporate communication's philosophy is perceptively attained through integrated communication. It is necessary to acknowledge the interdependence of these components and their importance in a corporate communication context.

2.3.1 Communication integration

The literature contains a variety of concepts referring to the idea of coordinating the organisation's communication efforts. Concepts such as *communication integration (CI)* and *integrated communication (IC)* are often used interchangeably when referring to the organisation's endeavours to achieve communication consistency, as used, for example, by Smith (2012a). Owing to the lack of a standardised concept, both CI and IC are used interchangeably when referring to the organisation's actions to align the communication of the entire non-profit organisation, as done by Smith (2012a). Models that suggest ways to integrate and consistently align communication in the organisation, and which were deemed appropriate to serve as basis for this study are outlined in chapter 4.

IC is defined as the "efforts to coordinate and align *all communications* so that the organization speaks consistently across different audiences and media [own emphasis]" (Christensen et al 2008b; Christensen, Firat & Torp 2008a:424; cf. Grant, Hardy, Oswick & Putnam 2004). Importantly, the impression is that these efforts are reliant on the combination of tools used to send, receive and facilitate interaction from a wide range of communication functions, of which public relations and marketing are briefly addressed later in this section (Gronstedt 1996b:292; cf. Niemann 2005; Ehlers 2002). Furthermore, it is postulated that integration is a fundamental component of corporate communication aimed at achieving the ideologies of unity and consistency in a corporate communication context (Johansen & Andersen 2012:272). Christensen et al (2008a:424) provide a more detailed explanation of what such an all-inclusive communication approach, as mentioned above, might entail, and state that it includes the entirety of "symbols, messages, procedures and behaviours" of the organisation (cf. Torp 2009:191; cf. Knox & Bickerton 2003:1013; Van Riel 1995:33). Niemann-Struweg and Grobler (2011:5) extend this notion of coordinating and aligning all communication, explaining that it is regarded as a "strategic management" effort to control all messages and purposively allow dialogue and advance long-term relationships.

The notion of an integrated approach to communication is considered to be rooted in the early 19th century with the presentation of house style manuals (Van Riel 1995; Christensen et al 2008b). House style can be understood as a form of symbolism that visually presents a coherent "picture" of the organisation (Van Riel 1995:28,37), and it is further regarded as the origin of corporate identity (see section 2.4.1.2). It initially emerged when organisations

needed to justify their practices and portray themselves as fundamental and caring establishments in society (Christensen et al 2008b).

The perceived benefit of achieving an all-inclusive communication ideal is to allow the organisation to communicate continuously, clearly and consistently with its internal and external stakeholders (Christensen et al 2008a:424). These ideals are deemed to be key components of the corporate communication philosophy and initially strongly linked to the management functions of the organisation (*ibid*), which are viewed as the typical functions concerned with the organisation's external communication. Over time, and in line with the call for the integration of communication, the boundaries that separated different communication functions in the organisation have become blurred (Gronstedt 1996b:289). Therefore, in a corporate communication context, IC suggests the inclusion of all communication efforts across the organisation, rather than a narrow approach such as only by means of marketing, public relations or any other communication function (Cornelissen 2004:47; Grant et al 2004). The purpose of the current study necessitated focusing on the existing communication orientation of non-profit organisations in South Africa, particularly on the integration of social media brand communication.

Although it is said that IC can informally and simply be understood as the organisation of communication in an integrated way (Christensen et al 2008b), scholars have different views on the achievement of such an ideal. Torp (2009:191), for example, contends that IC is viewed as a comprehensive effort to integrate everything the organisation says and does and everyone affected by the organisation's communication. According to Torp (*ibid*), integration could rather boldly be achieved by incorporating the *sending* and *reception* of all its communication – a notion that was eventually extended to include the *interactive tools* applied by the organisation (cf. Gronstedt 1996b). In addition, it is said to incorporate the *external* integration of visual design and the *internal* integration of the organisation's employees and corporate culture. It is acknowledged that communication integration is equally important as an intra-organisational and an outward-directed activity (Johansen & Andersen 2012; Torp 2009). In other words, and based on the views expressed here, the integration of communication should take place internally in the various management functions, as well as externally by including the receivers of the communication, namely the stakeholders. This study endeavoured to contribute to and broaden these viewpoints by distinguishing specific elements that non-profit organisations could apply to integrate their communication via social media.

A more comprehensive and recent approach to the actual integration of an organisation's communication by Rakić and Rakić (2014:187) not only supports such an inclusive approach,

but also reflects on how such integration could be operationalised. This approach was deemed relevant to the focus of this study on the integration of social media brand communication into an existing communication approach. In short, Rakić and Rakić (2014) propose that integration could take place in terms of *media*, *communication methods*, *timing* and *possibilities for interaction*, *participants* and *content creation*. This perspective was considered and integrated with other related theoretical elements from the literature and certain IC models (chapter 4) to ultimately collate a proposed set of elements. These scholars suggest integration through a mix of traditional and digital *media* that broadly includes all possible types of print, broadcast and electronic media.

In addition, as posited by Rakić and Rakić (2014), integration of all existing *communication methods* is required, of which the particular mix would probably be unique to each organisation. Examples include traditional media (public relations, marketing, sales, and so on), digital communication (via the Internet and/or mobile devices), and *word-of-mouth* (WOM) communication.

WOM is defined as any “positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions” (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsch & Gremler 2004:39; cf. Moriarty, Mitchell & Wells 2015:83; Rakić & Rakić 2014:193; Blackshaw & Nazarro 2006:2–3). It is occasionally called eWOM when online media such as the Internet is used to share and express experiences with and opinions about the organisation through personal communication (Tsao & Hsieh 2012:821; cf. Barreto 2014; see section 3.5.2, chapter 3). Alternatively, WOM can also be referred to as “social-word-of-mouth” (sWOM) when stakeholders exclusively use social media to make statements about the organisation (Hajli, Lin, Featherman & Wang 2014:674). eWOM is used to refer to statements in social media that are exclusively about the organisation. The aim of exploring an integrated approach to social media brand communication that explicitly promotes the idea that eWOM should be considered together with WOM media, validates such a distinction. The social media concept is thoroughly explored in chapter 3 and calls for a distinction between traditional and social media statements. In a marketing context, WOM is often equated with *viral marketing* (cf. Castranova & Huang 2012:118, 120; Kaplan & Haenlein 2011:254; Ferguson 2010:23; Duncan 2002:558). Nonetheless, as Ferguson (2010:23) contends, a distinction can be drawn between the two concepts in that viral marketing could be considered the *cause* when employing influencer marketing programmes or viral videos to create awareness. Conversely, WOM is the *effect* of such viral marketing ventures (cf. Moriarty et al 2015:425). *Viral communication*, however, is the way a message is rapidly and widely spread through networks of stakeholders, and is said to depend on the continuous interest or buzz created on traditional and social media (Moriarty

et al 2015:356,419). In context, and echoed by Castronovo and Huang (2012:118,120), Kaplan and Haenlein (2011:254), Ferguson (2010:23), and Mangold and Faulds (2009:359), statements by and conversations between stakeholders are deemed to be *interrelated* although not equivalent because the former does not necessarily signify dialogue. This then suggests that WOM and eWOM are considered both a *cause* of communication initiatives by the organisation to influence stakeholder's perspectives of the organisation, and an *output, result or return* of communication because they allow for the rapid dissemination of messages among stakeholders and they enable stakeholders to converse with one another.

For the purpose of this study, the concept of WOM was defined as

all statements and mentions about the organisation that are disseminated to and between various groups and individuals through traditional ways (WOM)

eWOM refers to

all statements and mentions about the organisation between various stakeholders on social media

As discussed in chapter 3, *social media conversations* refer to

dialogue or dialogic engagement between stakeholders on social media platforms that suggest the exchange of messages between the organisation and stakeholders or between themselves, over time, as opposed to the distribution of one-way messages

Rakić and Rakić (2014:187) furthermore assert that the integration of communication relates to the *timing* of communication and *interaction* possibilities that specifically refer to monologue (communication to stakeholders) and dialogue (an organisation's communication with stakeholders, and vice versa, and between stakeholders) (see section 4.4.2, chapter 4). Rakić and Rakić (2014) also posit that organisations recognise the involvement of both the organisation and stakeholders in communication and the need for them to be integrated. A last guideline by Rakić and Rakić (2014) pertains to the need to integrate the *content* created both by the organisation and stakeholders as communication participants. This overview of the proposed framework of Rakić and Rakić (2014) reveals progression towards actual communication integration and the possible ways in which it can be managed. Technological advances, particularly social media as the focus of this study, emphasise the necessity to coordinate all communication messages and interaction between the organisation and its stakeholders (Rakić & Rakić 2014:189; Madia & Borgese 2010:16–17). Hence, it could be argued that the non-profit sector needs to reflect on how communication with its external

stakeholders, especially by means of social media, largely takes place for it to qualify as actually being integrated.

A comparison between the ideals of corporate communication and integrated communication rightly indicates that both concepts share the same aspiration regarding the achievement of communication consistency throughout the organisation. In addition, one could deduce that IC serves to prevent possible communication fragmentation that might exist. As Mulder (2015:7) asserts, an IC approach is most valuable in fusing all points of contact between the organisation and its stakeholders. Hence, it would be beneficial to the non-profit organisation in portraying a uniform corporate brand through consistent communication.

A focus on external communication, as outlined here, subsequently compels the organisation to adopt an outside-inside perspective by considering and including external stakeholders in its communication practices. This point is explained in the next section.

2.3.2 Stakeholder perspective

The necessity to consider the needs, concerns and interests of those groups who are key to the survival of the organisation are apparently founded in the stakeholder theory that emerged during the 1980s (Driessen, Kok & Hillebrand 2013:1465; Malmelin 2007:298; Freeman 1984:46). These are groups or individuals who impact and are impacted by the strategic decisions and actions of the organisation, and with whom the organisation desires to establish meaningful relationships (Smudde & Courtright 2011:137; Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar & De Colle 2010:5; Freeman 2004:234). In view of the non-profit nature of this sector (section 1.2.8; section 1.3; cf. Driessen et al 2013), it can be expected that effective communication with external stakeholders by means of social media is paramount for the existence of these organisations.

A stakeholder perspective is an organisation-wide approach, that is believed to represent an outside-in approach in which organisations increasingly consider, among other things, the aspects that are needed by their stakeholders, especially to satisfy such a focus, and to ultimately develop and protect their reputations (Steyn & De Beer 2012; Cornelissen 2011:40–41; Christensen et al 2008b; De Bussy 2008; Steyn, Grobler & Cilliers 2005:33; Buchholz & Rosenthal 2005:138). The value of this perspective for this study specifically was to disclose the ways in which stakeholders gather and construe signals they receive from their interactions with the organisation, and how these are subsequently interpreted as satisfying stakeholders' concerns, needs and interests (cf. Buchholz & Rosenthal 2005:138; Cornelissen 2000:120). This notion is deemed crucial when stakeholders form their images and perceptions of the non-profit organisation, and is briefly discussed in section 2.4.1.1. Bearing in mind that

organisations strive to create significant connections with stakeholders to eventually achieve favourable reputations, thus requires purposeful attentional to stakeholders in the non-profit sector.

Furthermore, the discussion in this section emphasises the importance of a stakeholder or receiver perspective, as suggested in the previous section on communication integration. This is further explored in chapter 4 (cf. Cornelissen 2000:119). Debates concerning in whose interests an organisation should be run, centre around the rights of shareholders, and more recently, that of *stakeholders*. The latter can be perceived to represent a wider responsibility towards groups and individuals who have some kind of *stake* in the organisation (De Bussy 2008). Similar to Freeman's (1984:6, 46) seminal definition of stakeholders (see chapter 1, section 1.2.8), is Torp's (2009) reference to *everyone affected* by the organisation's actions or inactions, which underscores the need to also consider the "receivers" of and participants in such interaction. One may thus assume that a corporate communication perspective should aim to strategically align communication to all stakeholders, but also allow them to participate in the communication process (Cornelissen 2004:48). According to Angelopulo (2013a:40), stakeholder interaction that is dialogic may, in turn, be regarded as "communicating about issues with publics" (Driessen et al 2013:1465; Christensen et al 2008b; Kent & Taylor 2002:22; cf. Johansen & Nielsen 2011:20). The concepts, *dialogue* and *conversation*, feature prominently in social media literature and are conceptualised and contextualised in section 3.6.1.7 in chapter 3.

The contemporary organisation needs to recognise the interdependent relationships between the organisation and the groups with legitimate stakes or interests in the organisation (Cornelissen 2011:39, 41; cf. Greenwood & Van Buren 2010:425; Smudde & Courtright 2011:138; Hutt 2010:181; Buchholtz & Rosenthal 2005:139; Jones 1995:408; Brenner & Cochran 1991; Thompson, Wartick & Smith 1991:209; Freeman 1984:6, 46). It is thus likely that such recognition will require the organisation to connect with and accommodate all its stakeholders rather than only those who publicly choose to act against the organisation's decisions or actions (cf. Rupp, Kern & Helmig 2014:77). Currently, and from a corporate communication stance towards communication integration, a holistic view is deemed to include basically all interactions and everyone affected by the "organization's existence and activities", as highlighted in earlier outlooks (Torp 2009:190–191; cf. Rakić and Rakić 2014; Hutt 2010:181; Duncan 2002:7; Scholes & Clutterbuck 1998:228; Mitchell, Agle & Wood 1997:854; Freeman 1984:6; Donaldson & Preston 1995:67). It is therefore essential for non-profit organisations to identify and define prominent stakeholders who could actively promote the organisation through their statements and mentions on social media (Rupp et al 2014:76; cf. Donaldson & Preston 1995:69).

Malmelin (2007:298) argues that businesses are increasingly dependent on successful communication and interaction with “customers, sponsors, partners and other stakeholders”, which emphasises the importance of all stakeholders for the survival of the organisation. In line with the intention of corporate communication to achieve unity for the organisation, the focus of this study on social media brand communication and the above overview, one could infer that stakeholders and communication with them are fundamental to the success of the non-profit sector, thus prompting organisations to adopt a stakeholder focus.

Regarding the IC point of view, the stakeholder perspective is discussed in depth in section 4.4.1. The notion is that corporate communication should occur at strategic level. Strategy can be defined as a “more precise term for articulating how discourse operates, regardless of sender intention, in competitive business settings” (King 2009:20). From this definition one could infer that communication integration is closely related to business and is rightly a strategic activity (King 2009:21).

2.3.3 Strategic communication

Argenti, Howell and Beck (2005:83) regard strategic communication as “communication aligned with the company’s overall strategy, to enhance its strategic positioning”. In order to qualify as strategic, the communication strategy should therefore be linked to and contribute to the organisational strategy (Cornelissen 2011:84). Hence, in the context of corporate communication, communication has shifted from being a tactical function to being an extended strategic process (Christensen & Cornelissen 2011:397; Argenti et al 2005:83). Organisations need to adopt a strategic approach to communication, which indicates to everyone the strategic direction of the organisation (Argenti et al 2005:84) through intentional communication (Hallahan et al 2007:27). It is posited that the communication strategy guides the communication choices made by the organisation (Argenti et al 2005:84). Hallahan et al (2007:27) maintain that in instances where activities are thought to be deliberate, this could qualify as being strategic. Hence it appears that *strategic communication*, in the context of this study, underscores the persistent use of communication towards achieving the corporate communication objectives and, as mentioned above, to ensure it is aligned with the organisation’s overall strategy. The fact that the communication integration is regarded as a holistic approach aimed at embracing the organisation in its totality suggests that such communication should occur at a strategic level (Cornelissen 2011; Smith 2009:11; Cornelissen 2008; Gronstedt 2000:8; Van Riel 1995, Hallahan et al 1997).

There are different views in the field of communication on what constitutes strategic communication. Of particular interest are the deliberations over modernistic versus postmodernist approaches to the management of strategic communication that are perceived

relevant to other components such as the integration of communication (Smith 2013:71). Although this was not the purpose of this chapter, this matter requires some clarification. In some instances, proponents of a modernistic view have renewed their thinking, seemingly in particular on the issue of a top-down management approach, and they are now proponents of a postmodern approach (cf. Macnamara & Zerfass 2012; Hallahan et al 2007; Ströh 2007; Holtzhauzen 2002; Toth 2002). According to Holtzhausen (2002:251), the word *strategic* denotes a modernistic view in which the management of organisations mainly adopts a one-sided communication approach that largely represents management control, a focus on information transfer and an attempt to control the organisation's environment (cf. Hallahan et al 2005:21). A postmodern approach, as emphasised by Holtzhausen (2002:253), adopts a broad all-inclusive perspective recognising that individuals and organisations form their own realities, as opposed to a single dominant belief or truth, and appreciate multiple and diverse perspectives (Toth 2002:246). However, another view should be mentioned, namely that of Grunig (2009:4), who posits that the supposed control over messages and influence has always been an illusion, especially in instances where persuasion is deemed appropriate to influence people's attitudes and the representations they have of an organisation or brand. Grunig (1997) believes, and this is supported by his research on the situational theory of publics in the field of public relations, that members of the public's exposure to information has always been controlled by them and not by the organisation (cf. Duncan & Moriarty 1998:2). This is important because the stance adopted in the current study was that a corporate brand is a valuable intangible asset of the organisation that is presumably formed in the heart and minds of stakeholders rather than by the organisation. The perspective adopted in this study was the need to constantly portray the organisation in a unified way through an integrated approach to its communication, adopting a stakeholder view, to practise communication strategically and to include all communication functions. This is in contrast to the use of persuasion as referred to by Grunig (2009). The desired representations of the organisation are thought to be achieved through managing the organisation's behaviour and communication in an effort to ultimately develop stakeholder relationships (Grunig 2009:5). Grunig (2009:4) suggests that publics have always controlled their exposure to information, although he does concede that currently, digital media largely places the control of communication completely out of the organisation's reach (cf. Grunig 1997).

Strategic communication as such implies the consideration of stakeholders in the communication process. Barker (2013:117) concurs by stating that the concept *strategic* in fact points to the consideration of stakeholder needs.

2.3.3.1 Stakeholder focus

A study by Argenti et al (2005:83-84) suggests that stakeholder communication is possibly not only limited to underpinning and realising the organisation's strategy, but also to informing strategy by interpreting stakeholders' responses, hence not only by granting them opportunities to speak, but also listening to them. This underscores the plea for a *stakeholder focus* in corporate communication, thereby suggesting that organisations should approach their communication from the "outside-in" by considering the communication needs of and responses from their stakeholders. Following the debate on postmodernistic thinking, the inclusion of the stakeholder's contribution to communication could in a sense be considered to exemplify an abandonment of control over the communication effort that is typically linked to a modernistic approach to strategic communication. In terms of the corporate communication philosophy and the primary aim to ensure that the organisation is broadly perceived as a coherent unit, it could be argued that communication should continually be used specifically at a strategic level to achieve the organisation's goals.

Based on the above overview, it is evident that corporate communication allows for strategic communication and dialogue from all groups interested in the organisation by considering their respective communication needs as the starting point in such communication. Integrated communication is at play in the efforts of contemporary corporations to build detailed stakeholder databases (which is also important to a stakeholder focus), and to organise strategic dialogues with select stakeholders (Christensen et al 2008b). According to Christensen et al (2008b), dialogues can only be regarded as strategic when stakeholders are invited to participate in organisational decisions and thus permitted to have their say. Section 4.4.2, chapter 4, elaborates on dialogic communication.

The ultimate objective, namely to achieve unity through a holistic approach to communication, provides the foundation for strategic communication (Holtzhausen 2008). Hallahan et al's (2007:3, 4) seminal definition is often cited in studies on strategic communication, and was deemed relevant at this stage. The scholars (2007:3, 4) say it is the "the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfil its mission". Strategic communication as a purposeful endeavour is concerned with the presentation and promotion of the organisation as a whole, and this presumably ties in with corporate communication and the corporate brand (cf. Hallahan et al 2007:7). The ability to communicate strategically is seemingly enhanced by technological advances such as social media, which in this sense, enables organisations to reach a broad range of stakeholders otherwise not attainable (Holtzhausen 2008).

For corporate communication to execute its communication efforts strategically it needs to be positioned at a management level.

2.3.3.2 Management function

Strategic communication is furthermore perceived to be a *management function* that has evolved into a “strategic discipline concerned with the management of communications at many different levels” (Cornelissen 2011:86; cf. Valackiene 2010:99; Christensen et al 2008b; Cornelissen, Van Bekkum & Van Ruler 2006:116; Goodman 2006). This status could be validated by the performance of a variety of management roles that may well position communication professionals as credible communication managers and simultaneously demonstrate the value they add to the organisation (cf. Cornelissen et al 2006:124–125). Early literature indicates management’s role as active involvement in achieving organisational objectives by fulfilling *window* and *mirror* roles, which supports the notion of the concept being a management function (Van Riel 1995:2; Steyn et al 2005:33). The adoption of a window view broadly encompasses the vision of corporate communication as portraying the organisation as a single unit through consistent communication messages guided by a communication strategy (Van Riel 1995:2; Steyn et al 2005:35). This signifies, *inter alia*, the responsibility of strategic communication in the formulation and execution of such a principle of action proposed by the organisation, by exploring the use of communication “across professional disciplines” to represent the organisation as a whole (Hallahan et al 2007:4; Hallahan 2005). As stated earlier, several functions of the organisation entail communication activities, both internally and externally (Hallahan et al 2007:3; Van Riel 1995:1, 2, 8–14; Grunig 1992:5). Such achievement can be attributed to the sharing of common intent in respect of communication objectives and strategies (Hallahan 2005), which would suggest the strategic focus of the concept (Niemann 2005:28).

The *mirror function* requires monitoring the organisation's environment (internal and external) and identifying the changes that could have an impact on the organisation and its communication strategy. This could include monitoring stakeholders' expectations (internal and external), issue management and communication with all stakeholders (Van Riel 1995:2; cf. Valackiene 2010), and highlights the interdependence between the organisation and all the groups in its environment (Grunig, Grunig & Ehling 1992). The literature refers to various other communication management roles, such as but not limited to having a concern for organisational legitimacy, which is underscored by a perception that its actions are appropriate and needed (Sandhu 2009:83; Christensen et al 2008b); to ensure a stakeholder focus; and to set communication standards (Christensen et al 2008a:429). This ties in with the point raised in section 2.3.2 about the significance of a stakeholder focus.

Strategic communication further requires the *management* of communication.

2.3.3.3 Communication management

In the literature, communication management is often equated with public relations or even organisational communication (Hallahan 2005; Grunig 1992:4). Considering the emergence of corporate communication that is historically mainly rooted in public relations and is defined as the “management of communication between an organization and its publics” (Grunig & Hunt 1984:6), it has since evolved into a broader organisational function, namely corporate communication. The view supported here is that corporate communication refers to communication “managed by communication specialists” (Grunig 1992:5). Steyn and De Beer (2012:30–31) regard communication management as being primarily concerned with managing communication between the organisation and all its stakeholders at the functional level of the organisation. This correlates with Van Riel’s (1995) window function, as highlighted earlier, and is furthermore in line with the corporate communication context. Conversely, these scholars regard the mirror role as a strategic management function performed at strategic level. The corporate communications manager is described as a “*new style* manager who is able to take a more strategic and holistic perspective on communications [own emphasis]” (Cornelissen 2004:47), and who should be concerned with the “coordination of all forms of communication” to ensure success as a management instrument (Van Riel 1992a). This typifies the point of departure that corporate communication performs both a window and a mirror management function in its quest to achieve organisational goals, as contended earlier by Van Riel (1995) (cf. Cornelissen 2011:86). Hence the contribution of the current study was deemed to be at both the functional and strategic communication levels of the organisation, as emphasised by Steyn and De Beer (2012), Van Riel (1995) and Cornelissen (2004, 2011) above. The proposed elements for the integration of social media brand communication in the non-profit context is aimed at ensuring that the organisation is portrayed as a single unit through consistent messages guided by a communication strategy, as well as the adoption of a comprehensive and organisation-wide outlook on the integration of this communication.

As stated previously, corporate communication is regarded as a multifaceted concept composed of various communication functions unique to every organisation and that have allegedly converged to achieve the corporate communication philosophy of unity (Christensen et al 2008b).

2.3.4 Integration of organisational functions typically concerned with external communication

In this study, in terms of the main objective to explore guiding points for the non-profit sector to integrate its communication efforts, the views by Cornelissen (2011:16) and Thomson (1997:7) are recognised, namely that public relations and marketing are probably the most

prominent functions concerned with external communication. Public relations and marketing were originally regarded as “*full-blown and largely separate functions*” with shared attributes that have since been integrated (Cornelissen 2004:40). Recent views corroborate the expansion of corporate communication (Mazzei 2014:217; Cornelissen 2011:4; Christensen et al 2008b). This underlines the philosophy of integrating all communication efforts of the organisation to ensure the alignment of these efforts and to eliminate possible overlapping and duplication.

The resultant need to consider all communication functions of the organisation merits a brief overview of public relations and marketing because corporate communication is in fact rooted in their development. Over time, and combined with the development of newer communication methods, the boundaries of these communication functions have become increasingly blurred even though their strategic significance for the organisation is acknowledged (cf. Mulder 2015:2; McMahon 2011:260). An investigation of the corporate communication and corporate brand concepts underlines the distinct contributions of public relations and marketing.

2.3.4.1 Public relations

The general view is that the origins of corporate communication can be found in a communication approach that largely comprised communication to the media and mainly focused on seeking publicity and gaining recognition for the organisation in the media (Cornelissen 2011:4, 2008; Kitchen 1997:24). Originally, the function mainly followed an information distribution approach by providing information on demand, and was known as “public relations” or “public affairs” (Cornelissen 2011:4, 16; Christensen et al 2008b; Kitchen 1997:22; cf. Dolphin 1999:2). In the late 19th century, organisations that mainly used public relations as a function to communicate with the press, were confronted with a demand for more information and growing scepticism by a broader range of internal and external stakeholders and a growing need for communication expertise (Cornelissen 2011:4; Cornelissen et al 2008; cf. Argenti 1998:75). In an attempt to respond to the increasing scrutiny and criticism, public relations was mainly practised in a *reactive* mode. Its development to professionalism was marked by increased consideration of the representation or *imagery* of the organisation and the development into a management function concerned with communication management and relationship building. This is evidenced in the seminal definitions by Grunig and Hunt (1984:6), who define public relations as “*the management of communication between an organization and its publics*” (cf. Grunig 1992), and Cutlip, Center and Broom (1985:4), who view public relations as “*the management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends*” (cf. Stacks & DiStaso 2009; Lindheim

2008). Over time, the focus of public relations shifted to the use of communication to manage strategic relationships (Hutton 1999:208–209) and to favourably position the organisation – also referred to as the positioning of its reputation (Mazzei 2014:221; Lindheim 2008) – which is deemed to be main concerns to this day (Mazzei 2014:221, 223; cf. Stacks & DiStaso 2009; Christensen et al 2008b; Van Ruler & Heath 2008). This shift to and recognition as a strategic management function is regarded as a *proactive* approach that is especially pertinent to corporate communication and its attention to a stakeholder perspective and strategic communication.

2.3.4.2 Marketing communication

Marketing developed mainly to address the need for product publicity and promotion during the Industrial Revolution and the ensuing economic reform that compelled organisations to bring “products unto the market” (Belch & Belch 2009:815; Cornelissen 2011:16). The marketing mix is widely recognised as a key concept of marketing theory (Du Plessis 2013:155; Brønn 2008; Rafiq & Ahmed 1995:4; Kotler 1976:60). Despite many modifications, expansions and applications in different marketing contexts, the four traditional elements or the “four Ps” of the marketing mix still feature in marketing literature (Du Plessis 2013:155; Brønn 2008). The traditional elements include product, price, place and promotion. The fourth P – *promotion* – represents marketing communication (MC) that is typically directed at customers of the organisation (Brønn 2008).

As argued by Christensen et al (2008b) and Ouwersloot and Duncan (2008:9), MC’s original focus mainly fell on advertising as a function of marketing, but this has expanded to it being considered a business philosophy in which all MC functions strategically support and reinforce each other (Belch & Belch 2009:816). Integrated marketing communication (IMC) has evolved from marketing communication seemingly because of a need for more unified communication to address fragmentation, among other factors (cf. Mulder 2015:5; Belch & Belch 2009:815; Angelopulo & Thomson 2013:20). This progression is characterised by an understanding of consumers’ needs and behaviours, achieving a competitive advantage through analysis of opportunities, and establishing positive relationships with the publics of the organisation (Belch & Belch 2009:816; Kitchen & Schultz 2003:69; cf. Mulder 2010:140). According to Mulder (2015:5), IMC also recognises the importance of dialogue, enduring relationships and communicating a uniform message to stakeholders. Niemann (2005:27) states that IMC has evolved into IC, which currently involves a more comprehensive focus on the communication efforts of the organisation and not merely focusing on MC efforts (Mulder 2015:6; cf. Kitchen & Schultz 2003:66). This said, it should be noted that, from a marketing viewpoint, IMC represents the way to coordinate the marketing and promotional activities of the organisation,

as well as to ensure that customers receive consistent messages about the organisation (Ciletti 2011; Belch & Belch 2009:816; Hoffmann 2009). Niemann's (2005:29, 78) in-depth overview of related literature from the 1990s alludes to the fact that irrespective of fundamental differences between IMC and IC, the concepts are often used interchangeably and that some scholars prefer the concept IMC over IC, when in reality they are referring to an organisation's strategic communication function that is driven by its strategic planning. Barker (2013) suggests an alternative to IC, namely strategic integrated communication (SIC). According to Barker (2013:117), the SIC approach basically incorporates all the main elements of existing IC approaches, such as considering stakeholders' needs, ensuring a positive experience, coordinating communication activities, creating long-term relationships and regarding it as a strategic function. In addition to the general view of IC, Barker's (2013:112, 117) perspectives consider internet integration (II), which appears to depend on knowledge management as a key thrust. Since this was not a primary objective of the current study, for present purposes, the outlooks of scholars such as by Niemann-Struweg and Grobler (2011:5), namely that IC in effect encapsulates the strategic intent, was followed. Niemann- Struweg and Grobler (2011) do in fact use the concepts of IC and strategic integrated communication (not the abbreviation SIC specifically) interchangeably.

To promote an understanding of the corporate communication concept, at thus juncture, a brief overview of the historical corporate communication elements, which are all closely intertwined and perceived to be interdependent, is required.

2.4 HISTORICAL ELEMENTS OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation are arguably the most prominent elements associated with corporate communication, and since the 1950s have been the focus of numerous scholarly studies (Balmer & Greyser 2003:1). Regardless of the wealth of contributions to the field of corporate communication by scholars and corporate communicators, discrepancies between the different views and perspectives are evident in literature. The challenge to clearly differentiate between these elements is not new, and is deemed to still prevail (Cian & Cervai 2014:183; Pérez & Del Bosque 2014; cf. Le Roux & du Plessis 2014; Abratt & Kleyn 2012) for which there are two possible reasons: (1) the fact that these elements relate to multiple communication functions that approach research from different perspectives; and (2) because of the many management functions that engage in communication with a number of stakeholders (section 2.3.2).

The aim of this section is to examine the historical elements associated with corporate communication and to understand each of these elements by exploring its roots and development. Since corporate communication was proposed as the basis for the current study,

a succinct overview of these elements which also feature in a corporate brand, was warranted. Not all of these elements are explicitly defined or explained in the literature on the corporate brand, and an investigation thereof should contribute to an understanding of the context and underlying elements of the corporate brand perspective adopted in this study.

2.4.1 Corporate image and identity distinguished

The many definitions and varied perspectives of corporate image and corporate identity extant in the literature tend to result in dissimilar views about the elements and their relationships (cf. Abratt 1989:66). In some instances, they are regarded as being distinctly different (Cian & Cervai 2014; Melewar 2003; cf. Kitchen & Schultz 2001:104; Van Riel 1995:27). Other perspectives suggest that they share commonalities or are at least closely connected (Christensen & Askegaard 2001; cf. Kitchen & Schultz 2001:104; cf. Van Riel 1995:26), and are even to some extent regarded as equivalent (Cornelissen 2011:6). There is little agreement about whether the rise of image precedes that of identity and if it serves as basis for the development of identity (Knox & Bickerton 2003), or whether they can be regarded as equally significant as the corporate communication elements (Abratt & Kleyn 2012; Cornelissen 2011; Christensen et al 2008b). Nevertheless, both elements will be briefly investigated in the next section in an attempt to draw clearer distinctions. An investigation of the historical development and the origins of corporate image and identity merit references to seminal authors and sources.

2.4.1.1 Corporate image

Organisations appear to have endeavoured to improve the image they project (Crespi 1961:115). The nature of *image* can be explained on the basis of Newman's (1953:211—212) seminal analogy of the organisation to a human or person, which means that despite not possessing a human body, the organisation has a *character* – hence conferring human qualities on the organisation (Christensen et al 2008b; cf. Abratt 1998:64). The purpose of this analogy is to illustrate that the organisation, like a human being, has a character and wishes to protect it and create and project a certain image. Since initially proposed, references to or the use of this body metaphor in which organisations are likened to humans has been met with criticism, mainly because of the fact that many argue that organisations cannot be seen to truly possess human characteristics such as a conscience or feelings. However, its purpose here is primarily to illustrate that every organisation strives to be regarded in a certain way, such as having a positive or negative image.

The need to favourably present the organisation can be traced back to the early existence of corporate communication imagery (Grunig & Hunt 1984:6). As stated earlier, the word

“corporate” in the corporate communication indicates the organisation’s ultimate aim to be viewed as a *whole* or as a *one*, and it is thus used to refer to the organisational setting of each of the corporate communication elements (see section 2.2). Corporate image or product image, for that matter, can thus be regarded as the *image* of the organisation or the product that similarly reflects the goal of the organisation to ensure that the image, irrespective of whether it refers to organisation or product, is represented and perceived as *one* (a unit). Corporate image can be described as simply “the picture that people have of a company” (Van Riel 1995:27; cf. Schultz 2008; Dowling 1986:112), formed as “result of all past experiences” (Boulding 1956:6). A more expansive view explains corporate image as “the set of meanings by which an object is known and through which people describe, remember and relate to it. That is, it is the net result of the interaction of a person’s beliefs, ideas, feelings and impressions about an object” (Dowling 1986:110; cf. Schultz 2008; Keller 2006).

Cornelissen (2000:122) agrees that corporate image can be regarded as the outcome of a process affected by numerous *impressions* and based on the interactions of stakeholders with a multitude of messages, emanating from various resources besides the organisation. The author acknowledges the existence of other communication sources which, besides the signals received from the organisation through images, behaviour and symbols, are interpreted by stakeholders and eventually affect their image of the organisation. Firstly, stakeholders pay attention to the corporate communication of competitors and other businesses in the media. Moreover, messages from interpersonal contact or WOM and eWOM that involve discussions about the organisation are considered to influence how the organisation is perceived and the resultant image that is formed (Cornelissen 2000:121). A third source pertains to intrapersonal messages that could serve as a communication sources. It is argued that previous images and experiences can be reconstructed when the stakeholder is reminded of the organisation (ibid:122). It is consequently possible that different stakeholders can have different images of the organisation, depending on who is involved and his or her background (Abratt & Klein 2012:1050; Argenti & Druckenmiller 2004:369; Argenti 1998:74) and on his or her individual contact and experiences with the organisation (Kennedy 1977:123). Based on these insights, it can be deduced that stakeholders’ experiences with and the messages received from the organisation and one another will thus feature in their conversations about the organisation.

From a corporate communication perspective it would seem that both dimensions, namely to engage in dialogue or provide information and to construct a particular image for the organisation, are intertwined (Cornelissen 2011:60; cf. Lindheim 2008). Dialogue or two-way communication is seemingly inherent in the notion of communication integration and is

accelerated when social media is used to communicate (see sections 3.7.1.7, chapter 3 and section 4.4.2, chapter 4). The facilitation of two-way communication by means of social media is mainly due to the fact that conversations are extended to include both the organisation and stakeholders, and allow both to communicate (see section 3.6.1.7, chapter 3).

It is postulated that consistent communication might result in the organisation being noticed and thus increase stakeholder confidence that perceptively could have a positive impact on all business functions (Cornelissen 2011). In light of the above views, it would be fair to say that corporate image is an accepted strategic management function that currently shows concern about how the organisation as a whole is perceived, as opposed to earlier beliefs of how stakeholders viewed the products of the organisation (Goodman 2006:197; cf. Govoni 2004). At strategic level, corporate image is deemed to have specific advantages for the organisation, including allowing it to achieve distinctiveness, contributing to its financial goals and ensuring positive perceptions that might ultimately evolve into a sound reputation (Cornelissen 2011:60; cf. Schultz 2008).

The views of Cornelissen (2011) and Wan and Schell (2007) were included in the current study in that particular elements were identified to possibly guide the integration of social media brand communication and to, *inter alia*, allow the organisation to participate in dialogues about the organisation on social media and ultimately achieve the desired image of the non-profit organisation.

2.4.1.2 Corporate identity

The literature supports the complexity and ambiguity of the corporate identity element (Wah 2008:138; Balmer & Greyser 2003:34). Early views refer to the concept as the “sum total of all forms of expression that a company uses to offer insight into its nature”, the “self-portrayal of an organization” (Van Riel 1995:27) and the “physical manifestation: its logo, company colours, house style of dress, décor and so on” (cf. Opoku, Abratt & Pitt 2006:23; Argenti 1998:56; Harrison 1995:68). The emphasis was initially only on the use of pictorial depictions of the tangible forms of the organisation’s identity (such as uniforms, buildings and vehicles), but over time, was informed by more recent views and was deemed to also portray intangible elements (such as values, behaviour and vision) (Argenti 1998:74; Argenti 1996:78) intended to represent everything it does or says (Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:4; cf. Goodman 1994:112). One should bear in mind that corporate identities do not necessarily emanate from the organisation only, but can also be generated by the external environment (such as by stakeholders) through feedback (Martin & Hetrick 2006:93). The value of a favourable corporate identity concept is seemingly its usefulness for the organisation to ascertain *who*

the organisation is, *what* it stands for and *what* its core purpose is (Cornelissen 2011:63; Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:61; He & Balmer 2005:338; Balmer & Greyser 2003:33). It is posited that this respectively represents a clear inward focus (or inward presentation of the organisation's identity) and an outward focus (or outward presentation of the corporate identity) (Cornelissen 2011:63; Cornelissen & Harris 2001:52), thus suggesting that corporate identity might broadly comprise these two foci. Organisational identity refers to the values shared *within* the organisation including its unique characteristics such as values, strategies and culture (Cornelissen 2011:62–63). Furthermore, according to Abratt and Kleyn (2012:1051), it correspondingly represents the way employees think and feel about the organisation. However, corporate identity perceptively adopts a broad outward focus representing the organisation through symbolism, communication and behaviour (Cornelissen 2011:63; cf. Kitchen & Schultz 2001:104). Considering the inward an outward presentation of the organisation through both organisational and corporate identity, the core elements of its corporate identity include “vision, mission, and corporate values” (Schmeltz 2014:239; Balmer & Greyser 2003:36). Schmeltz (2014) contends that *vision* and *mission* pertain to the desired future state or philosophy of the organisation and its purpose, respectively. *Corporate values* contain both vision and mission and refer to the goals the organisation plans to achieve and the actions needed to do so. A more contemporary and concise definition by He and Balmer (2005:338) is that corporate identity refers to “those critical attributes and traits that make us distinctive and which defines who we are and what we are as an organisation” (cf. Balmer 2008:894). The achievement of *distinctiveness* is particularly relevant to the more modern view adopted by organisations.

Different viewpoints posit that the focus of corporate identity is rooted in (1) design, (2) corporate culture, and (3) communication.

Early views focused on the visual presentation of the organisation and a preoccupation with the use of graphic *design* by the organisation to portray itself to its stakeholders (Cornelissen 2011:61; cf. Melewar 2003:195). Aspects such as house, style, logos and names, to mention a few, were regarded to fully encapsulate the corporate identity of the organisation, and it is fair to say that at that time, the visual presentation was exclusively relied upon as an indication of what the organisation is (Van Riel and Fombrun 2007:130; He & Balmer 2005:338; Abratt 1989:68; Van Riel 1995:28). According to van Riel and Fombrun (2007:63), early scholars of corporate identity and design specialists related identity to graphic design. These scholars simply followed Bernstein's lead, maintaining that corporate identity originated from the Latin word *idem*, which literally means *same*. This notion was subsequently broadened to the idea that these visual elements could be more beneficial when applied to the present or used to

express the identity of the organisation as opposed to seeing it as one and the same. This perceived extension of this element from fully representing the organisation to the application thereof, is reflected in the following definition: it is the “way in which a company presents itself by the use of symbols, communication and behaviour” (Van Riel 1995:28) to indicate *what the organisation is* (Balmer 1998:978). At that time, the emphasis shifted from reliance only on graphic design to the consideration of the values of the organisation and aligning it with the logo, behaviour and values of its employees (De Chernatony 1999:158).

According to Cornelissen, Christensen and Kinuthia (2012:1096), identity is certainly “*cultural*” and shaped by the “values, beliefs and assumptions of managers, employees and the general culture in which the organization is embedded” (cf. Balmer 2001). It is believed that organisations have always heeded the connection between values as an integral element of corporate identity (Schmeltz 2014:239; Cornelissen & Elving 2003:117; Balmer & Soenen 1999:74; Baker & Balmer 1997). Corporate culture is deemed to include a “mix of values and sub-cultural groups which is a major element of an organization's actual identity” (Balmer & Greyser 2003:77). This raised the question of whether a visual identity (such as during the design era) could solely and fully capture the qualities of an organisation, and then led to the realisation of the possible limitations of simply applying these visual forms of expressions in this regard, and a consideration of aspects such as values, beliefs and so on (cf. Balmer 2002:11). Following the earlier reference to inward and outward presentations of corporate identity, it was deemed appropriate at this juncture to further differentiate between these concepts because they also pertain to corporate values. It should be noted that values are basically seen to include “core organizational values (the impressions and experience of organizational members)” (Schmeltz 2014:236; cf. Duncan & Moriarty 1997:72), but can arguably also include or refer to the corporate values expressed to the organisation's external stakeholders. Values are deemed to be embedded in the personality of an organisation and to determine which cues of corporate identity the management of an organisation prioritises (Schmeltz 2014:237). Although outward communication probably captures and communicates the intrinsic nature of the organisation, including things like its values (Balmer 2008:889), it is suggested that corporate identity should also adopt an *inward presentation*, also referred to as *organisational identity*, to share such values with employees in the organisation (Cornelissen 2011:63; Cornelissen & Harris 2001:52). In the context of corporate communication and its philosophy of unity, both inward and outward presentations are deemed important. However, owing to the main focus of this study on the external communication with non-profit stakeholders, the outward presentation was of particular relevance. Cian and Cervai (2014:188), however, mention that corporate and organisational

identity are occasionally equated, thereby confirming existing inconsistencies in the use of the respective concepts.

The broad notion that corporate identity includes all possible types of *communication* by the organisation correlates with the vision of corporate communication to align these efforts and portray the organisation holistically. An emphasis on *behaviour* is of particular relevance as it is considered to be the “broadest possible form of communication”, drawing on all the senses to equip a person to develop impressions (Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:65). The emphasis, however, is not only on aligning symbols, communication and behaviour (cf. van Riel 1995:28), but also considering a wider range of elements, including but not limited to corporate design, corporate culture and corporate structure (Melewar 2003). In recent years, the popularity of corporate identity has increased, following growing recognition of its strategic importance (Melewar 2003:208; Balmer & Greyser 2003:73). Over time, there has been a realisation that traditional models of corporate identity often simply adopt a sender-dominated perspective, viewing communication merely as a channel in which meaning is predetermined and receivers are relegated to passive receivers who could compromise the active participation of stakeholders (Cornelissen et al 2012:1098). Nowadays, organisations emphasise the “deeper notions of corporate identity” relating to the attributes of an organisation (Balmer 2008:880), and corporate identity is progressively informed by multiple organisational characteristics (*ibid*:894), with less attention being focused on visual identification or symbolism. In a corporate communication context, which in itself requires a broad stakeholder focus comprising multiple groups, the idea is posited that identity can never be regarded as fully complete as it is “active and evolving organisms” (*ibid*:886). According to Cornelissen et al (2012:1099), organisations’ identities are developing in and constituted by the communication between them and their stakeholders. In so doing, organisations need to listen to stakeholders and acknowledge the value of their contributions in creating corporate identities.

The connection between corporate identity and corporate reputation is based on the idea that the main drivers of corporate reputation supposedly stem from corporate identity (Abratt & Kleyn 2012:1058).

2.4.2 Corporate reputation

As with all the concepts linked to corporate communication, there is no uniform definition of this element. The word “reputation” is derived from the Latin word *reputance*, which means “to reckon” (Balmer 1998:970). Corporate reputation is regarded as the aggregate or “collective representation” of numerous images held by stakeholders of the organisation, which can be linked to the organisation as a whole or all its parts (Argenti & Druckenmiller 2004:369; Balmer

& Greyser 2003:178). In support, Goodman (2006:203) states that an “organisation’s reputation is based on the way all those who come into contact with it perceive its behaviour, or experience its products or services” and that is supposedly also based on the organisation’s performance (Argenti & Druckenmiller 2004:369). This is specifically links to the notion of metonymy in corporate communication (see section 2.2.1), which suggests that every part of the organisation should fully represent it. Hence, based on metonymy, one can assume that the communication of the organisation by all management functions should be coordinated and aligned to the reputation the organisation desires to achieve. Corporate reputation is often equated with corporate image, but the definitions and explanations referred to earlier support the idea that the elements can be separated on the basis of the fact that reputation is built or formed over time, based on the past and present actions of the organisation and that might answer the following question: *How are we perceived over time* (Abratt & Kleyn 2012:1050; Martin & Hetrick 2006:17, 71; Argenti & Druckenmiller 2004:369; cf. Balmer & Greyser 2003:177; cf. Balmer 1998:971).

In line with the corporate brand perspective and with due consideration of a corporate communication foundation, the perspectives of Abratt and Kleyn (2012), Cornelissen (2011), Christensen et al (2008b) and Martin and Hetrick (2006) were adopted for this study, namely that *strong reputations achieved through a positive brand are vital for organisations to achieve their strategic objectives, including being distinctive and profitable.*

Reputations may be weak or strong (Hatch & Schultz 2001:130; Argenti 1998:78), positive (Abratt & Kleyn 2012:1051; Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:107) or excellent (Abratt & Kleyn 2012:1049). However, it is possible that organisations may simultaneously project a positive or strong impression in some respects and a negative impression in others (Blythe 2009). The ultimate goal is to create the most appropriate reputation for the organisation (*ibid*). A strong corporate reputation is said to be *visible, distinctive, authentic, transparent and consistent* (Christensen et al 2008b). It is viewed as an intangible asset that has proven its worth in successful organisations over tangible traditional and monetary measures (Alniacik, Alniacik & Erdogmus 2012:3). Such a reputation admittedly has commercial benefits for an organisation (Balmer 1998:964), creating a competitive advantage (Alniacik et al 2012:3; Martin & Hetrick 2006:8), maximising business opportunities and alleviating threats (Argenti & Druckenmiller 2004:368,374), or promoting financial gain (Dowling 2006:134; Martin & Hetrick 2006:8).

Notwithstanding the different views on what corporate reputation is, it is also deemed to be of strategic importance in allowing corporate communication to reach “its full potential” (Romenti 2010:306; Balmer & Greyser 2003:177). Mazzei (2014:223) and Cornelissen (2011:4) regard

reputation management as the core concern of corporate communication practitioners (cf. Sutton 1997:14). A study by Walker (2010:367) to obtain a systematic view of corporate reputation resulted in the following conclusions: reputation applies to both internal and external stakeholders and thus emanates from both these contexts; the possibility exists for positive or negative perceptions because reputation is believed to be based on what is really known about the organisation; and corporate reputation is deemed to answer the following question: What is the organisation seen to be? (cf. Martin & Hetrick 2006). In the non-profit context, organisations are equally challenged to set themselves apart from similar organisations (Daw et al 2011:30). Achieving such a distinction correlates with the broad corporate communication philosophy, which is crucial to the organisations of today (Berthon, Pitt, Chakrabarti, Berthon & Simon 2011:182; cf. Cornelissen 2011:59).

This section drew attention to the foundation of this study. The corporate communication concept was explored to emphasise its suitability for the context of this study. This was followed by an examination of the key historical elements of corporate communication in an attempt to establish how modern organisations perceive it today. Table 2.1 below summarises these key elements (as adapted from Martin & Hetrick 2006 and Schultz & Kitchen 2004).

Table 2.1: Contemporary views on corporate communication

21st-century corporate communications	
Basis and direction of communication	Dialogue (two-way) between organisation and stakeholders Stakeholder (outside-in) perspective
Communication components	Integrated communication Strategic communication Stakeholder focus Communication expansion
Channels	Multiple communication functions
Key corporate communication elements	Image Identity Reputation
Content of communication	Focus on tangible and intangible assets
Importance of communication	Corporate communication as the core driver to promote a corporate brand
Importance of corporate message	Corporate brand as the strategic aim

Initial conceptions of the historical corporate communication concepts discussed above, namely image, identity and reputation, evoked significant interest leading to research, which appeared to evolve into a corporate brand perspective that is explored in the sections below. Although there are different views on the actual mix of a corporate brand and exactly how these elements are interrelated, many organisations view corporate brand as vital in

presenting the organisation holistically. Certain elements of corporate communication are sometimes more popular than others, which could be an indication of existing contrasting perspectives. Kapferer (2008:27), for example, prefers the term “reputation” to “image”. His reasoning is that it has an impact on the organisation as a whole and unites all the stakeholders and functions of the organisation, as opposed to image, which is viewed as artificially constructed and representing a restricted view. Knox and Bickerton (2003:1002) concur, and posit that corporate image has evolved into corporate identity and ultimately corporate reputation – hence their recognition of image as the starting point that eventually progresses to reputation. Notwithstanding, a corporate brand is said to ultimately defend the organisation’s reputation outwardly, irrespective of the varied views on which elements constitutes reputation and how they are interrelated (Kapferer 2008:27). According to Daw et al (2011:30), there is a link between the non-profit brand and the favourable perception thereof, which emphasises the relevance of a corporate brand perspective in the non-profit context.

2.5 THE SHIFT FROM CORPORATE COMMUNICATION TO THE CORPORATE BRAND

As noted earlier, there is a widespread belief that the success and future of organisations are rooted in the interactions between organisations and stakeholders, the formation of images and the subsequent evolution of these images over time into the reputations of organisations (Cornelissen 2011:3, 56; Franklin et al 2009; Ormeño 2007:1; Cornelissen et al 2006:114; Ghosh & Ho 1996:12; Gray 1986:8). The philosophy of corporate communication to achieve unity and wholeness in the present setting, compels the organisation to ensure it is well presented and viewed positively by its stakeholders in an attempt to gain a favourable reputation (Cornelissen 2011:61). The literature depicts the prevalence of the corporate image, corporate identity and corporate reputation elements in scholarly contributions on corporate brands and indicates that it is frequently mentioned alongside this concept (Bielenia-Grajewska 2012; Abratt & Kleyn 2012; Cornelissen 2011:61; Daw et al 2011:30; Kapferer 2008:27; Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:324). A corporate brand arguably represents a change in focus from product branding, which is concerned with creating positive perceptions of a product, to the holistic representation of the organisation, which emphasises the formation of unique connections with its stakeholders, ultimately resulting in a competitive advantage (Vernuccio 2014:211; Abratt & Kleyn 2012:1050; Arvidsson 2011; Balmer 2010:181; Siso, Bick & Abratt 2009:27; Moore 2008; Ormeño 2007:1; cf. Mulder 2010:140). A corporate brand is deemed an important intangible asset of the organisation and the solution to differentiating organisations in the marketplace (Biedenbach 2012:1, 13; Arvidsson 2011; Ind 2007:134;

Martin & Hetrick 2006:46). Nonetheless, consideration should be given to the perception that a brand is as much about “mind and emotions share” as it is about to *market share* (Gobé 2009:xxviii). Daw et al (2011:7) regard the brand and the organisation’s reputation as more critical issues in the non-profit sector, mainly because financial contributions (or resources) do not result in acquiring a physical item, and also, if a non-profit brand successfully appeals to and engages people at an emotional level, it might result in a belief in its mission and its ability to provide a lasting competitive advantage.

The assumption nowadays is that virtually every message and action of the organisation can be regarded as potential communication (Christensen et al 2008b), thus challenging organisations to align all their activities into a single message in such a way that they uniquely “identify, differentiate and position” the organisation in the minds of the stakeholders (Alizadeh et al 2014:17; cf. Kaufmann, Vrontis, Czinkota & Hadiono 2012:193, cf. Cornelissen 2011:65). Positioning is “what the brand stands for in the minds of customers, relative to competition and the benefits or promise” (Gronlund 2013:4), and defines “how a brand compares to competing brands” (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:73). In fact, it is postulated that the integration of all communication activities is a necessity for brand and reputation building (Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:8). Considering the aims of corporate communication and the organisation’s endeavours to create a unified picture, it would be fair to say that a corporate brand similarly strives to project a unified picture of the organisation that could enable stakeholders to connect with it.

The following approach is thus adopted in this section: firstly, to discuss concepts such as brand and branding, brand values, brand promise, brand identity, image and reputation, and brand personality in order to illustrate their bearing on the corporate branding perspective; secondly, to contextualise corporate branding as the perspective adopted in this study, by drawing clear distinctions between the different types of brands and providing a succinct overview of this concept; and thirdly, to justify the corporate branding perspective on the basis of a detailed explanation. The manifestation of a corporate brand in the social media age is discussed in section 2.6.

This study did not lend itself to a comprehensive and in-depth investigation of each individual concept essentially associated with corporate brand, mainly for two reasons: firstly, a corporate brand is seen as a more contemporary view of the organisation, and most scholarly contributions reflect a marketing perspective that does not fully incorporate the corporate communication philosophy as proposed in this study; and secondly, because of the many and varied perspectives and consequent ambiguity in the field of corporate brands, it would be impossible to fully address the concept in a single section.

2.5.1 A brand and its associated concepts

A brand is a multidisciplinary concept and the literature contains countless perspectives and definitions thereof and its related concepts, as illustrated in table 2.2 below (Le Roux & Du Plessis 2014:120). As such, numerous components are related to it. Hence the definitions and explanations of the concepts typically associated with this concept are indicated in table 2.2. The intention is not to provide an exhaustive view, but merely to highlight the most pertinent concepts relevant to the setting of this study. These components are described in more detail in the sections after the table.

Table 2.2: Differentiation between the different concepts relating to corporate brands

Concept	Definition/explanation	Key elements
Brand	<p>"A brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. A brand thus signals to the customer the source of the product, and protects both the customer and the producer from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical " (Aaker 1991:7)</p> <p>"The concept of the brand can be traced back to product marketing where the role of branding and brand management has been primarily to create differentiation and preference for a product or service in the mind of the customer" (Alizadeh et al 2014:16; cf. Biedenbach 2012:1).</p> <p>It is a "statement, an image, a message, which is packed and delivered to the customer, so that they know what the company stands for" (Alizadeh 2014:14).</p> <p>The American Marketing Association (2011) defines a brand as "a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers".</p> <p>In general, a brand represents a "company's name, a logotype or even being used as a special term for describing marketing offerings of a company" and to "create special emotional connections" with their customers (Biedenbach 2012:1, 13)</p> <p>De Chernatony (2010:17) defines a brand as "a cluster of functional and emotional values that enables a promise to be made about a unique and welcomed experience".</p> <p>It is a combination of tangible and intangible attributes and seeks to create a positive connection with the customer in order to create incentive for customers to use the products of the company in the now and in the future" (Alizadeh et al 2014:14).</p> <p>According to Bernstein (2003:1134), "a brand equals product plus values".</p> <p>Christodoulides and De Chernatony (2002:), a "brand is a cluster of rational and emotional values that enable stakeholders to recognise a promise about a unique and welcome experience".</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • differentiation, identification of products or services • comprises tangible and intangible assets • identifies values linked to a product/service or organisation – functional and emotional • promises unique experiences • creates positive connections with stakeholders, particularly at an emotional level

	<p>According to Pearson (1996:6), a brand is a combination of <i>features</i> (what the product is), <i>customer benefits</i> (what needs and wants the product meets) and <i>values</i> (what the customer associates with the product).</p> <p>"Brands have meaning. Brands have personality. Brands have attitude. And because people so often identify with, relate to, and define themselves by them, brands have influence" (Gronlund 2013:3).</p> <p><i>The literature reveals many different types of brand, depending on the positioning of the organisation. Examples include service, product, corporate, sports, political, personal, city and destination brands (see section 2.5.1.1).</i></p>	
Branding	<p>"Branding is the initial means to build consumer awareness by naming the offer, but also by distinguishing the offer from other similar products or services within an established category" (Alizadeh et al 2014:14; cf. Knox & Bickerton 2003:999).</p> <p>Bernstein (2003:1136) distinguishes as follows between physical and psychological branding:</p> <p><i>Physical</i> (the product) branding ensures that the brand name is linked to the company or product – inextricably and uniquely.</p> <p><i>Psychological</i> (values) branding, if rigorously enforced, ensures that the communication, promise and, above all, behaviour of the product are consistent, coherent and in character.</p> <p>Organisations seemingly employ different branding techniques to achieve positive connections to a brand. Some examples include the use of corporate storytelling, names, logos, design and emotional branding (see section 2.5.1.1).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creates awareness • encapsulates all communication about a brand • links a name to a product/service or organisation • comprises emotional and functional values • ensures consistency of communication, promise and behaviour
Brand values	<p>Brand values are seen to "encapsulate the additional values that are inherent in or associated with the corporation and its products and services" (Balmer & Gray 2003:973).</p> <p>They are derived from "corporate identity – from a firm's purposes, values, activities, quality standards and so on" (Balmer 1995, in Balmer 2012:1065).</p> <p>Brand values are often regarded as a <i>promise</i> to the stakeholder (Balmer 2001, in Balmer & Gray 2003:974).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a promise of possible additional values associated with a product/service or organisation • determined by the purpose, values, activities uniquely associated with the organisation

Brand promise (product vs brand promise)	<p>"A company's corporate brand provides consumers with expectations of what the company will deliver (a 'corporate brand promise' similar to the 'brand promise' of product brands)" (Argenti & Druckenmiller 2004:368; cf. Brito 2014:145).</p> <p>According to Kapferer (2008:38), it is also referred to as the <i>brand contract</i> that contains a value proposition comprising its values and positioning that becomes the "benchmark for customer satisfaction" and is sort of "set in stone".</p> <p>Balmer (2012:1065) sees the essence of a brand as relating to the "informal, albeit powerful, bi-lateral contract (<i>covenant/promise</i>), between the organisation/organisations behind the brand and its customers and other stakeholders [own emphasis]".</p> <p>"Brands are a promise of something" (Gibbons 2009:45).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informal contract (agreement) of what the stakeholder can expect from a product/service or organisation • a covenant between the organisation and stakeholder
Brand identity and brand image	<p>Alizadeh et al (2014:14) define brand identity as a "unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain, it comes from the organization" and brand image as "how a brand is perceived by consumers, it has its origin in the minds of consumers".</p> <p>A brand identity is a "set of aspirational associations for the corporate brand to perform its assigned roles" that imply a promise (Aaker 2004:15) .</p> <p>According to Harris and De Chernatony (2001), brand identity comprises six components: vision and culture, which drive the brand's desired positioning, personality and subsequent relationships, all of which are then presented to reflect stakeholders' actual and aspirational self-images.</p> <p>The brand identity constitutes a collective picture or form and answers the question "Who is the brand?". Brand image, however, is "the picture of the brand held by customers and the surrounding world (Urde 1999:128–129).</p> <p>Brand identity is deemed to comprise "a company's defining attributes, such as its people, products, and services", while brand image is a "reflection of an organization's identity and its corporate brand. The organization as seen from the viewpoint of one constituency" (Argenti & Druckenmiller 2004:369).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brand identity: holistic picture of the attributes of a product/service or organisation (mission, values, culture, people, for example) • brand image: the perception the stakeholder has of the product/service or organisation • an expression of its identity and brand
Brand reputation	<p>Brand reputation is defined as "a collective representation of a brand's past actions and results that describes the brand's ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders" (Harris & De Chernatony 2001:445).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collection of impressions stakeholders have of the organisation over time

	<p>It is seen as the concentration of many images over time (Fombrun and Van Riel 1997, in Harris & De Chernatony 2001:445).</p>	
Brand personality	<p>"The personality of the brand with all his/her personality traits and emotions, usually like the target audience or customer" (Gronlund 2013:4; cf. Brito 2014:145).</p> <p>The brand's emotional characteristics are represented by the metaphor of personality, which, among other sources, evolves from the brand's core values (De Chernatony 2010:46).</p> <p>According to Aaker, Benet-Martinez and Garolera (2001:493), brands can "develop a personality that is widely assumed to be similar in their characteristics".</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • humanlike characteristics • underscores emotional values • evolves from a brand's core values

The next section provides a concise overview of the different concepts included in table 2.2 above. This discussion underscores the significance of the concepts and their relevance to the perspective of this study.

2.5.1.1 A brand

Brands have been deemed to have existed since ancient Egyptian times. In bygone times, the term “brand” was used to describe the use of marks to establish ownership, such as the marking of cattle (Gronlund 2013:2; Kapferer 2012; Berthon et al 2011:182; Arvidsson 2011; Gaski 2010:1; Blackett 2009:13; Cornelissen, Morsing & Cheney 2008b; Buckingham 2008:12; Danesi 2006:8; Ormeño 2007:11), or marks on artefacts (Schultz, Antorini & Scaba 2005:25). The popular definition of a brand by the American Marketing Association (AMA) is cited by various scholars as being a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition” (Cravens & Piercy 2013:255; Gronlund 2013:23; Du Toit & Erdis 2013:17; Tsotsou 2011; Crane 2010; Verma 2010; Moore 2008; Ind & Bjerke 2007:23; Ormeño 2007:11; Argenti & Druckenmiller 2004:368). This definition seems to suggest that a brand was initially (and is currently) regarded as a mark of distinction that is uniquely associated with goods (or products) and services that serve a threefold function, namely to *identify, differentiate and satisfy a need* (Gronlund 2013:12). Moreover, according to Ouwersloot and Duncan (2008:8), it comprises the “perception resulting from *experiences with, and information about*, a company or a line of products [own emphasis]” underlining the idea that a brand is determined by and represents the entire organisation and its activities. In fact it is seen as the “sum total of everything that makes a product, service or organisation distinctive” (Bruce & Harvey 2008:6). This implies that a brand incorporates services, products and the attributes and values that stakeholders assign to it (cf. Mulder 2010:164). It can thus be accepted that the primary purpose of a brand is to allow customers to recognise a particular product or service and to allow them to set it apart from its competition by purposively creating a predisposition in the minds of customers to prefer a product or service over another (Xie & Boggs 2006:350; cf. Thellefsen & Sørensen 2013:478; Arvidsson 2011; Verma 2010; Crane 2010; De Chernatony 2010:5; Mascarenhas 2009; Batey 2008:3).

As mentioned earlier, brands are considered to be significant intangible assets that intrinsically have value for the organisation by creating assets in the “minds and hearts” of a wide range of groups, including customers, distributors and so on (Gronlund 2013:18; Kapferer 2012; Biedenbach 2012:1; Tsotsou 2012; Balmer 2010:183; Mascarenhas 2009; Clifton 2009:3; Burmann, Jost-Benz & Riley 2009:390; Lindemann 2009:26; Kapferer 2008:4,10; Knieper 2008; Danesi 2006:137; Schultz & Kitchen 2004:361; cf. Keller 2015; Argenti & Druckenmiller

2004:374; Duncan & Moriarty 1997:9). These assets rely on support from and the presence of tangible assets such as products to successfully deliver their benefits (Kapferer 2008:10). This intangible asset is classified as a *conditional asset*, which means it bestows benefits over time through consideration of other assets, such as a product or service (Kapferer 2012). Hence it cannot exist in isolation and is associated with a specific tangible product, and as such is deemed to constitute both intangible and tangible elements.

The proposed value of the brand is also referred to as *brand equity* (Gronlund 2013:4; Crane 2010; Kapferer 2008:3; Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:9,40; Keller 2006), sometimes classified as *goodwill* (Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:40) or the *reputation* of the organisation's products and services (Forsyth 2011). Simply put, it can be understood as the "value added by the brand" (Tsiotsou 2011) (cf. Perry & Spillecke 2013:3; Agresta & Bough 2011:12; Crane 2010; Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2005:20), which allegedly depends on whether stakeholders view the brand elements as relevant and important (Gronlund 2013:59; Crane 2010). Hence it can be accepted that, over time, brands became strategic business tools used to not only represent the product or service through pictures or visual representations, but also to represent the organisation as a whole, including its values and attributes (Kapferer 2012; Berthon et al 2011:182; Kapferer 2008:52; Moore 2008). Alizadeh et al (2014:14) posit that a brand can be successful, and thus conversely also unsuccessful (cf. Bielenia-Grajewska 2012; Wilson 2009). In this sense, success depends on customers' ability to identify the item – product, service or organisation – and the ways in which its values are perceived to meet their needs.

In light of the objective of the study, it is important to note that a brand can contribute positively to having a positive impression of the non-profit organisation. Furthermore, brands are deemed strategic assets that can provide a "long-lasting competitive advantage" (Kapferer 2008:2) for any type of organisation, including non-profit organisations (cf. Biedenbach 2012:6; Mulder 2010:140; Moore 2008; Opoku et al 2006:20; De Chernatony & McDonald 2003:49). Keller, Dato-on and Shaw (2010:106) contend that the value of a brand is to set non-profit organisations apart in a competing marketplace and to yield positive performance results that outweigh the challenges these organisations currently face, such as developing and executing non-profit branding strategies and the lack of proper assessment activities. Based on the above overview, one could therefore infer that brands primarily aim to create valuable assets over time – in the hearts and minds of respective stakeholders – that will ultimately result in financial and/or reputational value (cf. Lu-Anderson 2011).

Following the introduction to and overview of the brand concept thus far, it is clear that different types of brands feature in scholarly literature, of which product brands, service brands and corporate brands are prominent. Many other types of branding have emerged over time that

focus on different items. Examples include the following, *inter alia*: sports brands (Bielenia-Grawjewski 2012, Kapferer, JN 2012; Tsotsou 2011; Lu-Anderson 2011; Walsh 2011; Lee & Miloch 2011); personal or self-brands (Gronlund 2013:88; Bielenia-Grajewski 2012; Arvidsson 2011; Agresta & Bough 2011:18; Traflet 2009); city brands (Ren & Berg 2014; Kapferer 2012; Arvidsson 2011; Kavaratzis 2009; Moore 2007:74); political brands (Knieper 2008); retail or store brands (Rajagopal 2009; cf. Perry & Spillecke 2013); and destination brands (in tourism) (Bielenia-Grajewski 2012). These types of brands were deemed inappropriate for the proposed corporate brand perspective because their foci and emphasis are determined by the positioning of the organisation and thus concentrate on individual categories such as sports, cities or politics, as explained above, and contrary to corporate brands that inherently focus on communication and the activities of the organisation as a whole.

The concept *brand* is often used in close association with *branding*, which is the communication about the brand using different communication techniques. Reflecting on the definition of Alizadeh et al (2014:15), *branding* can, in a sense, be seen as the ability to create and maintain a brand, and serves to connect the “provider and the receiver” in such a way that the brand is perceived as intended by the organisation (Gobé 2009:xxix; cf. Bielenia-Grajewska 2012; Franklin et al 2009; Blythe, 2009, 2006; Traflet 2009)). Branding can thus be described as the *act* or *tool* through which a favourable impression of a product, service or organisation is established (Arvidsson 2011; Gronlund 2013:2; Moore 2008). In line with the corporation communication foundation, the corporate brand perspective of the study, and the modern view of He and Balmer (2005:338) and Balmer (2008:894), *corporate branding* can broadly be defined as the act through which the distinct attributes and traits of an organisation – including a non-profit organisation – are demonstrated and communicated.

Organisations might use several branding *techniques* to subtly create awareness of and positive associations with the brand of which, (1) emotional branding, (2) corporate stories, and (3) names, logos, designs, symbols and packaging are examples (Du Toit & Erdis 2013:29; Verma 2010; cf. Keller et al 2010:109). These techniques are commonly linked to the meaning a brand has for the consumer and supposedly for a non-profit organisation too, as briefly discussed in the next paragraph (Du Toit & Erdis 2013; Batey 2008; Beverland 2009).

The significance of a brand seems to serve as basis for creating an *emotional* connection between the product and customer (Gronlund 2013:6; cf. Traflet 2009; Gobé 2009:xviii, xxix). It is acknowledged as being fundamental to contemporary brands, irrespective of the type – services, products or organisational – and may comprise feelings such as having a special experience, and feelings of trust, safety, glamour and elegance or being liked (Gronlund

2013:18; Bearden, Netemeyer & Haws 2011; Gobé 2009:xxix). It is contended that these emotional connections allow customers to develop lasting trust in and a bond with a brand (Crane 2010). Emotional branding relates favourably to brand personality and the notion that brands have personalities and are thus experienced as being human, and for this reason, they serve to create personal connections with the stakeholder (Kadens, Linda & Prince 2012).

The origins of and the type of product that was named first are unknown, but Dansei (2006:13) traces the *naming of products* as far back as the middle of the 19th century (Verma 2010). Gronlund (2013:135) asserts that the brand name represents the *face* of the brand that intentionally or unintentionally creates a particular impression of the product, service or organisation (cf. Crane 2010; Dewhirst 2007; Lilleker 2006). As Bielenia-Grajewska (2012) suggest, branding refers, *inter alia*, to the activities concerned with the naming or renaming of a brand, and is commonly associated with the differentiation of organisations, services or products (Tsiotsou 2011; Traflet 2009; Wilson 2009; Moore 2008; Dewhirst 2007; Lilleker 2006). However, it might also comprise other marketing activities of which product *design*, logos, *symbols* and *packaging* are examples, through which a brand's personality might visually be conveyed (Gronlund 2013:139; Du Toit & Erdis 2013:17–18; Daw et al 2011:147; Traflet 2009; Batey 2008:152; Lilleker 2006; Danesi 2006:54–60; cf. Verma 2010; Moore 2007:81; Arvidsson 2006:2; Lindstrom 2005:64; Dewhirst 2007). Daw et al (2011:22–23) agree that in many instances, non-profit organisations tend to be over-reliant on factors such as a new appearance or *face*, logos or colour, rather than adopting an organisation-wide approach to communication to ensure their causes are shared through their total interactions with stakeholders. This argument thus supports the significance of a corporate brand perspective adopted in the current study, and for non-profit organisations in the overall advancement of the organisation.

The section below provides an overview of the three concepts that are strongly associated with organisations as a whole, namely service, product and corporate brands to typify the different foci and conceptualise the proposed corporate brand perspective.

2.5.1.2 Differentiating between service, product and corporate brands

A *service brand* is supposed to represent a specific set of characteristics exemplified through intangible and invisible services (Kapferer 2008:103–104; Morrison & Crane 2007:414). Although the perception exists that the focus on the services sector has only recently emerged, there is evidence to prove that most countries in the Western world have long been service dominated (De Chernatony 2010:3; Blackett 2009:21; Ind & Bjerke 2007:5). It is regarded as vital for organisations because it emphasises the involvement of employees and the powerful influence they have on the impressions stakeholders form of the organisation, and the

importance of aligning their values to those of the organisation (De Chernatony 2010:10). Ind and Bjerke (2007:5) highlight the contribution of employee behaviour in services to creating value. This type of brand is thought to be closely linked to the unique emotional values the organisation attaches to its services, combined with how the brand contributes to pleasurable customer experiences (De Chernatony 2010:17). Hence the success of a services brand will depend partly on the values attached to it and partly on the customers' experiences thereof (cf. De Chernatony 2010:19), which in all probability might be affected by the willingness of the employees of an organisation to engage with customers.

Belch and Belch (2012:59) describe a product as "anything that can be marketed", which through use or support, that is satisfying to a person. A *product brand* is considered to be "a set of perceptions which serve to differentiate the product from the competition" and which originated in product marketing (Alizadeh et al 2014:14; cf. Smith 2009:41–43). It aims to differentiate products or tangible articles from those of competitors by offering promises that ultimately create a favourable perception of these products and compel consumers to buy the products (Ouwertsloot & Duncan 2008:38). According to Balmer (2012:1065), a product brand has *meanings* that are often artificially created by stakeholders. Product brands are deemed to focus on a functional level, namely on a product's practical qualities such as how fast a car can accelerate (Gronlund 2013:9).

There has been a shift from product to corporate brands that can mainly be ascribed to technological advances and the need to gain more visibility and recognition through more credible communication. A *corporate brand* is thought to have its roots in product branding, to be built on the same principles and to share similar purposes, namely as a means for identification and to create differentiation and preference for the organisation (Christensen et al 2008b; Xie & Boggs 2006:348; Knox & Bickerton 2003:999). King's (1991) seminal contribution on the "company brand" is widely recognised and cited, and considered to form the basis for the corporate branding idea (Balmer 2010; Ormeño 2007; Balmer & Gray 2003; Knox & Bickerton 2003). In a description of the differences between traditional product brands and corporate (or company) brands, King (1991:7) noted that the "consumers" of the corporate brand are different and more diverse (cf. Gronlund 2013:74), that there are more points of contact, that staff are integral to corporate brand building and that the personnel director has a role in the management thereof. This correlates with the notion in corporate communication that calls for the consideration of a comprehensive stakeholder focus, as well as the importance of employees in this process. A corporate brand calls for the involvement of many disciplines of the organisation of which accounting, human resources, marketing and public relations are examples. As underscored by Urde (2013:743), the most explicit distinction between a corporate and product brand is in the concept of *corporate*, which denotes the

presence of organisations and the typical use of "we" when referring to themselves (cf. Ind 1997:2). As emphasised by Balmer (2012:1065), a corporate brand comprise *values* that are inherently or distinctly part of a corporate brand (*ibid*; Salzer & Strannegård 2004:225). It has also been postulated that a corporate brand possesses a more complex communication mix, which, *inter alia*, suggests the consideration of multiple communication channels (Balmer 1998:987).

A corporate brand is regarded as defining the "firm that will deliver and stand behind the offering that the customer will buy and use" (Aaker 2004:6), as opposed to a service or product brand that relates to either a single service or product provided by an organisation. The corporate brand perspective was deemed most appropriate for the purposes of this study, and is further conceptualised in section 2.6.

In addition to the brand concepts discussed thus far, a brand may offer a particular promise and comprise certain values with which the stakeholders can associate.

2.5.1.3 Brand promise and brand values

There is wide support for the idea that "brands are a promise of something" (Gibbons 2009:45; Batey 2008:4; Crane 2010), and such promise is perceptively fundamental to any brand (, 2013:745, 750; Perry & Spillecke 213:3; Abratt & Kleyn 2012:1054; Balmer 2010:189; Xie & Boggs 2006:349; Bernstein 2003:1134; Balmer & Gray 2003:974; Urde 1999:126; Pearson 1996:6). According to Balmer (2012:1065), the essence of a corporate brand is the brand promise (or contract) between the organisation and its stakeholders. It can be regarded as a combination of a feature (what the product is), customer benefits (what needs and wants the product meets) and values (what the customer associates with the product) (cf. Crane 2010; Batey 2008:4; Pearson 1996:6). It is thus fair to conclude that a brand aims to differentiate and identify a certain organisation, but furthermore emphasises the value or promises of possible benefits the stakeholder might expect through capturing the additional values that are unique to the organisation (cf. Balmer & Gray 2003:973).

Vernuccio (2014:212) describes brands as "systems of functional and emotional values". This view is corroborated by De Chernatony (2010:17), who further acknowledges that it enables organisations to make certain promises about "unique and welcomed experiences". These values can be explained as the reasons why customers buy products (Kaufmann et al 2012:192) and are referred to as *consumption values* (De Chernatony & McDonald 2003:139). According to Aaker (2010), functional benefits refer to the features that are inherently part of a specific product or service a customer buys, and in a sense these features illustrate what the product does – its practical qualities (Gobé 2009:xxxii). Emotional benefits or self-

expressive benefits are aimed at the emotional benefit the stakeholder might experience, such as a particular feeling of gratification when making a donation (Aaker 2010; cf. Belch & Belch 2012:298). Gobé (2009:xviii,xxix) asserts that emotional values emphasise the desire to experience emotional fulfilment, of which supporting a non-profit cause through a donation or as a volunteer are apt examples in the current setting. The brand triangle of De Chernatony (2010:12) is well known and frequently used, not only to illustrate the nature of a brand, but also to typify the progression a customer is thought to make from functional values, to emotional values, and finally, to the promised experience or the benefits of a product (cf. Da Silva & Alvi 2008:1041; Christodoulides & De Chernatony 2004:240). As a starting point, the stakeholder will thus assess the functional values (its practical qualities), then the emotional values (emphasis on the senses, emotions and emotional fulfilment), and finally, advance to the promised experience or benefit linked to the product, service or organisation. A different view proffered by Abratt and Kleyn (2012:1054) suggests that the expectations of stakeholders may be functional and/or emotional, and not necessarily both. Although this assertion might be seen to challenge the proposed process of De Chernatony (2010), it does stress the need for non-profit organisations to fully understand the functional or emotional expectations of their stakeholders. To possibly achieve the integration of social media brand communication, a holistic view of the organisations' stakeholders is proposed and outlined in section 4.4.1, chapter 4. Stakeholders were deemed to be a key element of this study because of their ability to integrate content, participate in conversations with and about the organisation and specifically use social media to communicate (cf. De Chernatony 2010).

In the non-profit sector, brand values are perceived as a key to survival and success, underscored by a consistent mission statement (Keller et al 2010:108). These scholars investigated three main brand constructs, namely brand values, brand management and brand communication in three prominent non-profit organisations in the USA – the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. Of interest and pertinent here is the insight the study provides into the importance of *brand values*. Literature reviewed by Keller et al (2010:108) indicates that values allow these organisations to be significantly different and to stay "true to their mission". It was concluded that a mission statement containing the core benefits offered by a non-profit organisation to its stakeholders is non-negotiable, particularly in creating trust and loyalty (*ibid*:111).

2.5.1.4 Brand image, identity and reputation

The literature reveals the parallels between brand image, identity and reputation and corporate image, identity and reputation, as briefly discussed in sections 2.4.1.1 and 2.4.1.2 and table 2.2. These parallels are also evident in the definitions of these elements provided in these

sections. Brand image is defined as the “collection of impressions of what the brand ‘looks like’, forming a set of perceptions in the customer’s mind” (Gronlund 2013:4; Franklin et al 2009; cf. Wilson 2009), while brand identity is the “visual expression of a brand, for example, marks like the logo, symbols, and font style” (Gronlund 2013:3; cf. Bielenia-Grajewski 2012). Brand reputation refers to *how* stakeholders over time interpret their experiences with the brand (Gornlund 2014:4). As a point of departure, the earlier definitions and discussions of these elements serve as the foundations of the material in this section, with the aim of merely contextualising it for the purposes of the study.

As stated in section 2.4.1, and with reference to Dowling’s (1986) seminal definition of *image*, issues regarding corporate image are still pertinent today. The basic assumption that image comprises a collection of experiences or impressions is still deemed valid, with the additional perspective that a stakeholder-centred approach is preferred because people’s reactions and impressions are based on what they individually perceive reality to be, and the unlikelihood of two people forming the same brand image of an organisation (De Chernatony 2010:56; Abratt & Klein 2012:1050). Brand image is considered to focus on how stakeholders perceive the corporate brand, including the *set of beliefs* about the brand (Alizadeh et al 2014:14; Forsyth 2011; cf. Nandan 2005). The perceived need to align messages from the organisation with the perceptions of the stakeholders is amplified because a corporate brand also comprises functional and emotional values aimed at presenting a particular experience which might not necessarily be understood or interpreted as originally intended.

Despite the many and varied views of what constitutes corporate identity in corporate branding literature, the point that corporate branding extends the principles of product branding by reflecting the organisation’s identity underscores the relevance and importance of brand identity in corporate branding (Abratt & Klein 2012:2050; Christensen et al 2008b; cf. Kotler & Pfoertsch 2010:15; Martin & Hetrick 2006:59). In fact, brand identity arguably fulfils two roles, namely as the central idea of a brand, and then communicating this idea to the stakeholders. Urde (2013:743) identifies the mission, vision, culture and core values of the organisation as vital components of a corporate brand identity. However, to reiterate, there are many views on what constitutes the corporate brand identity that do not necessarily reflect a multidisciplinary view and could be seen to fall mainly within the marketing domain.

As already mentioned and considering the proposed perspective of the corporate brand, reputation can be explained as the total sum of all impressions over a period of time, based on the interactions with and experiences of a corporate brand. According to Abratt and Kleyn (2012:1050), stakeholders constantly interact with a variety of *brand-associated stimuli* that are uniquely connected to the brand. People who are connected to the brand seemingly

influence stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation, which over time, become impressions (brand images), and finally result in reputations. Examples of brand-associated stimuli include employees, groups connected to the brand or mass communication (*ibid*). Gronlund (2013:4) proffers a slightly different view by referring to these interactions as *experiences* and claims that the brand reputation represents the stakeholder *experiences with a brand* that is thus not necessarily only associated with interactions with certain people (cf. Kapferer 2012). From a corporate brand perspective, a brand (i.e. the organisation) is thus seen to comprise a feature (what the organisation is), stakeholder benefits (what needs and wants the organisation meets) and values (what the stakeholder associates with the organisation) (cf. Pearson 1996:6). In this sense, the above view of Gronlund (2013) could represent a more holistic perception of corporate brand reputation.

2.5.1.5 Brand personality

Aaker (1997:347) defines brand personality as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" that is regarded as powerful in building a brand identity (Gronlund 2013:4; Lee & Miloch 2011; Gobé 2009:151; cf. Mascarenhas 2009; Keller 2006; Lindstrom 2005:15). This desire to attribute human characteristics to theoretical concepts is known as *anthropomorphism* or *animism*, and is briefly addressed in the section on corporate image and the notion that the organisation comprises human characteristics (see section 2.4.1.1). The assumption exists that stakeholders base their purchasing decisions or decisions to support an organisation (such as volunteering in a non-profit organisation) on the values linked to these offerings, which suggests this could become a lengthy selection process (De Chernatony & McDonald 2003:139). The solution proposed by De Chernatony and McDonald (2003:139), from a corporate brand perspective, is to personify the brand by assigning human personalities to it and thus permitting stakeholders to rapidly make their decisions (cf. Gronlund 2013:46; Lee & Miloch 2011). The initial model of Aaker as conceptualised in 1997, comprises five personality factors, namely sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, and despite having endured much scrutiny and criticism, the model appears to be widely regarded as a valid account of the human personality traits that could be intrinsic in a corporate brand (Avis 2012:90; cf. Lee & Miloch 2011). Brand personality is associated with increased stakeholder engagement and an increased focus on emotional values (Gronlund 2013:3, 180; cf. Aaker 2011:256; Lee & Miloch 2011) that is expected to appeal to stakeholders' inner emotions (Gobé 2009:145).

This is echoed by Van Riel and Fombrun (2007:4), who acknowledge that the ultimate purpose of a corporate brand is to *personalise the company*, seemingly to capitalise on its products and services, employees and activities. It is through this personification of the brand that

stakeholders express their experiences and views of the brand and they are afforded opportunities to identify themselves through the brand (Agresta & Bough 2011:51; De Chernatony 2010:47). The increasing tendency to liken brands to humans by assigning human personalities to them ultimately emphasises the emotional dimension of brands (cf. Gronlund 2013:180).

Of significance is the interrelationship between *brand personality* and the *likeability* of such a personality, which demands the recognition and attention of the organisation, and this can be ascribed to advances in social media (Melewar & Nguyen 2014). They (2014) maintain that an understanding of the stakeholders' perceptions of the corporate brand are needed to ensure that the activities of the entire organisation attain a likeability towards its personality. This opinion seemingly ties in with the corporate communication philosophy that the organisation and every part of it should project a unified picture, as well as the need for a stakeholder focus as a theoretical element of corporate communication (see sections 2.2.1 and 2.3.2). The elements seemingly at play include an overall effort across the organisation towards achieving a uniform manifestation of the brand and the importance of knowing the perceptions of stakeholders, which ultimately results in the achievement of a *likeable* brand. In the current context, this could also point to consideration, *inter alia*, of the *communication activities* of the organisation and particularly how its participation in social media is perceived. A stakeholder focus as a key element of communication integration is propounded in section 2.3.2, chapter 2, and section 4.4.1, chapter 4. Based on the reasoning that the organisation needs to adopt a stakeholder or outward-in focus by having knowledge of their concerns, interests and expectations, it can be concluded that stakeholders' perceptions of the corporate brand and the organisation's approach to using social media, are closely linked to whether the brand is able to draw favourable attention.

As stated earlier, this study was approached from a *corporate brand* perspective that necessitated further exploration of this concept, particularly in the non-profit context. The premise underpinning this perspective is that corporate communication provides the foundation on which a non-profit corporate brand is perceived to exist, and this allows for an integrated focus on social media brand communication.

2.6 A CORPORATE BRAND FOCUS

In addition to the brief explanation of the corporate brand concept in section 2.5.1.2, it should be noted that Knox and Bickerton (2003:1013) define the concept as "the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of an organisation's unique business model" (cf. Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:107). In a similar vein, Daw et al (2011:20) view it as "a collection of perceptions about the organization" that are shaped by all touch points with the organisation. Ouwersloot and

Duncan (2008:324) concur and describe it is the “practice of managing the identity and image of a corporate organization” (cf. Bielenia-Grajewski 2012). Its value relates to the organisation as a whole, and in respect of a business model, it might offer the a promise of quality and insurance against underperformance or monetary loss (Bielenia-Grajewska 2012; Balmer & Gray 2003:973) and to personalise it entirely (Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:4). The uniqueness, originality and inimitability of a particular corporate brand are based on the organisation’s heritage, values and beliefs that the organisation and its stakeholders have in common (Kaufmann et al 2012:193; Aaker 2004).

In this sense, the corporate brand can be seen as an exceptional concept that unequivocally represents the whole organisation and all its products or services (Urde 2013:744; Aaker 2004:10; Argenti & Druckenmiller 2004:369; cf. Bielenia-Grajewska 2012; Christensen et al 2008b; cf. Kapferer 2008:27). As stated by Hatch and Schultz (2003:1041), differentiation requires the positioning of the organisation as a whole, which enables it to articulate and clarify the values that are regarded as the enduring beliefs about the brand (De Chernatony 2010:139; Urde 1999:127; cf. Ind 1997:13). This ideal of presenting the organisation as a whole can be related to the vision of corporate communication, which strives to create a unified picture of the organisation through coordinated and consistent communication. Then again, such prominence of the organisation draws attention to all its organisational activities and may expose it publicly, thus urging organisations to become transparent in their endeavours (Hatch & Schultz 2003:1044). As discussed earlier, product branding is associated with the marketing of products *per se*, whereas corporate branding, in a sense, is regarded as being concerned with connecting the organisation and its stakeholders by creating awareness of and a positive association with it.

In their quest to gain distinctiveness, organisations draw clear distinctions between a corporate and product brand. This idea appears to have been based on the well-known identity framework of Olins (in Cornelissen 2011:66; Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:121; Martin & Hetrick 2006:19; cf. De Chernatony & McDonald 2003:396; Kitchen & Schultz 2001:105). The three types of identity structures are monolithic corporate, branded and endorsed, their purpose being to illustrate the ways organisations typically arrange their identities and branding. A *monolithic* corporate identity signifies the use of a single name to brand all products, services, communication and behaviour, and seemingly refers to a corporate brand (Cornelissen 2011:66; Crane 2010; Martin & Hetrick 2006:19; De Chernatony 2003:396; Kitchen & Schultz 2001:104). The aim of such an identity is that it allows the promotion of a single brand by displaying the name and core values of the organisation that are unattainable through branded and endorsed identities (Cornelissen 2011:66; de Chernatony 2003:396; Kitchen & Schultz 2001:104). The *branded* identity structure brands the organisation’s products and services

individually and does not link them to the name or values of the company. In terms of the *endorsed* identity structure, products and services are gathered into specific groups that are individually branded, but display the name of the parent company (Cornelissen 2011:66; De Chernatony 2003:396; Kitchen & Schultz 2001:104). As stated by Cornelissen (2011:66) and Martin and Hetrick (2006:19), the monolithic corporate identity appears to serve the ideals of both corporate communication and corporate brand to achieve metonymy – that is, to be perceived by all stakeholders as a whole or a single unit and to communicate and be branded as such (see section 2.2.1). Taking the above into consideration, a monolithic corporate identity could generally be considered suitable for a corporate brand. Nevertheless, Kitchen and Schultz's (2001:105) perspective seems to challenge this initial conception of monolithic corporate identity. In their view, some organisations may really adopt different identity structures based on their overarching organisational strategy, which is possibly dictated by their different development stage/s as either international, global or multinational organisations (*ibid*).

The views on the purposes of a brand (see section 2.5.1.1) can likewise be applied to a corporate brand in the sense of creating differentiation, identifying the organisation and also purposively creating a predisposition in the minds of customers to prefer a certain organisation over another (cf. Alizadeh et al 2014:14; cf. Biedenbach 2012:1; cf. Cornelissen 2011:65; cf. Einwiller & Will 2002:108). Of significance here is the view that the corporate brand allows the organisation, in similar fashion, to focus inwards on the hearts and minds of employees which could influence stakeholders' impressions of the organisation (Martin & Hetrick 2006:19). A wider role of the corporate brand probably relates directly to the multidisciplinary nature of corporate communication, in that it suggests, *inter alia*, the involvement of multiple management functions such as public relations, strategic management and financial management (Christensen et al 2008b).

In addition to the elements relating to a corporate brand perspective, it is deemed to also be concerned with the associations stakeholders make and the expectations they have of the corporate brand (see section 2.5). Aaker (2010) asserts that organisational associations mainly define a corporate brand and can often be activated simply by a "corporate name or symbol" (Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:117; Aaker 2004:7). Hence it can be assumed that, in essence, the unique composition of an organisation, including but not limited to people, heritage, capabilities, values, strategies, vision and programmes, allows stakeholders to associate with the organisation, and serves to delimit the corporate brand (Cravens & Piercy 2013:267; Balmer 2012:1069). Furthermore, it may meaningfully represent and reflect the "organization that stands behind its products in spirit and substance", and at an emotional level could contribute to creating a beneficial connection with a respected organisation (Aaker

2004:6). Such associations might confer on an organisation "first-choice" status, and could be an indication of the quality of its products and services (Cornelissen 2011:59). Stakeholders perceivably also link their associations to the promise an organisation communicates through its corporate brand (Buckingham 2008:12; Gibbons 2009:45).

In Hatch and Schultz's (2001:130) conclusion to a longitudinal study, they asserted that an organisation should align three elements to create a strong corporate brand, namely "vision, culture and image" (cf. Hatch & Schultz 2003:1047). Their view suggests the involvement of three important stakeholders – management, employees and external stakeholders. *Vision* seemingly refers to the aspirations management has for the organisation, whereas *culture* includes the behaviours and values of employees, and *image* pertains to the overall view held by the external stakeholders (Hatch & Schultz 2001:130). The value of a corporate brand today is determined by the meaning it has for stakeholders (Gronlund 2013:3; cf. Hatch & Schultz 2003:1059), which is inherent in the promises of a corporate brand and especially the emotional benefits it is perceived to have.

Arguments that the corporate brand has many strategic advantages for the organisation were emphasised earlier, and also in Hatch and Schultz's (2001) widely cited work. It is supported by Balmer (2010:191), and its strategic position is evident in it being recognised as a "currency (having financial value as a guarantee of quality); a language (strong brand names are readily understood); a navigation tool (as a means by which corporate brands are positioned)". The aim of a corporate brand is to ensure that the underlying identity of the organisation is more noticeable, and to diffuse specific added values (Kapferer 2008:27; Keller et al 2010:108). An added value could be "functional, emotional and/or symbolic" and closely related to the organisation's core values (Urde 2003:1020; see section 2.6.1.2).

Based on the conceptualisation above and in terms of the perspective of the study, the researcher formulated the following working definition of a corporate brand:

The corporate brand is the point of interaction between the organisation and its stakeholders, with communication fundamental to create positive associations and impressions.

Despite different views on what the attributes of a corporate brand are and how they are interrelated, the literature does suggest that a corporate brand as a distinct type of brand possibly comprises certain qualities, such as brand values, distinct corporate brand features, corporate brand communication and the use the corporate brand story and emotional branding as branding techniques.

2.6.1 Distinctive qualities of a corporate brand

Similar to a myriad of concepts addressed in this chapter and throughout the study, there are diverse opinions about the qualities that constitute a corporate brand. The purpose of this section is primarily to identify qualities of a corporate brand which, with attention to the focus and context of the study and as evinced in the literature, ought to be noted and investigated.

Similar to most of the concepts of corporate communication, there are different views on the unique features of a corporate brand. Two viewpoints by Vernuccio (2014), and Abratt and Kleyn (2012) are worth mentioning because of their perceived relevance to this study and the similarities they share regarding the range of corporate communication elements to be included as properties of a corporate brand. According to Vernuccio (2014:211), a corporate brand embraces the corporate communication elements – identity, image and reputation – and integrates them into this single concept (cf. Perry 2014:63). Conversely, Abratt and Kleyn (2012) view corporate identity and corporate branding as main elements or drivers that concurrently strive to create a strong reputation. Vernuccio (2014) sees reputation as a part of the corporate brand, while Abratt and Kleyn (2012:1057) regard it as the desired outcome that completely represents stakeholder's "evaluation of an organisation over time". Early conceptions by Van Riel (1995:27) and others indicate that corporate identity includes all forms used by the organisation to express its nature to stakeholders, including communication, behaviours and symbolic elements, both tangible and intangible (see section 2.4.1.2). Abratt and Kleyn (2012:1052) support this view and maintain that corporate identity comprises firstly, the strategic choices made by the organisation, which include, *inter alia*, the values, culture and brand communication, and the ways these are expressed by the organisation. The second property named by Abratt and Kleyn (2012:1053), is corporate expression that concerns the decisions made and actions taken to convey their identity, including "visual identity, the brand promise, brand personality and brand communication". This conceptualisation of Abratt and Kleyn (2013) is of interest to this study as it purports an integrated and detailed view of the historical corporate communication elements, and contemporary elements of a corporate identified earlier in this chapter (section 2.4; sections 2.5.1.3, 2.5.1.4, 2.5.1.5). Based on the conceptualisation of Abratt and Kleyn (2012), one would expect a non-profit organisation to be attentive of the impact of the choices concerning the use of social media to communicate their strategic decisions (e.g. their values) and the ways these organisations express their corporate identity (e.g. their brand communication) have on their corporate reputations. The corporate brand is conceptualised as the point of interaction between the organisation's identity and its stakeholders, and include the aspects of *corporate expression* and *brand image* that represent the present perceptions that stakeholders have of a brand (Abratt & Kleyn 2012:1055; see section 2.6.1.1). In this context and considering the view of Abratt and Kleyn

(2012), the researcher postulated that social media brand communication could contribute to create a desired corporate brand and eventually a strong reputation for a non-profit organisation.

The above overview revealed the varied views on the distinct features of a corporate brand. Abratt and Kleyn's (2012) conceptualisation of possible elements of a corporate brand provides a more comprehensive outline by portraying the interrelatedness of the many different elements associated with corporate communication foundation and the corporate brand perspective, which was relevant to the current study.

2.6.1.1 Corporate brand values

Corporate brands have been linked to the importance of being distinctive, which is believed to be informed, *inter alia*, by a particular set of values, a typical design or other symbols unique to the organisation that can contribute to the tradition of the organisation and its credibility (Berthon et al 2011:182; McMurrian & Washburn 2008:5; Christensen et al 2008b; Kitchen & Schultz 2001:96). Values are deemed to provide a structure against which decisions can be measured by specifying the expected thinking and behaviour, in this instance, of the organisation (Ind & Bjerke 2007:57). When an organisation is successful in creating meaningful and displaying recognisable values, it is said to add value through emotional benefits that might result in stronger commitment to the organisation (Doorley & Garcia 2007:269). Urde (2009:616) contends that all organisations have values, also termed *core values*, which form the foundation of their existence Urde (2003:1018) furthermore explores the role and functions of the different core values necessary for building corporate brands, and postulates that these may be those associated with the organisation, or those that summarise the brand or the values experienced by the stakeholders. Notwithstanding these varied layers of values, their supposed ability to influence behaviour by employees and stakeholders is important (Ind & Bjerke 2007:58). Core values and corporate branding could play a decisive role in attaining value and a competitive edge (Xie & Boggs 2006:349). These values are thought to be vital to corporate branding, which, in Urde's (2009) opinion, informs the identity of the corporate brand; essentially provides insight into what the values a particular organisation represent; and what values its stakeholders have over time recognised and associated with the organisation (cf. Balmer & Gray 2003). Furthermore, it is asserted that these core values and those values expected and appreciated by its stakeholders need to be aligned as the corporate brand promise gathers the core values together as a meaningful whole (Urde 2009:616).

These issues give rise to the question of the ways in which an organisation could communicate or announce its underlying corporate brand values. As suggested by Aaker (2004:14), a

possible solution could be found in the existence of a *value proposition* that provides points of distinction and that support relationships. A corporate brand is deemed to comprise both functional and emotional values (Aaker 2004:14; De Chernatony 2010:10). De Chernatony (2010:10) argues that typical communication by means of the Internet and advertising has been successful in communicating both these types of values, and thus underscores the importance of clearly outlining the values an organisation has. A value proposition in the non-profit sector is likely to comprise three dimensions, namely rational value (understanding what the organisation stands for), emotional value (a focus on a specific cause or passion) and engagement value (consistent communication, a sense of community and fostering shared experiences) (Daw et al 2011:20, 21). It would thus be fair to conclude that the non-profit corporate brand should clearly articulate these values. Based on the conceptualisation of De Chernatony (2010:12) and considering the *engagement value* as purported by Daw et al (2011), the progression towards achieving engagement value for non-profit organisations is illustrated as a corporate brand value triangle in figure 2.2 below.

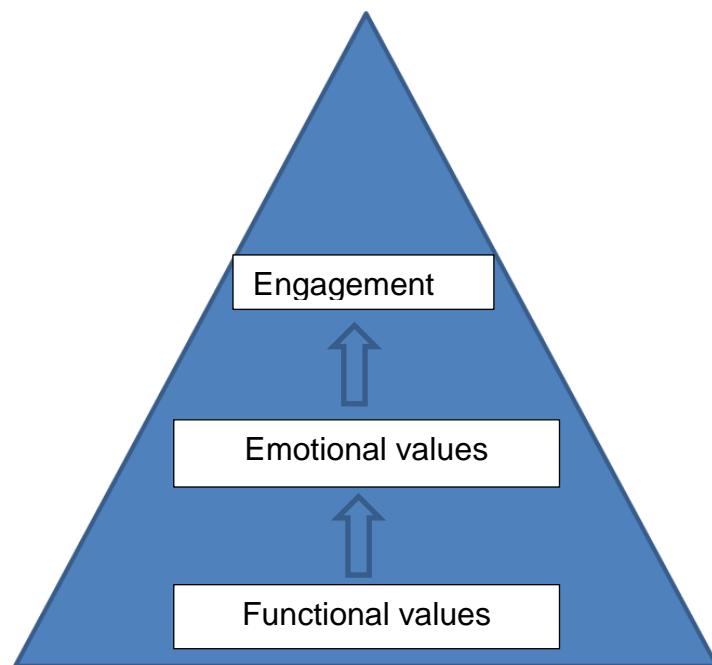


Figure 2.2: Corporate brand value triangle (adapted from De Chernatony 2010:2)

Opposite to the present context, is the view of Du Plessis (2014), who describes *engagement* in the context of social media, as the *connection* between people and brands on social media. In line with an overview of prominent definitions of social media in chapter 3 and the seminal view of Goffman (1967), the concept of *interaction* will be used when referring to actual action taken to connect with others through either traditional or social media (see sections 3.2.1 and 3.6.1.4, chapter 3). However, it is necessary to realise that such interaction can possibly only qualify as *engagement* provided people talk about the brand and share its content on social

media platforms (cf. Ken 2014). Breakenridge (2012:127) supports this argument and regards engagement as the “highest level of interaction”, and furthermore ascertains that *real engagement* occurs when there are extensive conversations between the organisation and stakeholders (Agresta & Bough 2011:65; cf. Ken 2014).

2.6.1.2 Corporate brand communication

This concept is seldom explicitly defined in the literature. According to Van Rooyen (2010:39), brand communication is the message that enables the organisation to explain who it is by referring to its differentiating features. As mentioned earlier, every action of the organisation possibly qualifies as *communication* (cf. Christensen et al 2008b; cf. Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:65; Duncan 2005:110), hence inferring that every communication endeavour and interaction with stakeholders constitutes communication. Ouwersloot and Duncan (2008:65) refer to it as *touch points*, thereby suggesting the numerous ways an organisation communicates with its stakeholders and the possibilities of stakeholders being exposed to a brand message (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:96; cf. Perry 2014:67; Hestad 2013:47; Gronlund 2013:75; Kapferer 2012; Belch & Belch 2012:26). Examples of such touch points, include, *inter alia*, the organisation’s role in the society, its stance towards environmental issues, its treatment of employees, and pertinently, the conversations with and from stakeholders. The relationship between corporate identity, image and reputation has already been established, and Perry (2014:62) opines that the corporate brand is built through the communication of these elements, hence suggesting them to concurrently be the elements of corporate brand communication.

Besides, as Hestad (2013:47) contends, the many touch points contribute to the identity of the organisation, thus emphasising the impact all encounters with stakeholders have on the overall corporate brand identity. A simplistic way of explaining brand communication is that it may be seen as telling the organisation’s story (Duncan 2002:305). Van Riel and Fombrun (2007:2) aptly define the system in which such communication is organised as the “multiple tactical and strategic media it relies on to communicate with its stakeholders, as well as the message content it chooses to diffuse through those media” (cf. Abratt & Kleyn 2012:1055). It is thus proposed that corporate brand communication should emphasise the efforts an organisation makes to increase positive impressions – or a distinguished brand image – through consistent communication with stakeholders using brand-related messages (cf. Leroux Miller 2013:42). The emphasis appears to be on the corporate brand’s *successful communication* with stakeholders (Joo & Erickson 2011).

Of relevance here is the idea that corporate brands are perceived to communicate at *primary*, *secondary* and *tertiary* levels (Balmer 2012:1066; cf. Illia & Balmer 2012:420; Balmer & Gray

2003:978; Balmer & Gray 1999:175). Primary communication is said to relate to the performance of products and services, and the total behaviour of the employees of the organisation, whereas secondary communication refers to all forms of controlled communication, which, in the context of this study, and in line with corporate communication, would include all the communication functions of the organisation (Balmer 2012:1066; cf. Perry 2014:65; Balmer & Gray 2003:879). On the basis of the explanation of WOM and eWOM in section 2.3.1, it would be fair to say that WOM and eWOM are examples of tertiary communication, which together with primary communication, is classified by these scholars as uncontrolled communication. This then indicates that the organisation is not in a position to control all aspects of such communication (Balmer 2012:1066; see section 2.3.1; cf. Perry 2014:65). As alluded to earlier, WOM simply refers to instances in which personal communication occurs between stakeholders (cf. Duncan 2005:121) by means of direct contact or eWOM on social media platforms (see section 2.3.1). Newer technologies such as the Internet and social media are perceived to accentuate the importance of the corporate brand and brand communication owing to the increased ease of establishing competing organisations and brands and the effortless interaction between the organisation and its stakeholders (Duncan 2005:403). Non-profit organisations are thus compelled to ensure that their brand communication is consistent and authentic and directed towards portraying a unified corporate brand.

A comprehensive view of the numerous ways contemporary organisations might communicate suggests consideration of the following aspects as discussed in section 2.3.1: a mix of *media* – traditional (e.g. print, WOM or direct-response) and digital (e.g. the Internet, eWOM or conversations); integrating existing marketing communication *methods* (e.g. advertising, public relations, digital communication); the timing and various possibilities for interaction (e.g. monologue and dialogic communication); including all communication participants; and the content created by all participants (Rakić & Rakić 2014:187).

Based on the preceding consideration of the corporate brand perspective and on the adapted definition of a corporate brand (see section 2.6), the researcher formulated the following working definition of corporate brand communication, with due consideration of the non-profit context:

Corporate brand communication refers to the numerous ways or touch points by which non-profit organisations emotionally connect with stakeholders.

Keller et al's (2010:109) view that corporate messages are distributed mainly through brand names and visual depiction – such as logos and slogans – represents a rather narrow outlook on brand communication, considering the background on what a brand entails and the different

branding techniques available to communicate with stakeholders (section 2.5.1.1; Daw et al 2011). The literature states that non-profit corporate brands might focus on alternative *branding techniques* to create and maintain a particular brand and positive associations with stakeholders. Storytelling and emotional branding as specific branding techniques have already been discussed and are deemed pertinent to the corporate brand and non-profit organisations, and thus merit further discussion here (cf. Storytelling at work 2013).

2.6.1.3 Storytelling as corporate brand communication

A branding technique that seems to be increasing in importance among scholars is brand storytelling (or brand narratives) (Du Plessis 2015:84). The significance of *storytelling* in building the brand and also creating emotional connections is acknowledged and, as stated by Perry (2014:67), should form part of all the *touch points* – hence all interactions – with stakeholders (cf. Webster & Hume 2016; Du Plessis 2015:85; Hestad 2013:54). In the literature, there are various references to “storytelling”, or “the brand story” as it is aptly termed by Ind and Bjerke (2007:177) (cf. van Riel & Fombrun 2007; Hatch & Schultz 2003). Brito (2014:145) explains a brand story as the illustration of an organisation’s history and how it adds credibility and value to the brand (cf. Fog et al 2005:50). According to Beverland (2009:7, 33), in marketing, these stories are unpretentious and focus on experiences, emotional or functional benefits apparently with great value for instilling trust (cf. Fog et al 2005:21). In fact, corporate brand stories likewise afford stakeholders opportunities to connect with the organisation, and the view is that stories often succeed in creating a shared context, allowing people to connect and disclose personal encounters about a brand (cf. Beverland 2013:33–35).

The idea that organisational culture comprises the shared memory of an individual’s past experiences, which might shape his or her future actions suggests a link to Brito’s (2014:145) view on the brand story and the fact that it is connected to the organisation’s history and its values. This inevitably emphasises the strategic nature of the brand story and the importance of it being strategically conceived and purposively planned to achieve measurable outcomes (cf. Ind & Bjerke 2007:165; Schein 1985:81; Anon [sa]). Ind and Bjerke (2007:176) regard organisational culture as comprising the organisation’s “mission, vision and values”, which can best be reflected through stories about the organisation. Storytelling is deemed to illustrate these unique elements of an organisation’s culture by conveying its own story through brand communication (Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:131; McMahon 2007:268; Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:175; Duncan 2005:305; Hatch & Schultz 2003:1060).

Ind and Bjerke (2007:137) emphasise the need to maintain a particular brand, and underscore the role of storytelling as a source of inspiration in this regard. Stories arguably lend

themselves to successfully connecting diverse stakeholders, such as the broad group also associated with corporate communication and the corporate brand (Hatch & Schultz 2003:1060). They are said to be unique to each organisation, and if considered to be a *good story*, might compel people to share it (Hatch & Schultz 2003:1061).

Corporate or brand stories appear to produce emotional connections between varied stakeholders and could be deemed an appropriate way to appeal to them. Besides, the significance of corporate brand stories in the non-profit sector is underscored by expectations that emotional appeals may contribute to *humanising a brand* by assigning human qualities and inevitably a personality to it (see section 2.6.1.3; Ind & Bjerke 2007:175; cf. Du Plessis 2015:84). Merchant, Ford and Sargeant (2010:754) contend that these emotional connections could be useful in engaging stakeholders through emotional appeals by offering a twofold opportunity to engage stakeholders – that is, by allowing them to actively *play a role* in the story and also by *providing a positive emotional experience*, say, by making a donation and experiencing a feeling of satisfaction by providing assistance in the non-profit sector (cf. Johnston 2015).

Corporate brand stories are thus perceptively essential in the non-profit sector, and it could be said that innovative non-profit brands could be excellent storytellers through which the organisation, its values and the benefits it offers current and prospective stakeholders are truthfully represented (Daw et al 2011:30; Lasica 2011a). The key presumably lies in the act of storytelling and how the benefits of the organisation are portrayed through telling the story (Hatch & Schultz 2003:1060). It is posited that non-profit organisations can visually share their stories on various types of social media by means of, say, video, digital stories with photos and narration, videos with a call to action, live video broadcasts, animation, a combination of images, text, sound and video, personalised videos and professional productions (cf. Johnston 2015). The various types of social media that could be used to share the brand story are identified in section 3.4.2 in chapter 32.

Daw et al (2011:154-159) argue that non-profit organisations might benefit from enduring stories comprising the following elements: (1) being authentic and genuine – using stories that are real and original; (2) being humanised – should illustrate real-life experiences reinforced by facts and statistics; (3) portraying personal and practical benefits, showing how the lives of supporters and the community are improved; (4) using compelling language to reflect the organisation's personal traits and inspiring stakeholders; (5) using images to support the message by means of photos and illustrations; (6) representing a noble and inspiring idea; (7) making a call to action by persuading them to act; (8) keeping a database of contacts, stories, video, anecdotes and suchlike; (9) ensuring relevance; and (10) involving celebrities as

goodwill ambassadors. Some scholars contend that stories are a powerful way to communicate and create understanding, and convey meaning, and they help the organisation to come to life (Daw et al 2011:153). Ind and Bjerke (2007:175) add that stories that share challenges and successes might define the uniqueness of the organisation and generate more commitment.

Owing to the unique nature of every organisation, it would be reasonable to conclude that the type of corporate brand story would be specific to each organisation. The suggestions in the literature by Hestad (2013:55) and Beverland (2009:38-39) of the various types of stories, their proposed content and benefits, especially from a non-profit corporate brand perspective, are illustrated in figure 2.3 below and summarised in table 2.4, and merit consideration.

The conceptualisation by Hestad (2013:55) concerning the different types of stories worth telling is primarily based on product stories, but can effortlessly be applied to the corporate brand and specifically to the non-profit brand (see figure 2.3). Similar to the perspective of Hestad (2013:55), the three layers in figure 2.3 represent a narrow focus – from stories about the corporate brand – to two broader contexts, namely stories about the wider context of the corporate brand and cultural stories.

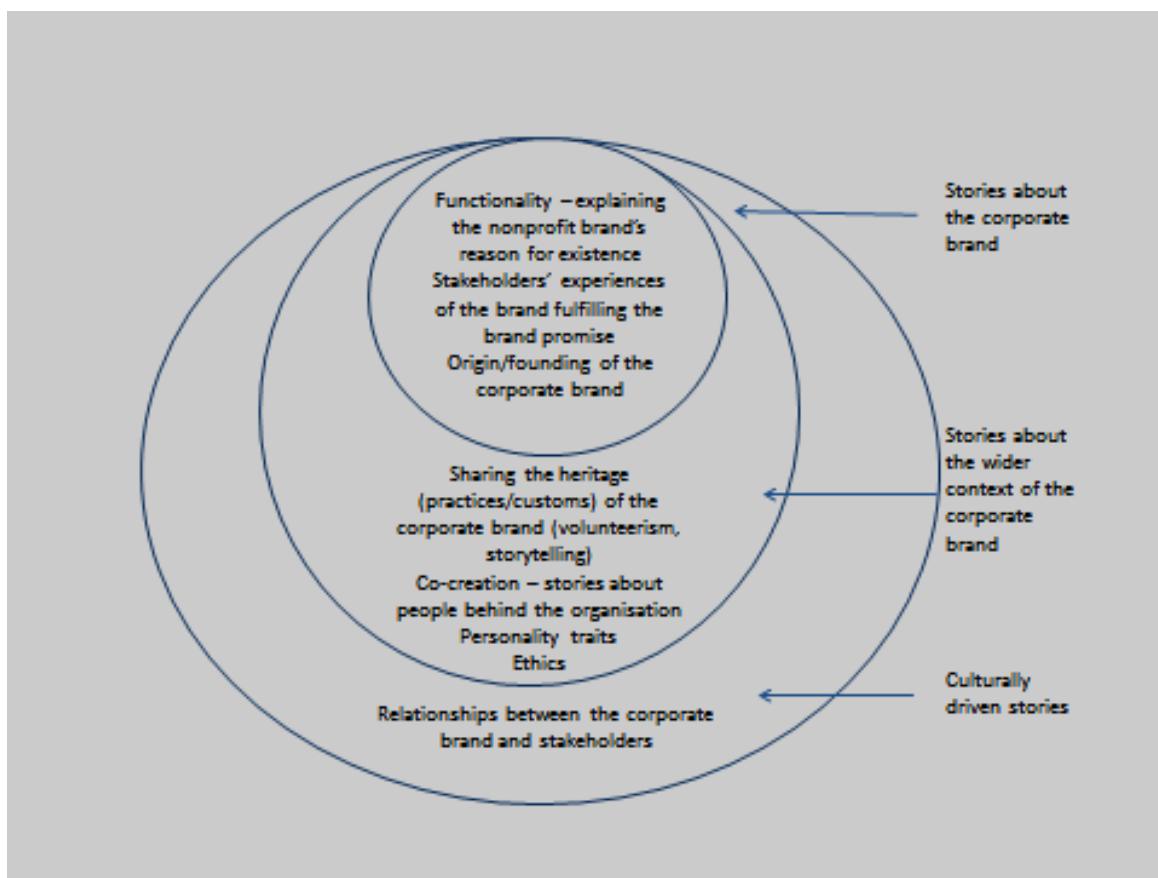


Figure 2.3: The types of corporate brand stories a non-profit organisation can share (adapted from Hestad 2013:55)

The first layer represents stories about the corporate brand, which (as in figure 2.3) could involve the non-profit's reason for existence, including its values and cause, stakeholders' experiences around fulfilling the brand promise and information on the founding of the corporate brand. In a wider corporate brand context, stories might focus on the practices and customs of the corporate brand, the people who collectively contribute to the success of the corporate brand, the corporate brand personality (see section 2.5.1.5) and ethical considerations such as the behaviour of the corporate brand. It is suggested that the last layer should consider stories with a cultural emphasis. In this instance, it is likely that stakeholders rather than the organisation might construct a certain story of cultural significance. Also, such a wider focus might emphasise the relationship the stakeholder has with the corporate brand, which would form the basis of the story.

Beverland (2009:38-39) also follows a consumer perspective and identifies several different types of stories that could benefit the corporate brand. Table 2.4 below adopts a corporate brand view and summarises some stories that could benefit non-profit organisations.

Table 2.3: Stories that a non-profit organisation could share, which might contribute to it being regarded as authentic (adapted from Beverland 2009:38–39)

Type of story	Content	Corporate brand benefit
Founding stories	Start-up and early challenges, and motivation for founding	Positioning the corporate brand in time, place, human experiences and values
Conflict and struggle stories	Conflict with others, self, authorities, competitors, forces of history and nature	Increasing emotional interest in brand, enhancing brand differentiation and increasing loyalty in times of difficulty
Triumph and tragedy stories	Successes and failures, triumphs, challenges, tragedies and disasters,	Humanising the corporate brand
Creation stories	Link people behind the corporate brand with its core focus/business, problem solving, innovation	Enhancing perceptions of quality leadership, heritage and sincerity
History stories	Role of the brand and people in historical events, support of brand by historical figures or celebrities, history of the corporate brand and background of supportive communities	Enhancing heritage and ensuring institutional status; brand is seen as part of the social landscape and cultural identity
Community stories	Relationship between the corporate brand and the community	Enhancing perceptions of heritage and status
Place stories	Role of place in shaping the focus of the organisation, provides a link to somewhere	Enhancing corporate brand's heritage, giving it physicality and enhancing uniqueness
Stakeholder stories	Personalised versions of other stories	Providing a personalised "voice" and enhancing authenticity
Core focus and commitment stories	Performance of the corporate brand, failures, commitment to the corporate brand	Creating perceptions of quality commitment

Of significance is the idea that stakeholders could similarly act as distributors and creators of corporate brand stories that are seemingly motivated by either extremely positive or negative experiences and the extent to which the brand promise is delivered (Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins & Wiertz 2013:246). These scholars (2013) further conclude that corporate brand stories could be effectively managed through stimulating and promoting positive and reacting to negative corporate brand stories. This evidently points to the fact that certain types of brand stories might urge and motivate stakeholders to share these stories with others. Recent research studies have investigated the application of creative message strategies in an online environment that should be deliberated when using storytelling to promote the corporate brand (Ashley & Tuten 2015; Du Plessis 2014; Swani, Milne & Brown 2013). Early strategies were basically distinguished as emotional or informational, but have been extended to include a more comprehensive collection, and to include, say, experiential appeal, social cause and corporate brand appeal (cf. Ashley & Tuten 2015:18; Du Plessis 2014). Scholarly literature propounds a correlation between the type of message strategy and the connection of the stakeholder to the brand. Nevertheless, opposing views in the literature, such as a study by Sinha, Ahuja and Medury (2011), reveal that the formation of emotional connections can rather be attributed to an increasing awareness of a brand as result of increasing use of social media to communicate, irrespective of the type of message strategies applied. Owing to the paucity of research on this topic, and in the light of the prominence of storytelling in non-profit organisations, this merits further investigation (see section 4.8.2.2, chapter 4).

Based on the preceding overview of a brand, its related concepts and corporate branding (see section 2.6.1), it can be concluded that emotional appeals by the organisation to stakeholders form part of corporate brand stories and also of the corporate brand as the broader context of the organisation.

2.6.1.4 Emotional branding as corporate brand communication

From a corporate brand perspective, emotional corporate branding can be regarded as the way in which an organisation connects with stakeholders at the "level of the senses and emotions" (Gobé 2009:xviii; cf. Agresta & Bough 2011:12; Morley 2009:58). Moreover, it is in line with Leroux Miller's (2013:42) view that corporate brand communication contains all attempts to increase favourable impressions and thus the associations stakeholders have with the corporate brand. Despite being outwardly contradictory, emotional connections are deemed useful in portraying the value of the non-profit organisation's activities in a rational fashion (Daw et al 2011:24) by addressing their concerns, aspirations and values. This point is strongly associated with storytelling and the possibilities it offers to appeal to and connect with stakeholders at an emotional level (Lasica 2011b). Besides, it has been posited that

people are emotional beings who often react emotionally to experiences and tend to assign these values to objects (*ibid*:xxix; cf. Kadens et al 2012). The relevance of this concept here is justified on the basis of the notion that corporate brands perceptibly consist of functional and emotional values (Aaker 2004; cf. De Chernatony 2010), which, combined with the fact that stakeholders are increasingly thinking with their “hearts and guts”, symbolises their increased focus on their emotional senses (Gobé 2009:xx). Following this reasoning, one could infer that emotional corporate branding could ultimately contribute to stakeholders emotionally connecting with the non-profit organisation. However, as argued by Christensen et al (2008b), corporate brands may also foster a sense of belonging among stakeholders that underlines the tendency to transfer emotional values to the organisation in an attempt to experience emotional fulfilment (Gobé 2009:xix).

This section explored the concept of corporate branding as a perspective of the study. From this overview, the following can be inferred: the organisation forms the foundation and is the strategic force of corporate branding; it adopts a multidisciplinary approach, is concerned with outside-in and inside-out thinking and requires strategic management; it includes a broad stakeholder base; and it aims to align the organisation with its brand identity and values (cf. Schultz et al 2005:27). In addition, and based on the background provided here, it can be accepted that a corporate brand has individual values, a personality, physical features, stories that propound a personal relationship with and connection to the organisation, and a focus on emotional appeal (cf. McMahon 2011:262).

2.7 MOTIVATION FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS TO ADOPT A CORPORATE BRAND PERSPECTIVE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNICATION

As posited in this chapter, corporate communication provides an appropriate communication basis as well as the components required to achieve the desired goals of a corporate brand view. These goals are differentiation, visibility, consistency, a strong reputation and the opportunity to connect with its stakeholders through the use of social media. Central to corporate communication is the role of an integrated approach to communication, which is supported in literature, and that this approach, together with *effective communication*, is seen as a prerequisite for achieving the desired corporate brand (Alizadeh et al 2014:17; Christensen et al 2008a:424; Ind 1997:13). Many contrasting views are found in literature on the contributions that IC could make towards creating favourable corporate brands, but unfortunately there is a lack of research studies on this topic. On this point, Ind (1997:6) emphasises that consistent communication – an underlying idea of *corporate communication* and *IC* – is needed to assign *tangibility* to a corporate brand that is essentially regarded as an intangible asset. For this reason, and in terms of the overview of these two concepts in

sections 2.3 and 2.3.1, one could argue that integrated communication, through a progression towards a true effort of integration, could entitle the organisation to adopt a clearer and all-inclusive focus on all the qualities of the corporate brand – tangible and intangible – through clear and consistent communication (*ibid*:2; cf. Christensen et al 2008a:424).

As concluded in section 2.3, corporate communication has truly progressed towards integration – linking prominent communication functions such as marketing, corporate communication and public relations, and hence the different communication activities of the organisation. As Christensen et al (2008b) argue, a corporate brand suggests a far more comprehensive engagement of these different communication functions to support the brand messages. A corporate brand thus probably offers the organisation a more inclusive opportunity to attain a truly unified representation of the organisation as the stated ideal of corporate communication. Therefore, underpinned by corporate communication and through a more widespread inclusion of all communication functions, such as a corporate brand perspective, its philosophy of metonymy can be realised. Furthermore, Kaufmann et al's (2012:193) statement that organisations need only a single and integrated message to gain visibility and differentiation in this regard, was noted. However, an opposing view is that, in some instances, different social media platforms and messages are needed to reach different stakeholders.

According to Van Riel and Fombrun (2007:23), the key task of corporate communication is to flesh out the profile of the “company behind the brand”, to minimise discrepancies between different markers of corporate identity, to define and assign communication responsibilities across the organisation and to mobilise support (internally and externally) behind corporate initiatives. Jones (in Alizadeh et al 2012:16–17) states that the corporate brand strives to coordinate and align all internal and external communication (Franklin et al 2009), and to apply a core and distinct identity of the organisation by means of integrated communication. It is indeed a matter of gaining preference in the minds of stakeholders that could be achieved through illustrating the organisation's distinctness, and allowing the stakeholder to differentiate between it and its competitors (Cornelissen 2011:65). Unlike product branding, which aims to explain the product represented by the brand, the task of communication in corporate branding could arguably be to explain the organisation behind the brand and thus to humanise the brand (Van Riel and Fombrun 2007, 23; cf. Urde 1999:127). On this point, Feldwick's (2009:127) statement that “everything a brand does is communication” should be considered. Organisations need to be aware that the way in which the corporate brand communicates (or does not) is key to forming mental associations with the organisation. Feldwick (2009:127) cautions against mechanistic one-way message transmission approaches in which messages are simply distributed to stakeholders. It would be fair to say that such approaches do not

correspond with the perspectives of the key theoretical components of corporate communication addressed earlier in this chapter – IC communication, stakeholder focus and strategic communication – and which, *inter alia*, endeavour to engage stakeholders in dialogue. It is argued that the corporate communication components in general, and the integration of communication in particular, may contribute to creating the desired corporate brands for non-profit organisations.

In light of the above, it could be argued that non-profit organisations in South Africa could benefit from a corporate brand perspective. Daw et al's (2011:6–7) perspectives are that a compelling non-profit brand can assist these organisations in the following ways: providing a clear direction and shared vision for all communication, activities and programming; fulfilling personal needs to be associated with “an issue or cause”; attracting, motivating and retaining the best staff and volunteers; strengthening relationships with current supporters through showcasing its culture (mission, vision and values) in action; investing in future inventions; cultivating new relationships by balancing “historic priorities with new initiatives”; “grounding the organization in enduring values and focusing it on long-term cause goals” which allows it to anticipate and adjust when needed. Keller et al (2010:107–108) support this perspective and maintain that a non-profit organisation should embrace the corporate brand as a strategic asset grounded in its underlying values. One should note the idea that social media is most beneficial in sharing visual content, such as photos, and ultimately linking stakeholders emotionally with the non-profit corporate brand (cf. Du Plessis 2017:353, 355).

However, in reality and despite the above positives concerning corporate brands, it is evident that non-profit organisations are still perceived to lag behind in formulating an all-embracing idea to drive its strategy and permeate all communication efforts with a deeper and distinctive purpose (Daw et al 2011:22). The notion that intangible assets are deemed more valuable than tangible assets cannot be regarded a recent tendency (Gobé 2009:xvii). As indicated earlier in this chapter, this has also been a trend in the development of the historical elements of corporate communication, namely corporate image and corporate identity, which are prevalent in the corporate brand perspective (see section 2.4.1). This increased focus on the senses and emotions of stakeholders affords corporate brands more substance and opportunity to capitalise on these emotional values that could further compel stakeholders to support the non-profit organisation.

2.8 SUMMARY

This chapter suggested a more contemporary view on achieving a unified perspective of the organisation, which, underpinned by corporate communication, focuses on creating a positive corporate brand for the organisation. It was argued that, based on corporate communication

and from a corporate brand perspective, social media could be used by non-profit organisations in South Africa to realise the ideals of a corporate brand perspective. The role of IC is deemed pivotal as it appears to allow organisations to achieve the desired corporate brand.

Corporate communication was explored by considering its *philosophy*, the different corporate communication concepts and the historical elements. This exploration highlighted the need to align and coordinate the organisation's internal and external communication activities to ensure uniformity and that the organisation is perceived as a unified unit. The corporate communication philosophy was illustrated on the basis of metonymy, which represents the way in which all parts of an organisation should individually represent the organisation as a whole. This corresponds to the perspective proposed for this study. The corporate communication *components* were identified as *communication integration*, a *stakeholder focus*, *strategic communication* and *communication expansion*, and these were deemed important in creating a communication environment conducive to coordinating communication and building strong corporate brands. These components are confirmed in chapter 4 to be key elements in an integrated approach to social media brand communication. Although not intended, the literature review underscored the significance of these components in a corporate brand perspective. Moreover, the investigation of the historical *elements* of corporate image, corporate identity and corporate reputation served to create a clearer understanding of the corporate brand perspective and to provide a basis for the discussion in the rest of the chapter.

Corporate brand as a perspective of this study was explored. The elements of brand, branding, brand values, brand promise, brand identity and brand image, brand reputation, brand personality were investigated, and their similarities with the historical elements of corporate communication were revealed. Three related types of brands – service, product and corporate – were discussed mainly to demarcate this proposed perspective. It was concluded that for the purposes of this study, a corporate brand encompasses values, brand communication, corporate brand story, emotional branding, and in context, conversations on social media. This chapter also explored varied views on corporate communication and the lack of a clear outline of what the concept entails. This could be ascribed to the growing interest in corporate branding and its possibilities to create positive associations with organisations.

The next chapter explores social media as the focus of this study. The researcher was keen to investigate the concept of social media in order to determine how non-profit organisations could integrate their communication with stakeholders by means of social media – hence the

need to conceptualise social media and its related elements from a corporate brand perspective.

CHAPTER 3: SOCIAL MEDIA CONCEPTUALISED FROM A CORPORATE BRAND FOCUS IN A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged that social media offers boundless opportunities for communication between organisations, communities and individuals (Valentini & Kruckeberg 2012:3; Kavanaugh, Fox, Sheetz, Yang, Li, Shoemaker, Natsev & Xie 2012:480; Gallagher & Ransbothom 2012:197; Kietzmann et al 2011:250). The view that “social media create a new environment in which organisations can interact with their stakeholders and customers” indicates the impact on the communication landscape in which organisations and individuals presently operate (Bochenek & Blili 2013:144; Agnihotri, Kothandaraman, Kashyap & Singh 2012:334; Trainor 2012:319). This landscape could thus offer alternate ways to organisations and individuals to communicate, because it redefines the communication roles of all participants and how content is created, distributed and controlled. Moreover, it accentuates the importance of communication and how conversations about corporate brands take place with or without the participation of the organisation (Duhé & Wright 2013:94; Robson & James 2013:2; Lovejoy et al 2012:315; Kietzmann et al 2011:244; Evans 2010:9; Owyang & Toll 2007:1). In the non-profit sector, the ability to reach global audiences through social media is significant because their efforts are often aimed at targeting multiple audiences that have traditionally proven challenging (Gainera & Padanyi 2005:855).

Whereas the previous chapter focused on exploring corporate communication and corporate branding as the foundation and perspective of this study, the purpose of this is to outline social media as the primary focus of this study on *social media*. This chapter therefore endeavours to address the following research objective:

To explore social media (in terms of its definitions, historical development, foundational elements and key features) in the context of non-profit organisations

To clarify the boundaries of this study, this chapter is structured as follows: firstly, it delineates the dimensions and emphases of social media at the hand of explicit definitions by seminal scholars and practitioners evident in literature; secondly, a brief overview of the historical development of social media is provided by highlighting the origins and shifts in focus as a result of technological developments; thirdly, it explores the classification of social media by differentiating between related concepts that are often equated with social media, namely digital, online and new media, and considering existing classifications of the concept; fourthly,

its foundational elements are identified and unpacked; and lastly, the key elements and theoretical foundations of social media are investigated. The importance and relevance of communication are evident in all aspects of social media brand communication – especially as applied to this study. Social media is contextualised to apply to the specific use by non-profit organisations in all these areas. Chapter 4 will focus on the significance of an IC approach because it is deemed a fitting possibility for communication that is facilitated by social media.

Despite the many mentions of the concept of social media in the literature, no single and comprehensive definition exists that notably underlines the ambiguity of the social media concept. The aim of the next section is to provide more insight into the pivotal elements of and boundaries associated with this concept by exploring existing definitions in the literature.

3.2 ADOPTING A SOCIAL MEDIA DEFINITION FOR THIS STUDY

Research into the technological evolution and use of social media in various disciplines has produced many descriptions and explanations of this media and what it is believed to be. Despite concerted efforts to encapsulate the meaning and the key elements of this concept, these efforts unfortunately have failed to generate a distinct and unbiased definition. This could possibly be ascribed to the vague and complex nature of social media and the fact that it applies to many disciplines (Vuori 2012:156; Divol et al 2012; Onete, Dina & Negoi 2011:737). Moreover, the absence of a single widely recognised definition impedes the study of this phenomenon to a certain extent because it does not clearly define the boundaries and key features of social media, particularly from a communication point of view.

Mentions of social media mostly resort to general descriptions of this media (Bechmann & Lomborg 2012:767; Larisky, Avery, Sweetser & Howes 2009:314). The concept is also often equated with concepts that are certainly related to, but that are not necessarily indicative of an explicit definition thereof and merely further confound the matter –for example, associating it with consumer-generated media (Blackshaw & Nazzaro 2006) or social media tools (for example social network sites) (Smith 2011:1; boyd & Ellison 2008; Jue, Marr & Kassotakis 2010:5). The objective here is to explore social media, and in conjunction with the array of implicit definitions found in social media literature, to answer the question of what definition could best describe the social media phenomenon in the context of this study specifically; and also because it has bearing on an integrated perspective to social media brand communication. According to Mersey, Malthouse and Calder (2010:40) if the concept cannot be explicitly defined, it cannot be measured. Likewise, the meaningful exploration of social media arguably relies on the discovery of the focal elements and the emphases on them in

existing social media definitions, which could contribute to an understanding of the main focus of the study by addressing the research objectives formulated in section 3.1.

The purpose of this section is not to address the current need for a comprehensive definition of social media, and the list of definitions collected is by no means exhaustive, mainly because of the various application possibilities, the different foci in multiple disciplines and the fact that this was deemed to be beyond the scope of this study. The selection here focuses on overt efforts to define or identify key dimensions of social media. The methodology applied is explained in section 3.2.1. Owing to the lack of a universally accepted definition for social media, 20 definitions of this concept were purposefully selected and then analysed via *Atlas.ti* to identify the concept's various dimensions and to formulate a definition for the purposes of this study. *Atlas.ti* is a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program specifically suited to systematically process textual, video, audio and graphical data (Friese 2014:1; cf. Yin 2014:134). It was deemed appropriate to identify the dimensions evident in definitions of social media and to indicate the prevalence of these dimensions in the collected definitions.

As a point of departure, the following seminal definition by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61) of social media was considered to be especially noteworthy because it is predominantly cited by scholars and practitioners in many disciplines in their attempts to explain the meaning of this media:

“Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideologies and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (cf. Chibita & Ugangu 2017:237; Bosch 2017:40; Valos, Habibi, Casidy, Driesener & Maplestone 2016:21; Kaplan 2014; Tsimonis & Dimitriadis 2014:328).

The absence of a common definition at that point in time, compelled Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) to fill the gap by formulating the above definition. Kaplan confirmed by email to the researcher that they (Kaplan and Haenlein) had developed the definition as “we didn't really find any real definition of social media at that time” (Kaplan 2014). However, one could contend that earlier definitions by Ahlqvist, Bäck, Halonen and Heinonen (2008) and Safko and Brake (2009) are perhaps equally significant. Besides emphasising the importance of technology, these definitions acknowledge the presence of people, their involvement in social interaction (such as *sharing*, *exchanging* and *commenting*) and their affiliation as community members (such as *virtual communities* and *communities of people*).

Ahlqvist et al (2008:13) define social media as

“[...] the interaction of people and also to creating, sharing, exchanging and commenting contents in virtual communities and networks”.

Safko and Brakes (2009:6) regard social media as

“[...] activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinions using conversational media”.

Nonetheless, the researcher felt the need to formulate and adopt a fitting definition of social media as the focus of the present study.

3.2.1 Methodology to identify the various dimensions of social media

Although the dimensions identified for this study (depicted in table 3.1) could be contested by other social media scholars, they are applicable within the specific perspective boundaries of the topic under investigation. Furthermore, it was deemed necessary to adopt a definition of social media from a corporate branding perspective, which currently does not exist.

The methodology employed in this section in order to explore the key features of social media prevalent in original social media definitions, is mainly qualitative and comprises three steps. Firstly, definitions of social media were purposively gathered by means of a literature review of works relevant in the context and to the focus of the study from articles, encyclopaedias, dissertations (internationally and nationally) and in online and printed publications through database searches. In all instances, where definitions were cited, they were traced back to the seminal authors and only included in the study if they could be successfully tracked and thus deemed eligible seminal contributions. Secondly, a coding scheme informed by Dahlsrud (2008) and based on the selected definitions was deductively developed by process of bottom-up coding (Urquhart 2013:38, 39). The bottom-up coding method applies when codes are suggested by the data and not the literature (Urquhart 2013:38), and this was particularly appropriate because of the paucity of social media research. Thus, the codes or dimensions were based on and informed by existing social media definitions that would serve as the data. Thirdly, the definitions were analysed according to the elements and focus of each. The most prevalent elements were identified and similar issues were then grouped into dimensions. The five social media dimensions that emerged from the data are indicated in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Social media dimensions

Dimensions	The definition is coded to the dimension if it refers to
Technological dimension	Web 2.0, web technologies, Internet, Web-based applications, sources of online information, online platforms/applications and collective software tools
Social dimension	Interaction, communicate, share, cooperate, collective action, relationship, exchange and engage
Community dimension	Communities of people, virtual/online communities, network of customers, individuals and communities
Content dimension	Content and user-generated content
Participation dimension	Collaborating, creating, modifying and publishing

A total of 20 definitions of social media was purposively gathered (as described in the introduction to this section) and coded. The coding process comprised three steps: firstly, the data (collected definitions) was loaded as primary documents in the qualitative data analysis program—(Atlas.ti) and the focus elements of each definition were identified according to their specific focus, resulting in a total of 59 codes; secondly, codes addressing similar issues were grouped into dimensions (or families as in Atlas.ti); and thirdly, an analysis of the codes and dimensions was conducted. The code-primary document in table 3.2 was generated through Atlas.ti and indicates the occurrence of the different dimensions in the definitions.

As further indicated in table 3.2 below, the technological dimension (94.4%) was most frequently emphasised in social media definitions, followed by the social (83.3%) and participative (55.5%) dimensions. Although the list could not be declared complete or representative, one could probably expect these prominent dimensions to form the focus of other social media definitions of this time.

Table 3.2: Mentions of the dimensions of social media in the selected definitions

Author/s	Dimensions				
	Community	Content	Participation	Social	Technological
Ahlqvist et al (2008)	1	0	1	1	0
Safko & Brake (2009)	1	0	0	1	0
boyd (2009)	1	0	0	1	1
Madia & Borgese (2010)	0	1	1	1	1
Correa, Hinsley & De Zúñiga (2010)	0	0	0	1	1
Jue et al (2010)	0	0	1	1	1
Solis (2010)	0	0	0	1	1
Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)	0	1	1	0	1
Kietzmann et al (2011)	1	1	1	1	1
Onete et al (2011)	0	0	0	1	1
Montoya (2011)	0	0	0	1	1
Cohen (2011)	0	1	1	1	1

Marketo [2010]	1	1	1	1	1
Nair (2011)	0	0	0	1	1
Andzulis, Panagopoulos & Rapp (2012)	1	0	0	0	1
Finkbeiner (2013)	1	1	1	1	1
Social Media in the Commercial Property Sector (2013)	0	0	0	1	1
Majchrzak, Farah, Kane & Azad (2013)	0	0	1	1	1
Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni & Pauwels (2013)	0	0	0	1	1
Daume, Albert & Von Gadow (2014)	1	0	1	0	1
Totals	8	6	10	17	18

The focus on technology and social interaction seemingly acknowledges the significance of Internet technology and the subsequent evolution of social media that permits stakeholders to interact with others socially (see section 3.3). The results further indicate a focus of 38.8% and 33.3% on community and content respectively, suggesting that these elements are regarded as less important, depending of course on the context in which they are used. Only the definitions by Kietzmann et al (2011), Marketo (2010), and Finkbeiner (2013) emphasise all five dimensions – hence confirming the diverse perspectives and views to explain the social media concept, identify its foundational elements and describe what it entails. It is noteworthy that despite mentions in the literature of the value of using social media tools and application and the need to co-create value for all stakeholders, this aspect is only mentioned in one definition (Agnihotri et al 2012; Merchant 2012; Nair 2011; Hoffman & Fodor 2010; Hinchcliffe 2007; Bonneau & Gensollen 2007). Only five definitions (27.7%) refer to the concept as "online" media, thus indicating possible indifference towards the importance or need to broadly classify social media (see section 3.4.1).

Based on the definitions and analysis of occurring dimensions, once could conclude that the definitions mainly emphasise five dimensions, namely technology, social interaction, participation, community and content. Also, as established, the definitions represent varying perspectives on the meaning of social media, hence complicating the formulation of a comprehensive definition for this study.

Based on the analysis and considering the context and corporate branding perspective of this research, the following definition of social media was formulated for the purpose of this study:

Social media is an interactive online platform that enables organisations and stakeholders to readily connect and interact in various ways.

It is argued that an exploration of the progression of social media could foster a clearer understanding of social media. To this end, section 3.3 provides a brief overview of the development of social media.

3.3 OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Although social media is perceived as a “recent and complex phenomenon” (Vuori 2012:156; boyd 2009), this view is opposed by Berners-Lee ([sa]b), Ryan (2012:153) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:60), who maintain that in reality it is not a current innovation, but merely an extension of the initial purpose of the World Wide Web (WWW) in the late 1990s, to promote information exchange between users (Bechmann & Lomborg 2012:767; Campbell, Pitt, Parent & Berthon 2011:87; Greenberg & MacAulay 2009:65). A user is a supplier of content, who “supports the distribution of content and service”, and who “plays a fundamental role in finding/selecting and filtering the relevant content and services” (Ahlgqvist et al 2010:4; cf. Pascu, Osimo, Turlea, Ulbrich, Punie, & Burgelman 2008). Social media is thus regarded as *evolutionary* (cf. Murugesan 2010:91) since it does not imply a revolutionary technological innovation per se, but rather signifies the emergence of a phenomenon with a widespread impact at individual, organisational and community levels that continuously evolves and influences the way “people live, work, and progress in both local and global community” (Rauniar, Rawski, Johnson & Yang 2013:195, 196).

This view of social media as a progression of the Internet and WWW – or Web – justifies a historical overview of their developments that subsequently contributed to the emergence of social media. Each development (from the Internet to the Web, and ultimately to social media) builds on the previous (Murugesan 2010:3), and the researcher felt that an overview of the origins would provide insight into the evolution of social media and its underlying applications, intents and foci. The concepts of Internet and the Web are frequently used in scholarly research on social media, and although they are often used interchangeably, they cannot be equated (Berry 2005 Berners-Lee [sa]b). As defined by Berners-Lee ([sa]b), the development of the Internet precedes that of the Web and is regarded as a network of networks or “technical network between computers” (Bonneau & Gensollen 2007:9), with the ultimate aim of being to distribute information between computers by connecting cables (Wood & Smith 2005:37; Berners-Lee [sa]b). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:60) fittingly compare the Internet to a “giant Bulletin Board System” (BBS), and thereby accurately illustrate the initial purpose of the Internet at that time, namely to serve as an *information only* platform (Andzulis et al 2012:306; Toivonen 2007:10) that would allow users to share and exchange information and data with others by way of computers.

The advent and existence of the Internet are significant and extremely relevant to the contemporary world because the Internet is the foundation for the different technologies that connect people worldwide. For the purpose of this study, the Internet was acknowledged as the foundation of the Web and of social media.

In contrast to the Internet, the Web is a service operating over the Internet that was first actively used in the late 1990s by Berners-Lee when he wrote probably the first and oldest known web page (as we would recognise it today) (Safko & Brake 2009:118; Harrison & Barthel 2009:158; Funk 2009:xiii; Ward 2006; Wood & Smith 2005:37; Raggett, Lam & Alexander 1995:1, Berners-Lee [sa]a, [sa]b; Segal 1995:1). This achievement ultimately led to the attainment of the shared goal/s of early pioneers dedicated to developing these technologies, namely to connect, distribute and share a variety of information worldwide and create a common information space (Berners-Lee [sa]b). Apart from providing the technical elements needed for the functioning of social media, the Web contains different content types or formats of information, such as documents, sound and video (Berners-Lee [sa]b) that are connected by hypertext links (see section 3.4.2). Hypertext links are understood to be a system proposed by Berners-Lee [sa]b that allows broader access to and retrieval of information by linking documents stored on different computers worldwide. Hence information that was, up to that point, exclusively accessible to technologists and scientists could be cross-referenced and shared online globally (Ryan 2012:9). By the late 1990s, human interaction was pursued and scholars called for a heightening focus on *people* or *community* rather than content (Gordon 2011:114), which could probably be interpreted as an expression of the need for human interaction that was fully addressed through the evolution from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 (Toivonen 2007:10; cf. Murugesan 2010:1). Web 2.0 was deemed to be particularly relevant to this study because Kaplan and Heinlein (2010) and Ahlqvist et al (2008) regard it as a foundational element of social media (see section 3.6). Prominent pioneers associated with the advent of Web 2.0 include Tim O'Reilly and Dale Dougherty, who are believed to have officially coined the concept "Web 2.0" during the first Web 2.0 conference in 2004 (Mandiberg 2012:3; Murugesan 2010:3; Harrison & Barthel 2009:159; Funk 2009:xvi; O'Reilly 2005).

At present, Web 2.0, also called the social Web, people-centric Web and participative Web, represents a new stage in the evolution of the Web, which per definition focuses on the user, and on sharing content and connecting people (cf. Funk 2009:xv; Weber & Rech 2010:17; Murugesan 2010:2–3). The existence of Web 3.0 and Web 4.0 was acknowledged, but their particular focus on machine-centric databases and human and machine intelligence, did not fall within the ambit of this study. The characteristics identified above endorse Web 2.0 as a foundational element of social media (see section 3.5).

The desire to exchange information was at the core of early technological developments such as the Internet, and the earliest networks focused merely on the connection of computer networks and overlooked the importance of connecting people or users and creating online communities, as with social media. One could thus argue that social media addresses the demand for social connection and interaction with others that emerged from an early demand for information exchange.

It is evident that technological advances, such as social media, allow a “form of virtual content sharing” that differs from and is more powerful than the earliest application of the Internet, mainly because of its information exchange abilities (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:60). Such progression offers new possibilities for organisations to instantly connect with stakeholders, and vice versa, and the many innovative ways available to share information, collaborate and mobilise collective action (Billington & Billington 2012:11; Lovejoy & Saxton 2012:338; Greenberg & MacAulay 2009:65–67; Drury 2008:275). Importantly, it presents stakeholders’ various choices on the type of social media and also flexibility with regard to location and time to engage in conversations about the corporate brand (cf. Székely & Nagy 2011:2191). Since its conception, prevailing views in the literature confirm that social media has become fundamental to everyday life. Besides, this media is thought to have a broad impact on people’s social, economic and political lives and has in a sense became integral to people’s day-to-day lives (Goneos-Malka et al 2013:129–130; Cunningham 2012; Cavanaugh 2009:16). In this sense, and in the context of the study, the supposed effect on people socially, including opportunities to keep in touch and share information widely with others, is noteworthy (Cavanaugh 2009:16; cf. Hinton & Hjorth 2013). In essence, and in accordance with the definition of an integrated approach to social media adopted in this study, the progression of social media is notable in the opportunities for unlimited discussions over specific topics pertinent to an organisation (see section 3.2). It can thus be anticipated that such conversations compel the integration thereof into existing communication activities. Monitoring and listening to these online conversations with and between stakeholders were a major focus of the present study to integrate stakeholders in the proposed framework for integrated social media brand communication (section 2.6.1.6, chapter 2; section 4.8.2.1 and figure 4.5, chapter 4).

To gain a broad understanding of the social media concept, it would be appropriate at this juncture to provide an overview of the broad classifications of social media.

3.4 BROAD CLASSIFICATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The multidisciplinary nature of social media that can be applied in different contexts, combined with varied views on how the concept might be classified, necessitated an investigation of the classification thereof in this specific research context.

3.4.1 Explication of social media as online, digital and/or new media

Various contributions in the literature highlight the existence of three types of media, namely digital- online and new media, whose differentiating characteristics are presently indistinct despite having endured thorough debates by scholars and communication professionals (Gane & Beer 2008:6). The concepts are often used interchangeably, thus complicating the setting of distinct boundaries that could allow for clear and broad classifications of different media types, for this study as well (Siapera 2012; Gane & Beer 2008). In some instances, scholars and professionals seem insensitive to the prevailing distinctions, and despite views supporting such differences, associate social media with either digital, online or new media, or combinations of the three types, referring to it as “new online media types” (Onete et al 2011:738), “new kinds of online media” (Mayfield 2008) or new digital media (Bechmann & Lomborg 2012:767). The purpose of an appropriate classification was to ensure a consistent reference to social media throughout this research study.

The quest to gain a deeper understanding of social media in the setting of this study, thus necessitated a concise distinction between the key characteristics and focus of each media type, to determine which, if any, could serve as broad classification of the focus of this study. The perspective of Siapera (2012) served as the point of departure.

In *digital* media, information or data is encoded in numbers, using a series of 0s and 1s, that can be accessed in a "delinked" mode (such as reading a book on Kindle), compressed and stored in small spaces such as on USB flash drives, thus providing speedy access to data (Siapera 2012:3, 4). Its focus is primarily on technological elements through "encoding and converting data and information" (*ibid*). *Online* media refers directly to the Internet and has the ability to connect with other media (such as computers or mobile devices), to link to multiple (one or more) others, distant and near, and to prioritise the quality and degree of connectivity (Siapera 2012:4, 5; cf. Cavanaugh 2009:4). Closely associated with the online media concept are the online and online communication concepts that seem to signify the computer-mediated and Internet environment in which this communication occurs (Ma 2012:394) and "reading, writing, and communication via networked computers", respectively (Warschauer 2001:207). Thompson's (1994:35) early definition of mediated communication as the "use of a technical medium (paper, electric waves, electromagnetic waves, etc.), which enables information or symbolic content to be transmitted to individuals who are remote in space, in time or both"

forms a suitable base for the views below on computer-mediated communication Computer-mediated communication thus refers to “*a kind of communication* based on computers and networks” [emphasis added] (Yu 2011:531), which supposedly occurs through the use of two or more computers by humans for communication (cf. Griffin, Ledbetter & Sparks 2015:122; Herring 1996:1). It consists of synchronous (real-time communication such as chatrooms) or asynchronous (delayed communication such as reading an email a day after it was sent) computer-mediated communication (Herring 1996:1; cf. Antoci, Sabatini & Sodini 2014:1913; Warschauer 2001:207). The concept of *social media brand communication* is used to signify acts of communication via various social media platforms, which was clear in the definition of this concept in chapter 1.

Siapera (2012:5) regards *new media* as “novel, innovative and dynamic” and continuously evolving. Besides a propensity towards continuous change, it is able to incorporate attributes from digital, online and other types of media without constraining or prioritising a single type (*ibid*). Its focus on interactivity, and the accommodation of all kinds of media with a constant evolving nature, can, *inter alia*, be understood as referring to the interchangeable roles senders and receivers are permitted to perform in acting as sources and receivers in the communication process (cf. Cunningham 2012; Gane & Beer 2008:97). The concept of *interactivity* is elaborated on in section 3.6.1.6. However, in social media literature, explicit distinctions between online and new media are seldom made, and the concepts are used interchangeably.

For the purpose of this study, and based on the above distinctions, it was considered more fitting to broadly classify social media as a form of *online media*, despite opposing arguments such as those of Allen (2012:264–265), Hearn, Foth and Gray (2009:50), Gane and Beer (2008:6) and others, because the debate is merely a matter of semantics, with the Internet as an apt example as it is often still labelled *new* although it is no longer exactly new (cf. Steele 2009:489–491). It should be understood that although social media commonly functions as integrated platforms that combine and link an array of digital and online media that shares audiences, it inherently remains an Internet application and hence an online media (Fuchs 2014a:6; Siapera 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010; Cavanaugh 2009:20, 57; Gane & Beer 2008; Manovich 2001; cf. Steele 2009:491). Examples of these integrated platforms include the use of digital images and videos on a Facebook page or in a YouTube video (cf. Fuchs 2014a:6).

Since a standardised classification of the different social media types or platforms does not exist, it warrants investigation in the next section.

3.4.2 Classification of social media platforms

In the literature, social media is referred to as "platforms" (Fuchs 2014b:57; Kochbar, Wilson & Tao 2012:293; Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden 2011:266), "applications" (Lovejoy & Saxton 2012:337; Drury 2008:274), "tools" (Smith 2011:1; Jue et al 2010:5) or more elaborately as "Web 2.0 enabled social media tools" (Vuori 2012:157). Many research studies on the use of social media mainly explore single tools, and although few studies focus on a broad spectrum of social media types, these studies often fail to propose a general classification of the different types of social media (Lahav 2014; Billington & Billington 2012; Smith 2010; Ingennhoff & Koelling 2009; Porter et al 2009; Kent 2008).

Despite the absence of a definite typology, it was deemed necessary at this stage of the study to explore how the different types of social media could be arranged to select the most apt classification. This section identifies different ways in which social media could possibly be classified. As a point of departure, the various social media platforms that are widely supported in the literature on this concept are identified, followed by an overview of the categories offered by Parent, Plangger and Bal (2011) and Corcoran (2009).

Different social media platforms are listed in table 3.3 below. The groupings of the different platforms are widely supported in the literature, and briefly discussed in the section to follow, framed according to the focus of the study.

Table 3.3: Social media platforms (adapted from various authors listed)

Social media platform	Example/s
Blogs	Blogger and Wordpress
Microblogs	Twitter, Tumblr and Sina-Weibo
Social online networks/social networks/social networking sites	Interact online in either a non-business way (e.g. Facebook, Google+, mySpace and Bebo (for personal networking) or for business purposes (e.g. LinkedIn (for professional networking))
Content sharing/video sharing/creativity works sharing sites/picture sharing	Flickr, YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest
Social bookmarking sites, also referred to as <i>social news websites</i>	Digg, del.icio.us or del.icio.us and Reddit
Social media search engines	Socialshare, Socialsearcher and Socialmention
Virtual social worlds	Second Life, Active worlds, World of Warcraft

Sources: (Wilcox, Cameron & Reber 2015:365–381; Daume et al 2014:10–11; Qualman 2013:8-9; Marques, Krejci, Siqueira, Pimentel & Braz 2013:396; Freberg 2013; Markos-Kujbus & Gáti 2012; Andzulis et al 2012:312; Menck 2012; Billington & Billington 2012:13,15; Chau & Xu 2012:1190; Bonsón, Torres, Royo & Flores 2012:125; Morris & Goldsworthy 2012:148-153; Wright & Hinson 2012; DiStaso et al 2011:513; Fischer & Reuber 2011:5; Evans, Twomey & Talan 2011:4-5; Meredith & O'Donnell 2011:265; Scott & Jacka 2011:8-15; Lewis, Pea & Rosen 2010:353; Cho & Huh 2010:31–32; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:63; Mangold & Faulds 2009:358; Newsom 2009:59–81; Hearn et al 2009:51–54; Mayfield 2008:6; Drury 2008:274; Eyrich et al 2008:413; Constantinides & Fountain 2008:233; Mayfield 2007:6).

Blogs are publishing tools that allow for the publishing of personalised information such as the author's profile, and personalised and opinionated content. They are also known as online journals or online diaries, of which most grant users options to comment (Daume et al 2014:11; Walaski 2013:40; Markos-Kujbus & Gáti 2012; Morris & Goldsworthy 2012:148; Cunningham 2012; Chau & Xu 2012:1189; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:63; Safko & Brake 2009:162; Hearn et al 2009:52; Mayfield 2008:6; Kent 2008:33; Constantinides & Fountain 2008:233; Cammaerts 2008:358; see section 3.6.1). Also, blogs allow interaction and conversation and through comments or posts, provide information and updates on pertinent strategic developments in order to promote transparency on a multitude of different variations and uses (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:63, Weinreich 2012; Andzulis et al 2012:312). In line with the corporate branding perspective, this platform could allow the organisation to communicate in a humanised way and thus contribute to the desired corporate brand personality it desires to project (cf. Cho & Huh 2010:32).

Micro-blogs combine publishing, conversational features and social networks in real time, and allow users to connect with others. Most micro-blogs are characterised by their short messages (limited to 140 characters) (Daume et al 2014:11; Walaski 2013:41; Andzulis et al 2012:312; Markos-Kujbus & Gáti 2012; Evans et al 2011). Twitter expanded this limitation to 280 characters in November 2017. It is said to increase accessibility and increase the appeal of this micro-blog by allowing users to send and receive longer tweets (Colling 2017; Busby 2017). It should be noted that, at the time of this study, this expansion had not yet occurred and the effect on social media brand communication of non-profit organisations could thus not be investigated. These micro-blogs can effectively be used to inform and solicit stakeholder feedback, collaborate on proposals and campaigns, follow stakeholders to uncover prospects, publish the corporate brand story and other success stories, connect with stakeholders and communicate with specific stakeholders (Andzulis et al 2012:312; Saffer, Sommerfeldt & Taylor 2013:213; Evans et al 2011; Waters & Jamal 2011:321; Hoffman & Fodor 2010:44). Despite its potential for two-way communication, a study by Waters and Jamal (2011) on the

use of Twitter by non-profit organisations, suggests that its use is limited to one-way messages.

Scholars, boyd and Ellison (2008:219), argue that *social networks* are organised around people with the purpose of not only interconnecting organisations, stakeholders and groups of stakeholders (cf. Walaski 2013:41; Markos-Kujbus and Gáti 2012; Morris & Goldsworthy 2012:151; Weinreich 2012; Cunningham 2012; Hoffman & Fodor 2010:44; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:63), but also exchanging information, and probably primarily communicating with others (Freberg 2013; Bonson et al 2012:125; boyd & Ellison 2008:211; Constantinides & Fountain 2008:233). Social networks allow users to connect from different platforms, for example, to link a YouTube video (which is a content-sharing site) and a Facebook page (a social networking site) (cf. Kane, Alavi, Labianca & Borgatti 2014:279; Markos-Kujbus & Gáti 2012). Considering the possibilities these social networks offer to exchange information, it is fair to say that it could benefit the organisation to share corporate brand stories, collaborate with stakeholders on campaigns, address pertinent issues raised by competitors or displeased stakeholders and contribute in projecting the corporate brand in a particular way.

Content communities normally publish richer types of media such as videos or photos that are publicly available and outwardly cented around common interests (Daume et al 2014:11; Markos-Kujbus & Gáti 2012; Cunningham 2012; Wang, Zhao, Zhou, Wang, Cui & Qi 2012:280). Of significance is its apparent worth for relationship building and the sharing of content with stakeholders on social media platforms (Du Plessis 2017a:1). This platform can certainly be linked to the sharing of corporate brand stories. Reflecting on the importance of corporate brand stories as explained in chapter 2, the use of photos or video can be optimised to visually illustrate such stories.

Social bookmarking sites or online news sites allow for selecting and recommending useful information. They afford stakeholders opportunities to interact through tagging, rating or commenting on articles. It is deemed a useful research tool because one can view others' bookmarks and locate sources of information (Daume et al 2014:11; Weinreich 2012; Markos-Kujbus & Gáti 2012; cf. Kent 2013).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:63–64; 2009) describe *virtual social worlds* as environments in which users or “inhabitants” live in an online virtual world. Users are referred to as avatars who interact with objects, places or other users in a virtual environment (*ibid*; Lewis et al 2010). These users are allowed to choose their own behaviour that often mirrors those in a real-life situation. This type of social media platform might offer opportunities for marketing and human resources among other fields, but is not deemed appropriate for a non-profit setting, because of the nature and causes of these organisations, which are not primarily focused on profit

making. Furthermore, the challenges in terms of resources and budgetary constraints that were specified in the interviews, by communication professionals in these organisations, do not readily allow the design and implementation of these virtual worlds. The literature review did not disclose any research in this context.

Parent et al (2011:220) offer a compelling adaptation of the academic categorisation of social media into egocentric, community, opportunistic, passion-centric or media-sharing sites, as indicated in table 3.4 below. These categories show an alternative to the groupings of the different types of social media platforms illustrated in table 3.3 above, and are mainly grouped according to the perceived attraction of the social media platforms as perceived by Parent et al (2011:220).

Table 3.4: Parent et al's (2011) social media categories

Categories of social media sites	Appeal	Example of site(s)
Egocentric sites	Allow users to construct profiles of themselves on virtual platforms facilitating identity construction and connections.	Facebook.com, MySpace.com, Bebo.com and Instagram
Community sites	Imitate real-world communities, allowing groups to form around similar beliefs and interests.	BigWaveDave.com, BlackPlanet.com and Dogster.com
Opportunistic sites	Allow for different social organisation of users and facilitate business connections.	LinkedIn.com, Academia.edu and alibaba.com
Passion-centric sites	Allow users to connect on the basis of interests and hobbies.	TheSamba.com, chatterbirds.com and germancarforum.com
Media-sharing sites	Allow users to share rich media with one another. Defined by content, not users.	Flickr.com, YouTube.com and slideshare.com

A possible shortcoming of Parent et al's (2011) and others' efforts to classify social media, is that the boundaries between the categories are probably permeable, depending on the focus and use of a specific platform – hence some platforms may qualify as belonging to more than one site. To illustrate this point, it could be argued that, based on the categories in table 3.4, Facebook could meet the criteria as an egocentric site because of users' ability to construct their own profiles, as well a community site, allowing groups to form around similar interests.

Another seminal perspective on the classification of social media, is that of Corcoran (2009), who focuses on the issue of ownership of the channels/media activities of an organisation by proposing that social media can be categorised as either owned, paid or earned media (cf. Du Plessis 2017b:361; Kornfield, Smith, Szczyplka, Vera & Emery 2015; Moriarty et al 2015; Rakić

& Rakić 2014; Brito 2013; Stephen & Galak 2012; Burcher 2012). Table 3.5 below illustrates Corcoran's (2009) perspective.

Table 3.5: Corcoran's (2009) social media categories

Type of media	Characteristic/s and roles	Example/s
Owned	The brand controls the channel/media, extends the brand's presence and builds long-term relationships.	Website or blog (fully controlled), Facebook, Twitter account (partially controlled), publishing tools on Facebook and LinkedIn
Paid	The brand pays to leverage the channel/media, guarantees immediacy and serves as a catalyst that promotes owned and earned media.	Paid advertising on Facebook, sponsored tweets on Twitter and sponsored posts
Earned	Channel or media not controlled or paid for by the brand, content is co-created by consumers, creates transparency and permanence, the result of well-implemented owned and paid media and allows for <i>listening</i> and <i>responding</i> to WOM or eWOM	Face-to-face discussions, social conversations on social media platforms, mentions of traditional publicity in online platforms, retweets, reposts, sharing, comments and social tagging

The literature espouses wide support and consensus of Corcoran's (2009) classification and the meaning of each type as originally envisaged. *Owned media* refers to media types that are created or generated in channels the organisation controls, such as an organisational Twitter account, Facebook page or a blog (Xie & Lee 2015:205; Moriarty et al 2015:341; Brito 2013; Stephen & Galak 2012:625; Burcher 2012:9). As Brito (2013) asserts, contrary to the belief that owned media is free, the time and labour spent creating content, collaborating with team members and building community should be considered. Moriarty et al (2015:407) maintain that owned media can be regarded as interactive when communication is initiated by the organisation and opportunities are created for two-way communication between the organisation, stakeholders and social media.

Corcoran (2009) states that *paid media* refers to instances where activities are generated and *paid* for by the organisation. Advertising is an example of this media and can include Google AdWords, Facebook advertisements and sponsored posts, or displays (Corcoran 2009; cf. Brito 2013; Stephen & Galak 2012:625). This media is said to include print media (magazines and inserts), broadcast media (television and radio) and online media (display ads, banners and paid-for-posts) (Moriarty et al 2015:341). According to Corcoran (2009), this media is useful to advance owned and earned media (cf. Stephen & Galak 2012:625). However, it is probable that not all organisations have paid media, possibly because of budget constraints, which might be the case in non-profit organisations (cf. Stephen & Galak 2012:627, 637).

In comparison to the two types above, the channels or media that are believed to be uncontrolled and unpaid for by the organisation, are referred to as *earned media* (Corcoran 2009; cf. Moriarty et al 2015:342; Xie & Lee 2015:205; Brito 2013; Stephen & Galak 2012:625). These channels or activities are not directly generated by the organisation, and considered instead to be products of stakeholders' conversations in instances such as WOM and eWOM. According to Stephen and Galak (2012:625), earned media can moreover be categorised in social or traditional media, generated through either online and offline connections and print or traditional marketing, advertising or public relations activities, respectively. It was established earlier in chapter 2 that WOM and eWOM may be either positive or negative statements that feature in conversations about the organisation either via traditional or social media respectively. As suggested in the previous chapter, the statements or discussions by and conversations, at will, and with others are really both the *cause* and *result* thereof, which denotes an *interrelation of reciprocity* in that all elements are obviously reliant on the others. Contemplating the increased involvement of stakeholders in conversations with or about the organisation as a consequence of the emergence of social media, the prominence of eWOM and conversations compel organisations to be attentive to this matter. Hence the integration of these conversations is of utmost importance when considering an integrated approach to social media brand communication (see section 4.8.2.1 and table 4.5, chapter 4).

The above-mentioned categories have since been expanded to include *converged media* and *media convergence* (Lieb, Owyang, Groopman & Silva 2012; Jenkins 2006). The category of *converged media* has since emerged, which is defined as the use of "two or more channels of paid, earned and owned media ... characterised by a consistent storyline, look, and feel. All channels work in concert, enabling brands to read customers exactly where, how, and when they want, regardless of channel, medium, or device, online or offline" (Jenkins 2006). Converged media needs to be differentiated from *media convergence*, which, according to Jenkins (2006) includes, *inter alia*, the "flow of content across multiple platforms". It thus denotes access to and the sharing of content by stakeholders on numerous media platforms (Jenkins 2006). This study mainly explored how non-profit organisations embrace *media convergence*, which is summarised in table 3.6.

Table 3.6: Jenkins' (2006) media convergence category

Type of media	Characteristic/s and roles	Example/s
Media convergence	The use of multiple social media platforms to share the corporate brand message with stakeholders, and where content can be accessed	Sharing a story link or YouTube link in social media, using Periscope to live-stream an event on Twitter and Facebook

As mentioned earlier, the boundaries between the different classifications of social media are outwardly indistinct in that platforms could be associated with multiple groupings (cf. Brito 2013; Stephen & Galak 2012; Burcher 2012; Morris & Goldsworthy 2012; Cunningham 2012). Burcher (2012:22–23) emphasises the dynamic interaction between all three channels and the importance of using all three types cooperatively (Drell 2014:32; Brito 2013; Stephen & Galak 2012:624). Powell, Groves and Dimos (2011:3) and Burcher (2012:22) support this point, adding that not only do all three categories work alongside one another, but they also drive one another to ultimately obtain social media mentions and discussions.

With due consideration of the groupings in tables 3.5 and 36, combined with the challenges to derive a uniform classification of social media highlighted in this section, and acknowledging the previous boundaries, the proposed classification of Corcoran (2009) was broadly adopted in this study. Throughout the study, references are made to the following: media created by the organisation (owned); media that is paid (e.g. advertisements on social media platforms); media that are co-created by stakeholders (earned media or eWOM on different platforms); and the combination of different types of media (media convergence). No single classification of this concept was thus adopted, and the references were made with on the basis of the social media focus of the study and its key elements that allow unrestricted opportunities to create and share content.

Over time, the social media platforms have progressively become accessible through mobile devices that enable stakeholders to access these media at any location.

3.4.3 Social media access on mobile platforms

In the context of social media, the use of mobile media – or *wireless communication* (Cook & Muir 2010:370; cf. Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:230) – can be explained as direct and indirect communication, through many portable devices, which are accessible anywhere at any time and available to people *on the go* (Wilcox et al 2015:382; cf. Cook & Muir 2010:371; Murugesan 2010:17; Hearn et al 2009:51). The assertion is that coffee breaks are becoming *social media breaks* because of the ability of users to access social media applications at any location (Armano 2009) and without time boundaries. Alternatively referred to as *mobile-enabled content*, mobile media is suggested to have replaced personal (or desktop) computers and appears to be more commonly used for accessing the Web in some instances (Wilcox et al 2015:382; cf. Kaplan 2014b). Organisations can thus expect some of the social media platforms identified above to be accessible on both desktop and mobile platforms, although some are better optimised for mobile platforms (e.g. Instagram), while others are more tailored for a desktop (cf. Humphreys 2013:21).

The creation of powerful mobile devices allows social media access on mobile applications such as cellular phones (smartphones) and various hand-held devices, of which tablets are an example (Kaplan 2012:129; Belch & Belch 2012:13; Leiner, Cerf, Clark, Kahn, Kleinrock, Lynch, Postel, Roberts & Wolff 2009:31; cf. Wilcox et al 2015:382; Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:230). These devices merited a brief explanation in the context of this study owing to the belief that stakeholders who are active users may access and hence *use* social media tools via their cellular phones or other portable devices (Kaplan 2012:130). In line with the belief that all interactions contribute to a certain perception of a corporate brand, one could rightly argue that these mobile devices should be accepted as such a communication touch point. It is important to note Hearn et al's assertion (2009:51) that the *user* and not the *media* qualifies as mobile on account of the fact that mobile platforms support and afford users independence. Hence such mobile platforms become accessible at any location, as determined by the user, and at any time, which allows for the creation, adaption and sharing of content (Hinton & Hjorth 2013; Armano 2010; cf. Webster & Hume 2016).

Kaplan's (2012:131) definition of mobile social media emphasises the importance of these types of media for this study, provided it is accepted that UGC takes on various forms such as tweets, YouTube videos, photos and so on, which are created and widely shared by the organisation and among stakeholders via different social media platforms.

Although mobile social media brand communication is considered to mainly take the form of *company-to-consumer*, it could be argued that the value of such portable devices for communication by the organisation could ensure effortless integration into the ordinary lives of users, engagement in conversation, prompting stakeholders to produce UGC and sharing experiences online – irrespective of time and location (Kaplan 2012:134; cf. Kietzmann et al 2011:241). It is interesting to note that social media networks have mobile applications that permit organisations to achieve the above-mentioned goals (Kietzmann et al 2011:246; cf. Kaplan 2011). The view is that websites are invaluable for stakeholders to verify basic facts about the organisation, for example, contact details, staff numbers and financial information, and to access newsrooms, among other things. Besides, mobile devices can also act as a direct means of making content available such as articles, photos and feature stories (cf. Morris & Goldsworthy 2012:153). It is furthermore considered apposite to create general awareness of corporate brands – hence urging the non-profit organisation to *tell its story* and affording stakeholders similar opportunities (cf. Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:230). In fact it could be said that mobile social media enables stakeholders to engage in those conversations about and with the organisation that merit the attention of non-profit organisations.

Communication scholars emphasise the need for mobile-friendly content for a wider array of social media applications in addition to social networks, for example, website information and news releases to optimise viewing on mobile devices (Wilcox et al 2015:382; cf. Morris & Goldsworthy 2012:153). This consideration was addressed by Google in 2015 through the introduction of a *mobile-friendly algorithm*, which rates the pages as being *friendly* or *not friendly* (Schwartz 2015).

Statistics of social media users in Africa confirm the increase of social media usage on the continent. According to Parke (2016), in 2016, over 120 million people on the African continent used Facebook with over 80% on mobile devices. The South African *Social Media Landscape 2018 study* revealed that around 14 million users access social networks on mobile devices. This undoubtedly proves that social media has become part of daily life for many people and that the extensive use of cell phones is combined with their interest with social media. Despite geographical boundaries, mobile devices therefore serve to connect people via social media and afford organisations numerous opportunities to reach a wider audience. Although the present study did not specifically distinguish between the different methods of access, such as on mobile social media, it should be noted that these devices have bridged the digital divide between those with ready access to social media and those without.

The varied classifications of social media that are outwardly influenced by specific contexts and views, fail to provide insight into the elements that form the basis of this media. Comprehension of these elements is needed because they can be expected to be requisites for the functioning of social media.

3.5 FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

As stated earlier (see section 3.2), there are numerous definitions of and perspectives on social media and the sociality of this media that do not necessarily clarify the foundations of this phenomenon. This section highlights Web 2.0, UGC and community as *foundational elements* of this media, as contained in social media literature (cf. Kaplan & Haenlein 2010; cf. Ahlqvist et al 2008).

3.5.1 Web 2.0

The evolution of the Web has already extended beyond Web 2.0 to the development of Web 3.0 and Web 4.0 (also referred to as Web X.0), as mentioned in section 3.3. Web 1.0, 2.0, 3.0 and 4.0 should be understood as *phases* or *stages* of the Web's evolution, each of which is required for the next phase (Murugesan 2010). Each phase focuses on different objectives and features that address unique problems and build on the foundation of the previous version. Hence no single phase or stage can endure on its own and is reliant on the others.

This section focuses on Web 2.0 as a foundational element for social media, which endorses the purpose and action of this phase (Casoto, Dattolo, Omero, Pudota & Tasso 2006:312), namely that people are at its core and that it allows users to actively consume and produce content with a perceived value to the user and community (see section 3.3). This does not refute the possible future value and impact of Webs 3.0 and 4.0, but simply reflects the current state of social media as an Internet-based application supported by Web 2.0 elements – hence its suitability for this study.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61, 62) assert that although the concept of social media is often equated with Web 2.0 (cf. Schnekenberg 2009:509; Constantinides & Fountain 2008:232; cf. Berthon, Pitt, Planger & Shapiro 2012:262), it is necessary to differentiate between these concepts, as Web 2.0 forms one of the cornerstones of the foundation of social media and essentially allows social media to utilise its technologies. Web 2.0 primarily provides the possibility “to reply, to connect, to produce our own content and to go in for diversification, sharing and distribution in ways that are beyond control” (Juel 2012:767). Social media, in turn, utilises these opportunities by using the Web-based technologies to create platforms that allow individuals and communities to collaboratively “share, co-create, discuss and modify” content (Kietzmann et al 2011:241).

Although Web 2.0 is often merely used as a collective concept for the technological developments that allow for the continuous advancement of content and applications, its value to promote human interaction and engagement (Fernando 2010:500) by continuously finding ways in which technology can connect users, create communities and share knowledge and ideas (Harrison & Barthel 2014:157; Ryan 2012:13) was deemed important in terms of the focus of this study. The view is that human interaction also allows collaboration and the participation of stakeholders in communication and organisational activities (Vuori 2012:156; Ahlqvist et al 2010:4; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:61; Morrison 2009:2; O'Reilly 2005:1). These views were particularly relevant to this study because they reflect the social nature of social media technologies (Fernando 2010:500; Fuchs 2014a:37; see section 3.6.1.3), the human agency of stakeholders (Fuchs 2014a:37; see section 3.6.1.3) and participation by all users (see section 3.6.1.2).

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:60-61), Web 2.0 as a foundational element of social media, is dependent on an *ideological* and a *technological element*. The *ideological element* allows users to modify and apply content through participation and collaboration (as opposed to merely creating and publishing information) – hence acknowledging and allowing the contributions of users (Tredinnick 2006:231). It allows users to not only receive, but also to drive (initiate) communication (Torp 2009; Hearn et al 2009). Although not distinctly

emphasised by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), active participation by users serves to differentiate traditional and new media (Kochbar et al 2012:294; Rauniar et al 2013:196; Trainor 2012:317). This perspective is emphasised by Freberg (2013), who refers to the essence of social media in his comparison with traditional media, namely that social media is accessible, centralised, modifiable (see following section on user-generated content [UGC]), permits two-way communication and gives prominence to various types (see section 3.5). Likewise, it is about the participation of both the organisation and users or stakeholders (Safko & Brake 2009:65). The ideological element thus focuses on the *organisation* and *user* or *stakeholder*, as active participants in the context of this study. This element is closely linked to the foundational element – UGC – and for the purposes here, is distinguished in terms of its focus on the presence of the *technical elements* of Web 2.0 that allow *user participation and collaboration*.

The second consideration relating to Web 2.0 is the *technological element* that points to social media's dependence on a "set of basic functionalities" or collaborative technologies (Vuori 2012:156). Examples of such technical elements are Adobe Flash (a combination of animation and interactivity); really simple syndication (RSS), and asynchronous Java script AJAX) (Bonsón, et al 2012:123; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:61). The concept of Web 2.0 is regularly used to refer to a "set of technologies and tools" (Daume et al 2014:10; Mandiberg 2012:4; Ahlqvist et al 2010:3; Bonneau & Gensollen 2007:9) or "applications" of social media (Bonneau & Gensollen 2007:9) that allow users to create content. Combinations of these technologies create platforms for the "free exchange of information and content produced, edited and distributed by internet surfers, belonging to organised communities and brought together by common interests" (Mabillot 2007:39). Both social media and Web 2.0 can thus be regarded as Web-based phenomena (Toivonen 2007), and it can be concluded that these technical elements are needed for the functioning of the Web 2.0 and as well as social media.

It can thus be posited that Web 2.0, as a foundational element of social media, comprises both an *ideological* and a *technological element* that allows users to actively participate in human interaction (such as to connect, share and communicate), and provide the required technical foundations to facilitate such online participation and collaboration in content-related activities, respectively. Such connectivity of users (the ideological element) is deemed to be closely related to technology (the technological element) and the way stakeholders are reached. The resultant claim by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) is supported in that these elements are interdependent and prerequisites for the interaction of social media users (cf. Hanna et al 2011:266). Also, it can be argued that the technological element, by providing the necessary technologies, could serve as the *means* that allow users to achieve certain desired goals or *ends*, such as to connect, share or communicate as part of the ideological element. For this

study and the primary objective of this chapter to explore social media, it was thus essential to recognise that Web 2.0 and its interdependent elements serve as a basis for social media.

3.5.2 User-generated content (UGC)

UGC can broadly be understood to include different types of content or “material products” that are freely available, created and shared by end-users (Mandiberg 2012:2). As suggested earlier, the focus of this foundational element of social media shifts from technical elements that enable participation (the ideological element of Web 2.0) per se, to the creation of *content*.

Content is at the core of social media and refers to information and data that are commonly created and shared among social media users through a variety of social media platforms such as, *inter alia*, Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia and Flickr (Raunier et al 2013:202; Morris & Goldsworthy 2012:153; Handley 2010:52; Marketo 2010:12; Madia & Borgese 2010:3, 12; Timoney 2010:52; Drury 2008:274; see sections 3.4.2 and 3.6.2). Despite some views that consider social media to be mainly concerned with the ways people *use* social media, no clear explanation is given of what elements might qualify as *content* (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:61). This said, *content* could be understood as useful and relevant information intended to educate, assist or be of interest to users (Handley 2010:52). It is furthermore evident that content needs to be of high quality that depends on different factors such as the organisation’s goals, audiences, resources and the time available (Handley 2010:52). Other scholars, such as Ahlqvist et al (2008:13) and Safko and Brakes (2009:6), consider broader perspectives of what could be considered as *content* in a social media context, and they refer to social media as allowing participants to *interact* and *comment*, and *converse* (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:61). In accordance with the social media and communication focus of the study, *content* was thus seen to comprise more than simply information, but actually also refers to data and communication such as conversations and eWOM that are created, shared and adapted by means of a variety of social media (cf. Handley 2010:52).

Content created by individual users takes on many different forms of which “encyclopedic collections of knowledge”, videos on YouTube, encyclopaedia articles in Wikipedia” (Agarwal, Gupta & Kraut 2008:244), Twitter tweets, retweets and hashtags, Facebook status updates, posts, reposts, tagging, videos on YouTube, images and blogs are examples (Sachan & Emmanuel 2011:145; Ahlqvist et al 2010:4; Handley 2010:52; Parent et al 2011:222). In this sense, content can hence be understood as the product of social interaction permitted by social media platforms in many formats as mentioned here. Importantly, and from the organisation’s perspective as a user, content generated by it might be considered in terms of the classification as owned, paid or earned media, as previously discussed in section 3.4.2. Since owned and paid media via social media platforms are primarily created and controlled

and paid for by the organisation, it can be said that the UGC created for and on these platforms is produced by the organisation. There are numerous examples of such content, namely blog posts, infographics, videos, website content and images. Conversations can also be categorised as products of social interactions and qualify as *earned media*, and they are arguably of significant value in creating widespread discussions about a corporate brand and advancing the brand name (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis 2014:333; cf. Tsao & Hsieh 2012:821). Contrary to the interpretation that earned media is largely beyond the organisation's control, actions such as reposts, reviews and retweets, could allow the organisation to react to these conversations.

UGC is characterised by user participation in *content creation* rather than simply consuming content (Agichtein, Castillo, Donato, Gionis Mishne 2008:183; Finkbeiner 2013:7). This defining feature of social media allows users to create, share or adapt existing content (Evans 2010:16; Franklin, Hogan, Langley, Mosdell & Pill 2009:212) and is labelled *prosumers*, based on the ability to jointly produce and consume content (Rakić & Rakić 2014:197; George, Paul & Nathan 2012:397; Jurgenson 2011; cf. Fuchs 2014a; see section 3.5.2). The *sharing* of UGC allows content creators to express and share opinions and experiences with others (Tsao & Hsieh 2012:821, cf. Kietzmann et al 2011:245; Parent et al 2011:220; Rajapat 2009:28; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler 2004). Hence the organisation can anticipate that stakeholders will participate in creating and sharing the content it creates (see section 3.6.1.2). Nonetheless, such sharing could perceptibly contribute to the building of relationships that is determined by the functional objective of each type of social media and takes place by means of any of the different *types* of content (preceding paragraph), such as the intention to connect with friends on Facebook (posts and reposts) or Twitter (tweets and retweets) (cf. Kietzmann et al 2011:245). True to the nature of social media, eWOM and conversations seemingly occur in an uncontrolled fashion, which in this way challenges organisations in terms of governing the content in an online environment. On this point, Du Plessis (2014) asserts that in actual fact, control over the brand message is already lost once it has been distributed on social media platforms.

Traditionally, organisations acted as the main initiators and senders of information, and in this sense, controlled the communication to stakeholders. In the social media era in which discussions on the corporate brand are unrestricted, it is thus essential for organisations to stay informed about this (cf. Hoffman & Novak 2009:32). So-called online *brand ambassadors*, by sharing their experiences of a brand with their respective networks, could provide a solution to the uncontrolled online discussions about organisations (Hoffman & Novak 2009:32; Li & Bernoff 2008:130). Baer (2015) distinguishes between a *brand ambassador* and a *brand influencer* (cf. Du Plessis 2015:88). The former is perceived to be someone who passionately

champions a brand in the long term, whereas the latter is someone who is less committed to a brand but who could increase brand awareness and promote conversation and excitement about the brand in the short term to a wide audience (Baer 2015; cf. Du Plessis 2015; Moriarty et al 2015:142). Evans (2010:318) actually recommends that organisations should aim to build relationships with their influencers on account of their importance for the organisation. In addition, Barger and Labrecque (2013:68, 70) identify a *brand advocate* as someone who can actively create and upload social media content to promote the corporate brand. Brand advocates have seemingly progressed from being passive bystanders to active promoters of the brand which, if compared to an influencer, are more devoted to the corporate brand and can thus be regarded as more valuable in this sense (*ibid*:69). With reference to UGC, it is thus fair to expect influencers and advocates to create and share content with a wider audience, and as such they could escalate conversations about a corporate brand on social media (cf. Du Plessis 2017b:367; Baer 2015). Another consideration, as proposed by Du Plessis (2014), is the value of a *message strategy* that could prove useful in guiding these unregulated conversations. Hence perceptions of the corporate brand could be improved when the organisation intentionally incorporates its stakeholders and also their conversations into their communication strategies (cf. Li & Bernoff 2008:130).

Against the above background and supported by views in social media literature, content can be classified as *created*, *co-created*, and *curated* (Rakić & Rakić 2014:197; Leroux Miller 2013:204, 275; Mullan 2011). *Created content* is created by the organisation and shared with its stakeholders on multiple platforms (Leroux Miller 2013:204). This includes basically every type of content in social media that significantly also requires the organisation to follow up on pertinent issues and topics. Examples include corporate brand stories, social media updates, photos and YouTube videos, and original content based on issues raised in conversations with participants, brand ambassadors, brand influencers and brand advocates (Leroux Miller 2013:198; 275; Barger & Labrecque 2013:69). Non-profit organisations should be mindful that content published on a particular social media platform needs to be repurposed to be appropriate for other types of social media (Barger & Labrecque 2013:179). *Co-created content* recognises the participation of both the stakeholders and organisation in the creation of content primarily permitted by social media (Rakić & Rakić 2014:197; see section 3.4.2). Integration of social media content inevitably focuses on the content created by stakeholders or UGC and not only the content created by the organisation, and includes consideration of the value of such a co-creation (cf. Rakić & Rakić 2014:197; Pongsakornrungsil & Schroeder (2011:304). Similar to social media content, the *types* of co-created content are distinct to each organisation and determined by its mission and vision or, as in the case of the non-profit sector, also the *cause* of the non-profit. It may include trending topics, questions and answers,

summaries of debates, corporate brand stories and views of or research by stakeholders, such as experts, board members, stakeholders, brand influencers and advocates (see sections 3.5.2 and 3.5.3). Given the importance of storytelling by stakeholders as a corporate branding technique aimed at driving communication about the non-profit brand, it can be deduced that stakeholders should be prompted to share their experiences by means of storytelling (see section 2.6.1.3, chapter 2). Moreover, to solicit UGC, organisations should request stakeholders to comment on shared stories and curated content (see the discussion below), and also to share pictures and videos. *Curated or repurposed content* is described as the continuous effort by a person or *content curator* to aggregate (finding and organising information by means of an automated process), curate (identifying the most relevant content) and analyse (providing the curator's viewpoint) the most appropriate online content for an audience or stakeholder on a specific topic (various definitions in Cohen 2013; Leroux Miller 2013:267). Furthermore, it is deemed to specifically meet the constant need for content by selecting and sharing content created by others, including similar organisations, on topics or causes that are of relevance to them (Du Plessis 2014). Curated content could be sourced by, *inter alia*, following the *hashtags* and keywords of a particular industry, creating lists of industry keywords and influencers and advocates, and even following competitors and prominent people (Milbrath 2013). *Hashtags* are represented by the symbol "#" and used to organise topics or keywords within a Tweet. This allows conversations with the same topic and prefixed with the # symbol to be recognised and tracked (Neff & Moss 2011:199-200; Kanter 2009; cf. Hashtag analytics for ... [sa]). Curated content should be sourced by using available technology to search for information and posts on designated topics, considering the latest news and possible impact on the organisation, links to news from competing or similar organisations, and obtaining relevant information from industry conferences (Cohen 2013; Leroux Miller 2013:268).

According to Milbrath (2014), social media content tends to be restricted to information sharing rather than to strive for true engagement, and thus proposes the "social media rule of thirds" to ensure content is balanced – that is, it attracts and engages stakeholders (cf. Leroux Miller 2013:200). This rule states that a third of social media content should be about the organisation or corporate brand and its own content (created or original), another third should be based personal interactions views and stories that promote the brand (co-created), and the last third should share ideas from industry leaders or stakeholders (curated or repurposed) (*ibid*). The non-profit organisation should have clarity on which social media content will be created by the organisation and the content it wishes to solicit from stakeholders or other sources. A content plan could help to plan and illustrate the content mix of *thirds* by identifying

how the editorial calendar will be filled with created, co-created and curated content (Leroux Miller 2013:200).

As explained above, it is evident that the foundational elements of social media as discussed, promote human interaction particularly through the ideological element of Web 2.0, and hence the creation and sharing of UGC. In addition, the literature supports the notion that the *community* could likewise serve as a main element of social media, based on its concern with human interaction between participants (Ahlqvist et al 2008:4; cf. Arman 2014:121). The sharing of UGC through social media interaction, as outlined in this section, seems to be a significant reason why users associate with one another and form communities that are centred around their common interests (Kietzmann et al 2011:245; Nair 2011:50; Mayo 2009). Based on the outlooks presented in this section, it is evident that non-profit organisations should consider all three foundational elements when utilising social media to communicate.

3.5.3 Community

Human interaction is a social characteristic of social media, suggesting it should be considered as a distinct foundational element (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). In a community, the desire for human interaction is the primary reason why people become and remain community members (Gordon 2011:114). *Community* [*Gemeinschaft*] is not a novel concept and was conceived by Ferdinand Tönnies in the 1880s. It centres around the need to *belong*, and the importance of collaboration and participation “as a form of sociality” (Fuchs 2014a:39; Sullivan 2009). An early definition views community as any “*set of social relations that are bound together by a sense of community*” (Chavis & Newbrough 1986:335). It can thus be assumed that the existence of social relations (Ahlqvist et al 2010:4; Sullivan 2009) and a desire to belong are prerequisites for creating a community.

In the context of social media, communities form online and are also known as *virtual* or *online communities*. The following definition of such communities was adopted for the purposes of the current study: “groups of people with common interests and practices that communicate regularly and for some duration in an organized way over the Internet” (Ridings, Gefen & Arinze 2002:273).

The transformation of the Web from an information platform to a community platform (Ahlqvist et al 2010:5; Toivonen 2007:10), alongside the notion that social media is community driven (Fernando 2010:511), further justifies community as the third cornerstone of the social media foundation. Since its initial design and introduction, the Internet has been associated with the formation of communities and has subsequently evolved to meet this objective (Wang et al 2012:782). Early communities comprising researchers, academics and Internet developers

have over time evolved to include a broader user and commercial community (Leiner et al 2009:29) with the potential to include all people globally. The interdependence of the Internet and community is highlighted in the following view: “The Internet is as much a collection of communities as a collection of technologies, and its success is largely attributed to both satisfying basic community needs as well as utilizing the community in an effective way to push the infrastructure forward” (*ibid*).

The transition of the Internet to a community platform allows communities to fulfil a crucial role as “communication and discussion platforms”, suggesting that communities steadily become key in stakeholder dialogue and relationship building (Ahlqvist et al 2008:5, 6; cf. Arman 2014:121). Social media allows individuals to interact through UGC and eventually become members of global communities (Rauniar et al 2013:196), thus also generating opportunities for organisations to engage in dialogue and strengthen relationships on a global scale (Ahlqvist et al 2008:6). It is a recognised business platform, but also a *community* “where people gather, connect, and communicate” (Nair 2011:50) that centres around *common interests* of stakeholders and acknowledges the catalytic role of communication in creating community (Ledingham 2003:190). On this point, the significance of *brand influencers* and *advocates* in creating and extending the awareness of a brand as raised earlier is of particular relevance mainly because of, *inter alia*, their potential to extend awareness of and credibility for a brand, and to develop brand communities (cf. Du Pleesis 2017:367; see section 3.5.2; cf. Moriarty et al 2015:142).

According to Boster, Kotowski, Andrews and Serota (2011:180), online communities comprise, *inter alia*, well-connected individuals which they term “mavens”. Their thinking is based on an experiment by Travers and Milgram (1969), who indicated the existence and impact of a few influential and well-known people with the aptitude to connect widely dispersed audiences around certain topics and interests. Non-profit organisations should be committed to identify, acknowledge and exploit the connectivity of these individuals in order to unite stakeholders into communities. In context, organisations need to realise the importance of being part of online communities and to be involved in their conversations. Staying informed about what is said could benefit them by providing opportunities to respond to those conversations, which could affect the impression stakeholders have of the corporate brand.

In the context of the study, non-profit organisations should be concerned with the concept of *brand community*, which is defined as a “specialised, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand” (Muniz & O’Guinn 2010:412). According to Daw et al (2011:175, 177), brand communities are built and grown

by nurturing and empowering supporters who are inspired by the cause of the corporate brand. Such intentions require an attentiveness to the needs and beliefs of these groups (*ibid*:177). For the non-profit sector, the ultimate aim should be to build strong relationships with like-minded stakeholders that could promote loyalty to the brand (Bagozzi & Dholakia 2006:46; cf. Zaglia 2013:216). The literature reveals that despite the wealth of research on brand community in the for-profit sector, the opposite unfortunately applies to the non-profit sector (Thorsteinsson & Casalini 2015:27).

Following the viewpoints presented in this section, the conclusion drawn is that social media centres around empowered users, supported by technological elements (Web 2.0), the participation of all stakeholders in the creation and sharing of content (UGC) and a desire for human interaction as part of a community (through their interaction with one another).

The purpose of this section was twofold: firstly, to advance the insights obtained thus far by exploring the elements inherent in the social media concept and conceptualising it in a non-profit setting; and secondly, to explore the theories that support these key elements.

3.6 KEY ELEMENTS AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

The endeavour to gain an understanding of the key elements of social media, and also to establish a theoretical grounding for the focus on social media proved challenging because of the dearth of social media theory pertinent to the current study. This section sets out, firstly, to highlight some key elements of the concept found in social media literature through deductive reasoning, and secondly, to elaborate on these elements by providing a concise overview of theories relating to the concept. Owing mainly to the lack of social media theory, particularly from a corporate branding and non-profit perspective, the selection of theories in subsection 3.6.2 was guided by the views of Fuchs (2008), who maintains that the classical outlooks of Durkheim (1982), Marx and Engels (1846), and Weber (1978) are directly related to the elements of social media identified in section 3.6.1. The contemporary theories discussed are thus considered to be progressions of these classical suppositions.

3.6.1 Key elements of social media for non-profit organisations

In light of the view that social media is not a *new* phenomenon (see section 3.3), it can be accepted that some of the key elements of social media, such as participation, connectedness, the social of social media, interaction, presence, interactivity and conversations are not entirely new either (cf. Păun 2009; Haven 2008; Mayfield 2008). Nonetheless, considering the significant changes to the way stakeholders connect with others and the world (Gordhamer

2009), which are obviously embedded in the communication context of social media, it can be expected that an overview of these elements of social media necessitates a firm focus on such a context when considering the elements of social media. Key elements of relevance to this study are discussed in the sections below in no particular sequence.

3.6.1.1 Social media connectedness or connectivity

Connectedness or connectivity is a characteristic of social media that can be understood as the linking of “sites, resources, and people” (Onete et al 2011:738; Mayfield 2008:5), which is associated with a social life (cf. Whiting & Williams 2013:366). Here, the reference to *social media* serves to underline the setting of this section, namely the linking of users as facilitated by social media. Social media technologies allow organisations and individuals to communicate with broad global audiences who have access to social media and information and create a “24/7 collaborative world”, in which they can effortlessly stay connected every moment of the day and night and in which all participants actively play interchangeable roles as creators, senders and recipients (Hanna et al 2011:267; Burcher 2012:14; Jue et al 2010:31 cf. Rakić & Rakić 2014:197; De Choudhury, Sundaram, John & Seligmann 2010:62; Kochbar et al 2012:294).

Hanna et al (2011:267) assert that the real power of the social media is about large collections of users who are typically joined to others in networked structures (Schoen et al 2013:532; Bechmann & Lomborg 2012:767; Berthon et al 2012:264). According to Ahlqvist et al (2010:4), one of the main *drivers* for social media is the “basic human need for creating and maintaining contacts” with others – in other words, to be connected to other people socially who are most common to Facebook, Twitter and Google Plus (Bechmann & Lomborg 2012:767). Accordingly, it can be said that social media concerns human relationships (cf. Li & Bernhoff (2008:18). This need for human contact and interaction is also described as *social networking*, which naturally results in *conversation* (see section 3.6.1.7). These connections primarily occur through the sharing of objects, also known as UGC, which include, *inter alia*, text, video and links (Kietzmann et al 2011:245), but also through computer networks (Fuchs 2014a).

Connectedness in a social media environment can be explained on the basis of Fuchs’ (2014a:37) view that media are techno-social systems and not technologies, comprising both “information and communication technologies” and human activities. In such systems, technologies fulfil a twofold role, namely to permit or limit human activities, and then also to produce, distribute and consume the outcome of these activities (Fuchs 2008:122; 2014a:37). These systems are connected in a cyclical process in which networks of computers allow networks of users to create content that is distributed once again by means of these technologies. Fuchs (2014a:37) contends that the Internet is made up of a technological

infrastructure and interacting humans, termed a "technological system" (or computer network) and a "social subsystem" (social network), respectively. It allows for the connectedness or connectivity between networks of computers and networks of humans, and in terms of social media, has to do with the human agency or human element of the techno-social system (*ibid*). It can thus be deduced that social media, as an Internet application, comprises and requires both the technology and social network systems, which, combined with human action and interaction, qualify to be recognised as such. Here, *social connectedness* emphasises the capability of social media to connect humans, and in this way to enable "communication, collaboration, and the sharing of vital information" (Jue et al 2010:34).

The social media eco-system consists of different online communities in which members are connected through *ties*, referred to as *simple connections* (Kane et al 2014:282) or "social ties" (Fueller, Schroll, Dennhardt & Hutter 2012:3218). A definition formulated as early as the 1980s by Chavis and Newbrough (1986:335), suggests that these social connections or ties are key to creating social relations and the formation of communities. The earlier discussion of community as a foundational element of social media, and the prominence of social media to facilitate human interaction needed to create or form these communities, underscores the relevance of this view by Chavis and Newbrough (see section 3.5.3).

The competitive marketplace increasingly requires organisations to establish more enduring stakeholder relationships or *connections* (Rapp, Beitelspacher, Grewal & Hughes 2013:41; Yang & Lim 2009). According to Trainor (2012:319), individuals increasingly rely on social media to stay connected with others, and organisations likewise realise the importance of these links to ultimately manage relationships and increase engagement (cf. Kent & Taylor 2002:27).

The views highlighted above focus on the need for people to be in contact with one another. It is evident that social media offers the non-profit sector opportunities to create such connections between stakeholders and also with the organisation. Ideally, social media should be used to powerfully drive corporate brand communication and connect stakeholders through, say, the sharing of corporate brand stories. Hence it is imperative for this sector to know which platforms are popularly used by their stakeholders and apply suitable social media platforms to reach and connect with them. Moreover, non-profit organisations might offer their stakeholders a reason to connect, based on knowledge of what experiences would drive them to action. The desire of humans to be joined to others is seemingly linked to the sharing of common interests and convictions, which could prompt them to connect and also advance the formation of communities around non-profit causes. Social media should serve as catalyst of

conversations about the non-profit organisation and what it stands for in these communities, simply because of its capability to connect stakeholders

3.6.1.2 Participation

In social media literature, the concept of participation or participatory approach is often used to depict the active involvement of all participants (senders and receivers) in creating (or contributing to) social media content (Fuchs 2014a:52; Bechmann & Lomborg 2012:767; Trainor 2012:317; Cammaerts 2008:358) and to contest the traditional broadcast (information distribution) model that is characterised by a one-to-many communication approach (Fuchs 2014a:52). Participation is effected by technological advances such as social media that alter the flow of communication by allowing users to actively participate in creating communication content and take part in communication, thus transforming traditional consumers (receivers) into creators (senders) (Hearn et al 2009:49; Jenkins 2006; see section 3.5.2). Participation via social media permits all users and participants to actively create and share content, participate in conversation and fulfil these roles interchangeably (Hearn et al 2009:49; Rauniar et al 2013:196). In addition, stakeholders are increasingly expecting to actively participate in these activities, and the concepts of *participation*, *participative* and *collaboration* exemplify such involvement by social media users (cf. Beer & Burrows 2007). This feature could possibly allow both stakeholders and the non-profit sector to become consumers and creators of content through their active use of social media tools and applications and to exercise their right to have a greater say in organisational matters (Saxton 2005:35; cf. Madia & Borgese 2010:24). Stakeholder expectations in terms of value have shifted from materialistic issues to increased involvement in all organisational activities, such as decision making, content creation and communication (Madia & Borgese 2010:24).

However, in some instances, the use of concepts, such as *participatory culture* or *approach*, to explain the empowerment of social media users is strongly opposed. Fuchs (2014a:53; 2008:139, 150) questions the relevance of these concepts and opposes their use to describe users' contributions and involvement in producing social media content. Fuchs (2014a:53; 2008:139, 150) argues that existing views on the relationship between social media and participatory culture and their use to portray social media's role in creating a more democratic culture and society, are most idealistic and by all accounts do not take note of the "broader notion of participatory democracy" (Fuchs 2014a:53, 65). As a scholar of social media, internet and society, and the political economy of media and communication, his views on matters such as "ownerships of platforms/companies, collective decision-making, profit, class, and the distribution of material benefits" that are presently being overlooked, raise pertinent issues that warrant future investigation from a critical outlook (Fuchs 2014a:54, 55). Fuchs'

reasoning is mainly based on the view that the Internet is currently mainly capitalist in nature and serves corporate interests, in that it accumulates capital when purposively targeting individuals, say, when targeted advertising is undertaken, based on user data available on social media (Fuchs 2014b).

In a non-profit context, the opportunities stakeholders have to participate both as creators and consumers of social media content are appreciated. This immediately highlights the role of all participants in unrestricted conversations, as alluded to in previous sections. The non-profit organisation should acknowledge the potency of social media to allow two-way communication and sanction all to contribute to the creation and consumption of social media content. In addition, this suggests the need for this sector to realise that stakeholders are increasingly afforded opportunities to be part of discussions with and about the non-profit organisation, and to know which stakeholders are fundamental to its success.

3.6.1.3 The social or sociality of social media

An equally important feature of social media centres on the *social* aspect of social media that ties in closely with the discussion above on connectedness (see section 3.6.1.1). Attempts in the literature to describe and explain the meaning of *the social* in social media or the *sociality* of social media, often revert to a simplistic view that the social is about *being social* and fail to clarify this concept. In many instances, discussions neglect the social element and merely concentrate on social media technology and the existing types available, while it could be argued that the focus should be on human relationships (Li & Bernoff 2008:18; Drury 2008:274). Based on an overview of the literature, it is posited that consideration should be given to both the social media platforms and the social element of social media, when formulating guiding points for social media brand communication. Since this study focused on social media, it was deemed necessary to understand *the social* to appreciate the different views on the concept when referring to and considering this media. The view of boyd (2009) that a “great deal of sociality is about engaging with publics”, justifies the need to investigate the topic and to consider the different types of social forms of social media. The existence of *the social* is reflected in Fuchs’ (2014a:37) views on how different networks are connected by stating that the question of *the social* or the *sociality* of social media deals with the human agency or social subsystems, and can be understood on the basis of different perspectives of what it means to be social (cf. Dean 2014:22–23; Weber 2012:342). This is supported by Finkbeiner (2013:6), who asserts that the use of *social* as an adjective when referring to social media, not only indicates the importance of interaction, but also strongly suggests a human presence when applying this media. The requisite for human *action* to qualify as social is therefore confined to instances where the behaviour of others is taken into account (Fuchs

2008:126). It is supported by prevalent views that social media is inherently social (Avery, Larisky, Amador, Ickowitz, Primm & Taylor 2010b:337; Drury 2008:274); is an extension of the “human faculty of exchange and collaboration” (Fernando 2010:500); is mainly people-centric (Murugesan 2010:3), allows “social contact with others” (cf. Whiting & Williams 2013:366); has people at its core (Rajapat 2009:29); suggests “two-way interaction” (Dean 2014:2); and is “just about being human beings” (Mayfield 2007:7; cf. Li & Bernoff 2008:18).

Fuchs (2014a; cf. 2014b:58) proposes four perspectives based on different scholarly views that could contribute to a clearer understanding of the social nature of social media, namely information and cognition, communication, community, and collaboration and cooperative work.

Information and cognition provide a broad understanding of sociality and are based mainly on the idea that all media, technologies, features and actions are in essence *social*, because they are created “in society by humans” (Fuchs 2014a:4; cf. Limberg & Sundin 2006). Such understanding would thus classify television, radio, books and other forms of information, including Web technologies and certain social media types that mainly contain information such as blogs, as social. Although these media are products of “humans in social relations”, human interaction is not present and they do not support “direct communication between humans” (Fuchs 2014a:6, 38). Examples are Amazon.com and Ebay.com, which mainly provide information, but do not support communication per se. This view correlates with the information distribution approach of Web 1.0.

Fuchs (2014:5) maintains that media can also be understood to be social if *communication*, as a form of the social, takes place between humans. Preconditions, according to Fuchs (2013; 2014a), include the involvement of at least two people, in a reciprocal process, in which symbols with a specific meaning are exchanged to allow interaction between them, and the emphasis is on social relations as a result of meaningful symbolic interaction between humans (Fuchs 2014a:5, 39). This element acknowledges communication as the basis of society and all human activity, and relates to the communication approach of Web 2.0 (Fuchs 2014a:5). It is arguably linked to the requisite that a brand and its communication could be *humanised*, because of the idea that the participants in or users of social media are *people* – not organisations – who need to associate with the source of the message cognisant of issues such as authenticity, which was raised in chapter 2 (Hinchcliffe 2007; cf. Vermeren 2015). In this regard, Smith (2010:197) draws a connection between humanising the brand and responsiveness or timely online responses to stakeholder’s comments, posts and so on. According to Smith (*ibid*), timeous responses may demonstrate the organisation as a caring and listening organisation.

The third perspective of sociality is *community* and the role of continuous communication in converting social relationships to a need to *belong* (Smith 2010:197; cf. Kapferer 2012). In terms of social media, this is not a new concept, and in the 1980s, the desire to create communities was expressed through the advent of earlier virtual communities and social network sites such as WELL and Open Diary (see section 3.3). Furthermore, the Internet as a social media platform, comprises collections of communities and technologies, all of which contribute to its success (see sections 3.5.2 and 3.5.3). Although Fuchs (2014a) relates this form of the social (*community*) mainly to Web 3.0, one could argue that the focus on community creation has already existed since the evolution of the Internet, and that Web 2.0 currently acts as a community platform. Following a corporate brand perspective, the view exists that a brand should create a community (Kapferer 2012). Hence a non-profit brand using social media to communication will inevitably aim to create a community of stakeholders on which its survival depends.

Fuchs (2014a) identifies *collaboration* and *cooperative work* as the last form of the *social*, and this is associated with Web 4.0 (Web X.0). This form resorts under computer-supported cooperative work (CSCW), and is a specialised research area into how computers permit cooperation and collaboration of remote groups of individuals working on projects (Fuchs 2014a:5). The editing of articles on Wikipedia and the shared writing of documents on Google Docs are examples of such collaborative work, with more recent platforms being Wikipedia, and the like (*ibid*).

Furthermore, Fuchs (2014a:6) maintains that a type of social media could support one or more than one of these forms of sociality. Hence a particular type of social media such as Facebook could involve three types of sociality, namely communication, community and information, and to a lesser or no extent, collaborative contributions. Despite Fuchs' (2014a) comprehension of *the social*, it is evident that efforts to specify which meaning of the social are used at any given time, may not yet be a reality yet or may depend on the stance adopted. On this point, his Fuchs' critical thinking about social media and civil society is expressed in his philosophy that nowadays, corporate social media cannot be viewed as being entirely *social* and thus for the following factors: a real need to comprehend basic concepts; the impact of current pressing issues such as ownership; the exploitation of user contributions; and the reality of capitalism in the business world that seemingly inhibits the anticipated sociality of this media (Fuchs 2014a:256). Notwithstanding his views, the social element (or human agency) of this media does exist and merits investigation and consideration by communication practitioners.

Moreover, there is evidence that the sociality of this phenomenon can also be considered to be the *product* or the “sum” of social activities (Finkbeiner 2013:7), and it is mostly used to

describe the social aspect or the art of communication in media (Onete et al 2011:737). The actions of users to share and respond to online information through creating, modifying and commenting on others' content exemplifies the social capabilities or social aspects of social media (Hocevar 2013:2; cf. Kietzmann et al 2011:245; Madia & Borgese 2010:3, 12). Thus, content created by users, such as video, blog postings and the like, could be viewed as the *objects* around which sociality occurs. Based on this perspective, one could argue that each of type of sociality – information and cognition, communication, and collaboration and cooperative work – as defined by Fuchs (2014a) is viewed as products or outcomes around which sociality occurs. In this sense, social media can be equated with human action or action of a social nature (Agresta & Bough 2011:2).

In sum, and according to the literature, *the social* of social media can be understood on the basis of the following viewpoints: Firstly, it pertains to the fact that the social is intrinsically part of human nature or agency – in other words, that it is a characteristic of humans. Secondly, it can be considered according to the primary objective or the purpose of the media, including to inform, communicate, create community or collaborate, or any combination typical to a specific social media platform. Thirdly, the social can also be regarded as the product or sum of all social activities. Actions such as sharing and creating content or commenting on others' contributions thus demonstrates *the social* capabilities or *the sociality* of social media. A distinction can be drawn between *the social* and *social interaction*, based on the purpose of social interaction that outwardly refers to *being in contact* with others, as per Goffman's (1967) view discussed in section 3.6.1.4. Nonetheless, it is evident that the sociality of this media is a complex issue that needs thorough contemplation before deciding which type of the social is addressed.

This element of social media – *the social* – can be understood primarily as referring to the social nature of humans and also based on the first view explained above. Non-profit organisations should take cognisance of the desire of stakeholders to be *social*, because this drives and influences other elements of social media, such as being connected or being part of a community. This said, it can be assumed that stakeholders of non-profit organisations would naturally seek encounters with others on topics that are central to the existence of the corporate brand. As such, the organisation should accommodate this element by instituting apt social media platforms to enable social connections with stakeholders and between them. As with many of the elements investigated in this section, the desire to be *social* will drive stakeholders to connect or interact, and this could also benefit the non-profit organisation in gaining loyal support.

The concepts, *the social* and *social interaction*, are closely intertwined and therefore need to be differentiated. Based on the background in this section and for the purposes of the current study, *the social* or *sociality* and *social interaction* are respectively understood as referring to the need and desire for interaction and connection with others, and the actual social action taken to satisfy this need.

3.6.1.4 Social interaction

Goffmans' (1967:5) seminal view that we live in a world of "social encounters" and are constantly in contact with other people, is particularly relevant today because, as he indicates, this contact or interaction may be face to face or mediated (cf. Sandstrom 2011; Ahlqvist et al 2008:13; Thompson 1994:35) and thus applies to the era of social media and mediated communication. To align his view to the focus of this study, some adaptations to his views on interaction were required. First, his reference to face-to-face contact during that time, restricted interaction to a specific geographical setting, whereas at present, social media allows online interaction with "widely dispersed others" that may take place speedily or over extended periods (Hocevar 2013:1; Divol et al 2012). Secondly, he maintains that when individuals of a particular group are in one another's presence, the collection of interactions on such occasions will qualify as an *interaction* or *encounter* (see also Goffman 1959:26). Social media interactions are not limited to a particular group of individuals who are physically present in the same place as in these early years, but in fact they include interactions between many to many, requiring an online or virtual presence (see section 3.6.1.5). Hence the collection of interactions or encounters will only qualify as a *social interaction* if these take place between many individuals or groups, in an online space at any given time. Goffman's (1959) view that people use communication to connect with one another deemed to be particularly relevant in the present context, as social media in essence allows them to connect and interact through creating and sharing content to thus fulfil this basic human need (see sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.4).

Furthermore, the significance of interaction via social media is imbedded in acts of human communication and may thus be viewed as *products* of such behaviour (Finkbeiner 2013:6). It would be fair to say that social media interaction directly involves communication behaviour, that is expressed in different forms, such as blog comments, online messages, online conversations around shared media artefacts (sharing a personal video), social actions (voting on the social bookmarking site Digg, or using the "like" feature on Facebook, and Tweets on Twitter) (Fischer & Reuber 2011:15; De Choudhury et al 2010:63, 64). Social interaction is also driven by reversed communication roles played by producers and consumers of social

media when engaging in interactive communication exchanges (Bechmann & Lomborg 2012:676).

Social interaction perceptively constitutes the following three elements: a *channel* through which the interaction takes place; the *content* communicated through the channel; and the *impact*, which is the “ultimate effect of others’ actions” (Godes, Mayzlin, Chen, Das, Dellarocas, Pfeiffer, Libai, Sen, Shi & Verlegh 2005:417). Such an *impact* relates closely to some of the key principles of symbolic interactionism, as discussed in section 3.6.2.3, namely that people act according to the meaning they attach to actions or symbols, with social interaction central to creating such meanings (cf. Sandstrom & Kleinman 2005). Meaning can be defined as the “whole way in which we understand, explain, feel about, and react towards a given phenomenon” (Rosengren 2000:59), and in terms of social action in the current study, refers to the *entire way in which stakeholders understand, experience and react towards their environment and others*. In other words, the impact or result of social interaction is dependent on and determined by people’s understanding of either the symbols or others’ actions applied during interaction. Alongside this, it could qualify as a reciprocal process during which symbols or meaning are likewise learnt through social interaction.

In the online world, a potential benefit of social media interaction for an organisation is to achieve many goals, *inter alia*, to establish relationships and attain personal or business goals such as developing brand reputation (Onete et al 2011 743, 737; Fischer & Reuber 2011:1; Fueller et al 2012:3218; cf. Scott & Jacka 2011:21). Both these goals are vital to the organisation because quality relationships are key to achieving organisational goals (De Bussy 2013; Grunig & Grunig 2013:53). Relationships can therefore be considered significant outcomes of social interaction between individuals, and between the organisation and its stakeholders, which are permitted by social media (cf. Scott & Jacka 2011:21). Based on the above-mentioned background, social interaction for this study was thus understood as *the continuous encounters between organisations and stakeholders that take place on social media platforms, through sharing content and considering the effect thereof on all*.

Considering the social nature or sociality of this media (see section 3.6.1.3), it would thus be reasonable to state that social media might afford non-profit organisations opportunities to become part of their stakeholders’ *social life* and to interact and engage with them (Finkbeiner 2013:6; Fischer & Reuber 2011:1; Curtis et al 2010:90). The perceived value of the interaction between organisations and stakeholders to create positive reputations and contribute to the success of organisation was noted in section 2.3. The link between this element of social media and ensuring the non-profit organisation is well presented and viewed positively by enabling stakeholders to interact, is therefore explicit. However, by contemplating the main

aim of this study to formulate guidelines for integrating social media brand communication and the conversations on different platforms in particular, it can be accepted that the *interaction*, and hence *the sociality* of social media between and with stakeholders of the non-profit organisation, is an essential driver of these conversations.

3.6.1.5 Social presence

Presence is often classified and understood as either *physical*, being in a specific place, or *social*, being in the presence of another (Gooch & Watts 2013; Biocca, Harms & Burgoon 2003:459; cf. Fourie 2017:20; Madia & Borgese 2010:24). Apart from the potential to create a physical presence or a virtual place (Rauniar et al 2013:196), social media contributes to creating a sense of being in the presence of others, irrespective of time and distance (Rauniar et al 2013:205; Gooch & Watts 2013:507). Biocca et al (2003:456) maintain that networked communication can primarily be viewed as “a person using a medium to be with another” (or having a social presence), and could form the most essential part of interaction that is mediated by some form of technology. The view is that the *social* in social presence equals the “social aspect of presence” and it refers to the “properties of communication interaction” rather than features of a particular medium (Biocca et al 2003:470).

The literature refers to four general perceptions of the concept of social presence. It can generally be regarded as feelings of “togetherness” or “being with another” (Gooch & Watts 2013; Biocca et al 2003:456); the extent to which “a person is perceived as ‘real’ in a mediated environment” (Thayalan & Shanthi 2011:407); *being* present or in a particular setting – hence having a sense of *place* (Moskaliuk, Kimmerle & Cress 2010:592; cf. Rettie 2005:357); or the awareness of others (Short, Williams & Christie 1976:65). One can thus assume that in an online communication milieu, which is increasingly accentuated and characterised by the spatial separation of participants, all these perceptions might be at play. However, Biocca et al’s (2003:456) argument that the value for the organisation of being understood as *real* and *being together* in the presence of its stakeholders in a mediated setting, is arguably most appropriate to assist stakeholders to perceive their interactions and communication with the organisation as an actual occurrence. In terms of the focus of the current study, the view of the authors regarding the unrelatedness of other two perceptions was shared, namely that a sense of *place* and the awareness of others are irrelevant. This is because they merely represent other humans through technology and artificial representations of human or animal intelligence, such as robots (Biocca et al 2003:456–457).

In light of Lombard and Ditton’s (1997) belief, the above views expressed by Gooch and Watts (2013) and Biocca et al (2003) could be associated with the perception of presence as being *socially rich*, or social richness, referring to the extent of it being perceived as personal,

sociable, warm, sensitive and intimate in interaction with others (Sallnas, Rassmus-Grohn & Sjostrom 2000:466; Lombard & Ditton 2000; cf. Williams 1992:155). It is contended that *being together* can also suggest these feelings, which to a degree might be attained through conventional use of icons (emoticons), such as *smiles* – (: – or strong emotions – !! – to personify interaction in a mediated environment.

Since corporate branding is considered valuable in connecting with stakeholders at an emotional level, which might contribute to experiencing emotional fulfilment, one could argue that social presence in this sense may be positively linked to an “emotional sense of belonging” (Wei, Chen & Kinshuk 2012:530) that affirms its value for non-profit organisations and their quest for a strong corporate brand (see sections 2.6 and 2.6.1.2). Noteworthy is the premise that social media contributes, *inter alia*, to enhancing people’s self-esteem through their involvement in creating, adapting and sharing content (Kilgour, Sasser & Larke 2015:333; Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins & Wiertz 2013:247). There are other views on the concept of *presence*, but they were deemed less significant here because they did not fall within the ambit of communication and the scope of this study. These views include the following: presence as *transportation* (transporting a communicator to another place, a place or object is transported to the communicator or communicators are transported to a shared place); presence as *immersion* (deep involvement in the virtual world such as through simulations); and presence as a *social actor within the medium* (responding to social cues from actors in the medium as if interacting with a human). The view of a *medium as social actor* (assigning human characteristics to a medium and viewing it as an *actor*) relates favourable to the conception that a corporate brand can be personified by attributing human characteristics to it, which, at long last, create a favourable impression of an organisation. This was deemed to be in line with the corporate branding perspective of this study (Lombard & Ditton 2000).

In some instances, no distinction is made between physical and social presence, and the concepts, *social presence* and *presence*, are both used to refer to the “place where the consumer is” (Fueller et al 2012:3218). In line with the focus of this study, the concept of *social media presence* was mainly used to indicate the social presence of organisations and stakeholders – hence *being together* and in the presence of a *real person* in a specific place, such as in an online environment or virtual place, as allowed by social media technology.

Not only are users of social media increasingly expecting organisations to create, nurture and maintain an online social presence (Avery et al 2010a:191; Gallaugher & Ransbotham 2010:199), but a distinguishable social media presence is also believed to influence customer engagement and a prerequisite to attracting dialogue from the stakeholders (Gallaugher & Ransbotham 2010:199,200). According to Branston and Bush (2010:1), non-profit

organisations are more aware of the value of a social presence to attain their organisational objectives and increasingly attempt to create an online presence. The online representation of the organisation's presence is seemingly achieved through social media efforts (Avery et al 2010a:194), which thus implies that ideally, the non-profit organisation needs to be actively involved on the different platforms by, say, responding or reacting to certain conversations, ensuring they engage in two-way communication, and sharing their stories and those of stakeholders with others.

3.6.1.6 Interactivity

Interactivity is a concept frequently associated with social media and often serves to set apart *new media* (for example social media) from *older media* (e.g. newspapers) (Gane & Beer 2008:85; cf. Kahle & Valette-Florence 2012:240; see section 3.4.1). Similar to the various concepts relating to the focus of this study, there is also little consensus about the meaning and scope of the concept and about what qualifies media as being interactive, and whether it should exclusively be used to define newer types of media (Kiousis 2002).

There are many simplistic descriptions of *interactivity*. Early definitions, for example, state it is "the degree to which participants in a communication process can exchange roles and have control over their mutual discourse" (Rogers 1995:314; cf. Fortin & Dholakia 2005:388; Schultz 1996:145) or "a continuous construct capturing the quality of two-way communication" (Alba, Lynch, Weitz, Janiszewski, Lutz, Sawyer & Wood 1997:38; cf. Schultz 1996:145). Contemporary views suggest a more inclusive interpretation of this concept, namely that it refers to "a flow of messages among participants" or responses to messages (Wood & Smith 2005:128), "different types of online communication media" (Quiring 2009:899,900) or communicating with others in real time (Newton 2006:484). However, Gane and Beer (2008), Sundar (2004), and Kiousis (2002) caution against a simplistic view of this widely researched concept, which mostly focuses on only one of the three main domains prevalent in definitions of interactivity, namely the way users perceive interactivity. The view of Stewart and Pavlou (2002:380) illustrates a narrow view by maintaining that interactivity is determined by the media itself and people's decision when to interact. Kiousis (2002) classifies three main realms of this concept as the structure of technology, the communication content and the user perception of interactivity. Kiousis (2002:371) formulated the following definition that was deemed useful for this study because it attempts to integrate these focal areas:

"Interactivity can be defined as the degree to which a communication technology can create a mediated environment in which participants can communicate (one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many), both synchronously and asynchronously, and participate in reciprocal message exchanges (third-order dependency)".

Based on an extensive overview of different scholarly discourses and perspectives on interactivity, Kiousis (2002:368) holds that an interactive experience should comprise the following six main elements: *two-way or multiway communication* that is similar to *feedback* in the traditional communication models and typically through a mediated channel; *interchangeable roles* by sender and receiver; a so-called “*third-order dependency*” among participants with specific reference to message sequence and the extent to which these and earlier messages relate to each other; *communicators who can either be human or machine* provided that both roles of sender and receiver can be fulfilled; individuals who are able to “*manipulate the content, form, and pace of a mediated environment in some way*” [emphasis added]; and lastly, “users should be able to perceive differences in levels of interactive experiences” (Kiousis 2002:368).

From a communication perspective, scholars posit that interactivity can generally be regarded in two ways, namely from a *functional* and a *contingency* perspective, thus corroborating the first two elements and the third element mas highlighted by Kiousis (2002) above (Sundar, Kalyanaraman & Brown 2003:30; cf. Kelleher 2007; 2009:173). In brief, it concentrates on the features or characteristics of the media to permit “a dialogue or information exchange” (Sundar et al 2003:33), and on a process in which “users, media, and messages” are allowed to fulfil interchangeable roles, respectively (Sundar et al 2003:34–35). This ties in with the focus of the current study. Duncan and Moriarty (1998:8) view interactivity as a distinctive property of the paradigm shifts in marketing and communication in which organisations recognise the importance of engaging in dialogue with stakeholders and permitting them to act as senders and receivers in the communication process. Subsequent views also underline this initial perspective.

Regarding social media, interactivity between stakeholders and the organisation is viewed as a core element of engagement (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric & Ilic 2011) and thus vital for the non-profit sector to connect and interact with stakeholders. According to Fourie (2017:19), it simply points to *immediate feedback* that ensures participation and the fact that it is unique to social media, given the unrestricted contact between organisations and others. From the communication perspective in the above paragraph, non-profit organisations should ideally incorporate media, such as social media, that sanctions dialogue and also enables all users to fulfil interchangeable roles by accommodating their feedback, considering their conversations – as creators – and to lets them communicate with the organisation and others – as senders.

To conclude and corresponding to the focus of the study, the interactivity element of social media is significant because it relates to the notion of engaging in dialogue with and being responsive to stakeholder conversations.

3.6.1.7 Social media conversations

Social media is undoubtedly about conversations and as aptly stated – “its language is conversational” (Nair 2011:50) – that represents “the way how consumers communicate, including motivations, frequency and content” (Markos-Kujbus & Gáti 2012). This sharing of and responding to information, in the context of the study, is also referred to as “social conversations” (Evans 2010b:35) or “two-way conversation” (Onete et al 2011:738; Mayfield 2008:5). *Conversation* can loosely be compared to *talk* (Goffman 1981:14), and is more broadly viewed as “a form of social interaction that shows a specific form of local organization [...] and that serves not only to exchange information, but also for conversation partners to relate to each other and develop a shared reality between them” (Mengis & Eppler 2008:1290; cf. Agne & Tracy 2009).

The literature does not clearly distinguish between the concepts of interaction and conversation. However, based on the definition by Mengis and Eppler (2009) above, and for the purposes of the current study, social interaction was viewed as the broader concept, of which social conversations as such is thus recognised as a *type* of interaction specifically related to *dialogue* or *dialogic engagement*, suggesting the exchange of messages over time as opposed to single status updates on Twitter, for example (cf. Bortree & Seltzer 2009:317; Onete et al 2011:738). Notwithstanding this aspect, the prominence of conversation facilitated by social media warrants a separate investigation of this element as a distinct *type* of interaction.

Owing to the varied perspectives on the real meaning of related concepts that are often mentioned alongside conversation, such as dialogue and two-way communication (cf. Freberg 2013; Kent & Taylor 2002:23), the concepts of *conversation*, *two-way conversation*, *dialogue* and *dialogic engagement* are used interchangeably to denote the use of negotiated two-way and unrestricted communication between organisations and stakeholders. Evidence exists that social media allows for dialogical or conversational engagement that is founded on unrestricted, multidirectional exchanges of opinions between all stakeholders (Romenti, Murtarelli & Valentini 2014:10; Carim & Warwick 2013:521; Theunissen & Wan Noordin 2012:5; Onete et al 2011:738; Bonsón & Flores 2011:35; Bortree & Seltzer 2009:318; Grunig 2009:6). In section 3.4.1, brief mention was made of the fact that synchronous and asynchronous communication is popularly associated with communication. The view that stakeholders can access social media platforms at will and also progressively on mobile

devices, in effect suggests that conversations via social media can likewise take place synchronously (always taking place or occurring at the same time) or asynchronously (delayed involvement or taking place randomly).

Parent et al (2011:223) assert that social media in reality *extends* conversations between the organisation and stakeholders through a *feedback loop* that denotes the capability of social media to facilitate two-way communication (cf. Kent & Taylor 1998). This notion of unhindered exchanges between stakeholders when using social media is characteristic of the nature of the communication when using social media, and inevitably suggests *loss of control* over conversations that traditionally resorted with organisations (see sections 2.3.3, chapter 2 and 3.5.2; cf. Scott & Jacka 2011:3; Safko & Brake 2009:5). However, as stated by Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schäfer (2012:784), organisations are to a certain extent afforded opportunities to influence conversations between stakeholders that could affect what is being said about the corporate brand (cf. Overton-de Klerk & Verwey 2013:372; Kietzman et al 2011:245; Barreto 2014:632). It would seem as if the importance of eWOM, which is intensified by social media, has become an essential way of communicating that compels organisations to engage in dialogue and conversation to respond to possible negative communication (see sections 2.3.1, 2.4.1 and 3.5.2). It is believed that the future will increasingly be more about engagement in dialogue or conversation and the need to adopt a model of multidirectional communication rather than “traditional one-way monologues of the past” (Mersham, Theunissen & Peart 2009:10) that mirrors the stakeholders’ preferences for conversation over messaging (Capozzi & Zipfel 2012:340; Theunissen & Wan Noordin 2012:5; Solis 2010:37).

It is postulated that social media constantly offers alternate ways and opportunities to organisations to engage in conversation with their stakeholders (Theunissen & Wan Noordin 2012:5; Solis 2010:37; Arora & Predmore 2013:116,117; Kochbar et al 2012:292; Grunig 2009:6; Păun 2009:122; Gillin 2007:xiii). The interaction between people or groups of people is fundamental to dialogic communication (Kent 2013:343; Pieczka 2010:117), although in view of the other core concepts of social media, such as social connectedness, *the social* of social media and social presence (see sections 3.7.2, 3.7.3, and 3.7.5), one could conclude that each of these qualities actually promotes dialogue and conversation. In other words, all the concepts highlighted in this section not only merit consideration as characteristics of social media, but could also be regarded as conditions for meaningful dialogue and conversation to take place.

Global connectedness enhances stakeholders’ expectations about the obligation of organisations to engage in conversation across multiple social media platforms and geographic borders (Capozzi & Zipfel 2012:201; Divol et al 2012; Saxton, Guo & Brown

2007:144). This accentuates the fact that stakeholders may anticipate that organisations will be involved in communication on social media. Hence in order to achieve the main objective of this study, namely to formulate a conceptual framework to integrate of social media into the communication endeavours of the non-profit organisation, it stands to reason that the involvement of stakeholders in conversations about and with the organisation should intensify. The researcher contends, as suggested earlier, that if non-profit organisations integrate their stakeholders by listening to their conversations, *inter alia*, the corporate brand would benefit and expectations about the involvement of these organisations in this regard would be met (see sections 2.5.1.1. and 2.6.1.4, chapter 2). Moreover, organisations are increasingly compelled to adopt a more transparent and “publicly oriented” approach to communication by accommodating open and transparent conversation, which allows for engagement, participation and dialogue (Greenberg & MacAulay 2009:66, 67). This approach could benefit stakeholders by affording them opportunities to converse with the organisation or with others about the organisation. Consequently, organisations face challenges to relinquish control over these conversations and to keep track of them in an effort to protect its reputation when needed (Constantinides & Fountain 2012:3218; Kietzmann et al 2011:249; Booth & Matic 2011:184; Safko & Brake 2009:5).

Non-profit organisations rely on a positive reputation for the cultivation of relationships and for financial survival and therefore need to be aware of the conversations about the organisations on social media platforms (Holtzhausen 2014:287; Warner, Abel & Hachtmann 2014:5; Vernuccio 2014:215; Mindruta 2013; Burcher 2012:188; Breakenridge 2012:41). The need to listen to stakeholders’ discussions about the corporate brand is frequently raised in scholarly contributions (Vernuccio 2014:215; De Vera & Murray 2013:5; Mindruta 2013; Burcher 2012:38; Agresta & Bough 2011:84). In this regard, they should be committed to *listening* and monitoring these discussions by means of the available social media monitoring tools. Ideally, non-profit organisations should use the available analytic software tools to access apposite information, for instance, topics or popular themes; the opinions or sentiments of stakeholders that may be positive, negative or neutral, identify current conversations; and future earned media trends (Warner et al 2014:5).

The challenge in the social media environment undoubtedly refers to information overload that could prevent the organisation from listening effectively to the conversations of their stakeholders and key brand influencers and advocates. A commitment to being involved in stakeholder conversations wherever they meet should ideally afford the non-profit organisation invaluable opportunities to stay involved in conversations, promote the brand, and improve its reputation (cf. Burcher 2012:188). The opportunities for non-profit

organisations to monitor conversations and participate in them depends on knowledge of where its stakeholders meet and what platforms they prefer (Breakenridge 2012:45).

(a) *Social media conversations as corporate brand communication*

As mentioned earlier, corporate branding comprises all communication *touch points* by the organisation with the organisation's stakeholders. It is therefore logical to qualify social media conversations as corporate brand communication. Conversations on social media were exclusively deemed to be a touchpoint in this study in light of the role of the stakeholder in creating a certain perception of the corporate brand. Despite the views of Vernuccio (2014) and Abratt and Kleyn (2012) about the distinct elements of a corporate brand, they fail to consider the possible impact that conversations with and between stakeholders could have on achieving a desired corporate brand. Although it is not their focus per se, it does warrant mentioning in the present setting. It is to be expected that as interactions and conversations with and between stakeholders intensify through the use of social media, their experiences will be freely shared with one another (cf. Le Roux & Du Plessis 2014:120). The connection between the concepts WOM, eWOM and social media conversations was already debated. This study considers, *inter alia*, the integration of stakeholders and their conversations in social media brand communication, which is purposively identified as a way in which social media integration could take place (see sections 4.8.2 and 4.9, chapter 4). In particular, organisations should acknowledge and heed the conversations between stakeholders about the non-profit corporate brand in an effort to achieve the integration of stakeholders (sections 4.4.2 and 4.8.2.1 in chapter 4).

3.6.1.8 Social media content

In the social media environment, communication occurs rapidly, allowing effortless modifications to content (De Choudhury et al 2010:62; Kochbar et al 2012:294). It was already mentioned (see section 3.3) that *content* includes all information and data created by users (stakeholders) using various social media tools and applications (see section 3.5.2). It would be fair to say that this also concerns the social media content created by organisations. As established previously (see section 3.6.1.2), the use of social media contributes greatly to the participation of all stakeholders in communication activities at any given time and place, suggesting a reversal of the traditional role of sender and receiver in the communication process and the creation of social media content. Participation is propelled by offering anyone options to be seen or heard through the images and stories shared through social media (Drury 2008:274). Hence communication in an online environment is considered to be decentralised and therefore redistributes the communication responsibilities to allow equal participation by all (Kochbar et al 2012:294; Rauniar et al 2013:196; Trainor 2012:317).

The reversal of communication roles similarly allows content to become deinstitutionalised (Drury 2008:274; Bechmann & Lomborg 2012:767). This point is closely related to the discussion of UGC as a foundational element of social media, in which the decisions of users regarding the type of content to create and share or respond are emphasised (see section 3.6.2). Similar to social media conversations, stakeholders seem to prefer *content* that they can “relate to and appreciate” as opposed to elementary messages (Drury 2008:275; cf. Timoney 2010:52). Content drives social media, and the quality thereof is seemingly also vital in starting and sustaining social media conversation (Marketo 2010:12; Timoney 2010:64).

When considering *content*, it is apparent that the changes in the roles of organisations and users have a significant impact on the way content is created, distributed and retrieved by all. While organisations in the past merely distributed information (Web 1.0) to users, social media compels organisations to accept the fact that social media allows users by their own choice to access and retrieve information (Web 2.0) (Schneckenberg 2009:511; Marques et al 2013:396; Daume et al 2014:10). The two issues at hand are referred to as information “push”, which represents efforts to merely deliver information to the user (distribute), and information “pull”, which allows users to select specific content, retrieve it and exchange it with others (collaborate) (Daume et al 2014:10; Marques et al 2012:396; cf. Parent et al 2011:222). Notably, social media is seemingly more focused on “pull” media, which arguably enables organisations to bring the content and correspondingly the corporate brand to the stakeholder, allowing them to select the desired content, as opposed to expecting them to retrieve it themselves or to force it upon them (Hinchcliffe 2007). If this is so, social media could thus be regarded as the vehicles to concurrently reinforce corporate brand messages through unrestricted engagement, which, in turn, drives conversation and engagement on social media (cf. Ashley & Tuten 2015:15).

Following decisions of the organisation on the most desired content to strengthen the corporate brand compels it to schedule the sharing of this content at specific times (Leroux Miller 2013:179). An editorial calendar or social media calendar is apparently an ideal option to plan, time and schedule the publishing of messages of social media content weekly, monthly or yearly (Leroux Miller 2013:183; Evans 2010b:306).

The notion of “pulling” therefore challenges non-profit organisations to “find” their stakeholders and to “go to” where they meet in an effort to connect with them (Nair 2011:47; cf. Qualman 2013:10; Breakenridge, 2012:45; Schneckenberg 2009:511; Hinchcliffe 2007). The challenge, according to Hinchcliffe (2007), is to accept that social media conversations are increasingly out of the control of the organisation simply because this media is about *people* – or stakeholders in this context – who are actually controlling the conversations. Despite this

concern, locating stakeholders could present favourable occasions to the non-profit organisation to observe conversations, participate in them and request participation (Breakenridge, 2012:45). Hence organisations could benefit from knowing how best to apply both mechanisms to communicate (cf. Hinchcliffe 2007).

This section has thus far highlighted key elements of social media for non-profit organisations emerging from the literature. The next section provides as brief overview, through an *inductive reasoning* process, of theories and perspectives deemed to support these key elements. These are set out in a summarised way, in order to grasp the theoretical assumptions associated with social media. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that this theoretical account offers a distinctive view. In this instance, the focus is primarily on the perspectives and theories of *human action* and *interaction*, which can be justified on the basis of earlier considerations in this chapter underlining the value of these perspectives and theories when insights into the elements of social media brand communication were obtained,

3.6.2 Theoretical foundations of social media

To further explore social media and conceptualise it as the focus of this study, it was deemed useful to frame the concept of social media on the basis of existing theories and consider relevant scholarly works. Theory can be defined as a “system of generalized statements” (Edles 2005:3) or premises about a particular research phenomenon (cf. Anderson 2009; Griffin 2009:2; Miller 2005:22). The notion exists that theories are merely concerned with the abstract, as opposed to the much preferred application of skills, whereas theories should really be acknowledged for their guiding properties without which limited application would be possible (Neuliep 1996:26). Similarly, it is vital to uncover and consider existing theory – or perspectives on social media elements, in this instance – that could help to broaden an understanding of the social media concept and explain the element that may affect social media brand communication.

The selection of theories and perspectives in this section is by no means exhaustive, as other theoretical perspectives similarly strive to understand the interaction between humans by adopting a definite focus on explaining or understanding individuals’ behaviour, rather than on the performance of human action (cf. Ngai,Tao & Moon 2015:34-35). Furthermore, the mere fact that social media is believed to enable and promote social action further accentuates this emphasis (cf. Fuchs 2014a; Hocevar 2013; Agresta & Bough 2011). It is argued that these perspectives are rooted in the seminal contributions of Weber (1978), Parsons (1937), Goffman (1959, 1956, 1967) and Mead (1934).

The selection and relevance of the seminal theories and perspectives presented in this section, are affected by and justified according to the following four main arguments. Firstly, the lack of a single social media or social media theory that urges consideration of alternate but related theoretical underpinnings, Secondly, the widespread belief that social media is believed to enable and promote social action and interaction. It can be deduced from the synopsis of existing social media definitions that people are inherently social beings who seek interaction with one another, which is an underlying theme of the selected theories (cf. Jones, Bradbury & Le Boutillier 2011:1). Also, central to communication, which inevitably involves communication via social media, is the notion of *action* and the active participation of people that validates a concise overview of early perspectives on human action. The capability of social media to facilitate boundless interaction with and between stakeholders has been established by identifying the foundation of social media as comprising Web 2.0, UGC and human interaction. Interaction per se thus refers to the acts of stakeholders to connect with one another. In terms of the key elements of social media, namely participation, connectivity, sociality, social interaction, social presence, interactivity and conversation, one could say that social media is a *social technology* that both facilitates and depends on the social nature of humans and their tendency to interact with one another (boyd 2009). The selection made at this point is thus believed to yield an understanding of human action and interaction that reinforces the application of social media for communication in social settings. The adaptations of Goffman's (1967:5) view in section 3.6.1.4 on the daily encounters with others further justifies a succinct overview of a few theoretical elements of human action and interaction. This point is corroborated by Habermas (1987), who views communicative action, such as communication by way of social media, as the interaction between people who strive to reach a common understanding of a situation and eventually to coordinate future action.

Thirdly, the view of Fuchs (2008) that social media elements can be associated with the seminal views of Durkheim (1982), Weber (1978), and Marx (1846) and thus with the development of these views (cf. Fuchs 2014a; Hocevar 2013; Agresta 2011). Besides, the point made that all the identified elements can be regarded as mutually dependent implies that the theories and perspectives could be germane to most elements, if not all, and could thus serve as the foundation of this theoretical overview (cf. Hanna et al 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010).

Fourthly, and probably most telling, is a study in 2015 aimed at conducting a comprehensive literature review of social media theories and models that exemplify the dilemma in identifying theories relevant to the context of this study (Ngai et al 2015). Ngai et al (2015:34) confirm the prevalence of a myriad of theories and models in existing social media research, but admit that few sources actually use the term *social media* and merely refer to related concepts.

Hence the researcher could not accept that these studies and the theories and models are fundamentally concerned with the social media concept as explicated and defined in the present study. Theories and models from 46 empirical research studies are grouped into three categories: personal behaviour theories, social behaviour theories and mass communication theories (summarised in table 3.7 below). Two social behaviour theories, namely social identity theory and social interaction theory feature prominently, and could arguably fit into the present setting. However, a closer investigation indicated that their foci relate mainly to the effectuation concept that aims to explain behaviour towards social media and only partially focuses on either social identity or social interaction. Hence Ngai et al's (2015) study confirms the lack of actual social media theory and as result supports the selection of theories and perspectives that are associated with the key elements of social media presented in section 3.6.1.

Table 3.7: Theories and models used in social media research (adapted from Ngai et al 2015:35)

Theories and models	Main focus
Personal behaviour theories: Attribution theory, elaboration likelihood model, goal-directed behaviour model, personality traits, risk perception theory, switching behaviour, theory of planned behaviour, etc.	Explanation of human behaviour at personal/individual level (Ngai et al 2015:34, 35)
Social behaviour theories: Cognitive map, effectuation process, involvement theory, social exchange theory, justice theory, social influence theory, social aspects theory, social power, social identity theory, social interaction theory, etc.	Relates to social behaviour, explains individuals behaviour towards social media (Ngai et al 2015:34, 35)
Mass communication theories: Media richness theory, para-social interaction and uses and gratifications theory	Argues the influence of mass communication on people's behaviour, explains the effect of social media on behaviour (Ngai et al 2015:35)

This section is structured as follows and set out in table 3.8 below. Firstly, an overview of the classical perspectives on human action is provided and summarised, and the possible relationship with some of the social media elements indicated. The perspectives of the seminal scholars are corroborated throughout, which serves to substantiate the in-depth appraisal of the literature. Secondly, contemporary perspectives on human action and interaction, symbolic interaction and social presence as progressions of the classical views are explored through inductive reasoning, largely to uncover some theoretical propositions relating to the social media elements in the previous section. Table 3.8 below sets out the structure of the section and indicates the possible relationship between these classical and contemporary views and the social media elements.

Table 3.8: Structure and focus of the theoretical overview

Theoretical perspective	Main social media elements addressed
Classical scholars as the foundation of the social media elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scientific theory of society (Durkheim)• Marxism (Marx)• Theory of social action (Weber)	<i>Sociality</i> of social media participation, social media content social media interaction and <i>sociality</i> of social media
Contemporary theories as progressions of the classical viewpoints: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social action (Weber, Parsons and Goffman)• Symbolic interaction (Mead)• Social presence (Short et al 1976)	Social interaction and connectedness participation, social media content and social media conversation social media interaction, the <i>social</i> of social media and participation, social presence and <i>sociality</i> of social media

To reiterate, the lack of a single theory of social media and social media brand communication merits the use of Fuchs' (2008) perspectives on the classical theories of action and interaction as the point of departure in selecting these theories.

3.6.2.1 A summary of classical perspectives on human action (Durkheim (1858–1917), Marx (1818–1883), and Weber (1964–1920))

Irrespective of the multidisciplinary contributions to the study of the social nature of humans, scholarly works in the field of *sociology* feature prominently (see table 3.9 below). It is contended that despite these varied classifications, there is general consensus that the scholars, Durkheim (1982), Marx (1846), and Weber (1978) could be accepted as the founders of contemporary sociology whose scholarly works seemingly served as the foundations of various theoretical views that subsequently emerged (Habermas 1987:1; Jones et al 2011:22; Court 1997:1). The classification below is approached from a sociological perspective and is not intended to be the only view, but was deemed appropriate for the context here because it identifies the broad perspectives of these seminal scholars, their emphasis and critique (cf. Kornblum 2012; Fuchs 2008; Court 1997; various authors in table 3.9). It is argued that these perspectives of Durkheim (1982), Marx (1846), and Weber (1978), are to some extent related to social media and some of its key elements as emphasised in the previous section, and likewise recognised by scholars in the field of communication (Fuchs 2008:38; Bergen 2009:167; Spitzberg 2009; Griffin 2009; Neuliep 1996; Stacks, Hill & Hickson 1991). It can thus be argued that these classical perspectives serve a joint purpose, namely as foundations of classical perspectives and subsequent theories, and to accentuate some elements of social media.

Noteworthy is the perspective of Fuchs (2008:38–40) who, despite the emphasis on isolated elements, specifically relates these classical scholars to specific elements of social media (as

indicated in table 3.9 below), and hence argues for the relevance of these scholarly contributions in contemporary views, and pertinently, for this study.

Table 3.9: Classical perspectives on human action (Durkheim (1858–1917), Marx (1818–1883), and Weber (1964–1920)

The functionalist perspective	The conflict perspective	The social action or interpretive perspective
<p>Study of society as a whole</p> <p>Seminal scholar Durkheim (1858–1917)</p> <p>Emphasis: The reality of society is superior to that of the individuals; society is viewed as a totality with interconnected structures and substructures; acknowledges the central role of religion, morality and ethics and members of society (individuals), who are controlled by social facts such as morals, laws and values., transferred/relayed from generation to generation; acknowledges that <i>social links</i> connect individuals, thus allowing them to live collectively (Kornblum 2012:8; Jones et al 2011; Morrison 2006:148–149; Court 1997:3–4; Duke 1983:29; cf. Elliot 2014:29; Abrahamson 1981:80–81)</p> <p>Critique: The assumption that the values of all individuals are similarly shared (Ballantine 2014:55; Court 1997:4), maintaining the status quo to “maintain the social structure”; a focus on people’s dependence on groups for survival by <i>fitting in</i> (Ballantine 2014:55; cf. Duke 1983:30)</p> <p>Key social media element/s: The sociality of humans and all media and software as products of social processes and social connectedness</p>	<p>Focusing on the use of conflict to eliminate inequality</p> <p>Seminal scholar Marx (1818–1883)</p> <p>Emphasis: Regards society as a whole, comprising interconnected institutions; changes in social concepts are dependent on changes in nature (labour, capital, distribution of wealth etc.); focuses on revolution, class studies, exploitation, surplus value, aspects of the capitalist mode of production, conflict between the <i>haves</i> (bourgeoisies) and the <i>have-nots</i> (workers); focuses on the impact of unequal distribution of superior positions on behaviour; society is inherently unequal with conflict of interests between the privileged and less privileged (Elliot 2014:21; Ballantine 2014:57; Kornblum 2012:8, 17; Jones et al 2011; Dahms 2011:46; Jones et al 2011:11; Morrison 2006; Beilharz 2005; Court 1997; Stacks et al 1991:229; Duke 1983:29; Abrahamson 1981:81)</p> <p>Critique: Overemphasis of the cause-effect idea that changes to the economic base of society alter the social structure thereof – individuals do effect change independently of economic forces (cf. Beilharz 2005; Court 1997:6); a focus on the macro approach and neglecting the micro approach (individuals), limited empirical research to test theory and ineffective in explaining social cooperation (cf. Ballantine 2014:59)</p> <p>Key social media element/s: Participation and social media content</p>	<p>Focusing on the social interaction between humans</p> <p>Seminal scholar Weber (1864–1920)</p> <p>Emphasis: Humans can only act according to the interpretation of other humans; interpretation and understanding serve as the focal/central point of human action; active role of humans or individuals to construct individual social worlds, acknowledge the human nature of society based on understanding social action, particularly the interaction between individuals in social encounters (Ballantine 2014:51; Kornblum 2012:9; Jones et al 2011; Morrison 2006; Whimster 2005; Court 1997:8; Duke 1983:89);</p> <p>Critique: Possible subjectivity by ignoring the objective nature of society – hence ignorance of the process of socialisation and culture that is transferred and ignorance of social classes (acknowledging that individuals are born into a social class) (cf. Ballantine 2014:61; Court 1997:8; Duke 1983:94)</p> <p>Key social media element/s: Social interaction and the sociality of social media</p>

The preceding section provided an overview of the contemporary theories and perspectives concerned with human action, symbolic interaction and social presence collectively, which gave more insight into the focus of this study. The literature explains the progression of the classical perspectives to more contemporary views, as addressed in the next section.

3.6.2.2 Contemporary perspectives on human action and social Interaction (Weber (1864–1920), Parsons (1902–1979) and Goffman (1922–1982))

Action theory argues that the essence of social life encapsulates a human's ability to interpret the environment and/or a certain situation, allowing him or her to attach meaning to reality and then to choose to act in some way, based on this interpretation (Jones et al 2011:17; see section 3.6.1.4).

The aspirations of scholars to understand interactions in society and between individuals, and the nature of relationships between society and the individual, have captivated scholars for centuries and have thus given rise to extensive research in multiple disciplines. Scholars have deemed it essential to conceptualise human action to ultimately gain an understanding of the elements or characteristics involved in the ways humans establish links with one another, resulting in diverse perspectives on this matter. This section provides a succinct overview of the ideas of Weber (1978), Parsons (1937) and Goffman (1959, 1956, 1967) on human action and interaction that is widely acknowledged in the literature.

Irrespective of Weber's contributions towards a conceptualisation of human action in social settings, his ideas do not appear to have culminated in a formal theory (Morrison 2006:275). Weber was mainly concerned with a theory of society that could possibly consistently judge the decisions individuals make concerning their actions and interactions with others in a social context (Morrison 2006:348; Edles & Apperly 2005:138). As contended by Weber (2012:243), action only qualifies as *social* in instances where it is oriented to the behaviour of other people. In other words, not all action qualifies as *social*, for example, when considering an inanimate or lifeless object such as a stone.

Weber was aware of the differences between natural sciences and social sciences and therefore focused increasingly on the key concepts underlying the social sciences in order to draw a distinction. He focused, *inter alia*, on the "inner states of the actor" rather than events in the outside world or society, and the fact that individuals derive knowledge from an inner nature that needs to be understood to explain their social actions in society. Moreover, he emphasised how investigation extends beyond the observation of events to the manner in which understanding affects their acts and how it might relate to their action in society (Morrison 2006:348–349; cf. Jones et al 2011:84). As such, Weber proposed four types of

action – or means-end rationality – which are at play in different combinations in almost every instance and which could serve as a conceptual explanation of the factors compelling humans to act, namely instrumental-rational action, value-rational action, affective action and traditional action (cf. Jones et al 2011:85; Ryan 2005; Morrison 2006 357–361). *Affective action* is probably the most appropriate type in context of this study, as the corporate brand strives to emotionally connect with stakeholders to urge them to share corporate brand messages and participate in conversations about the brand (Morrison 2006 357–361; Ryan 2005; Weber 2012:245).

Social action, as perceived by Weber, acknowledges the active participation of individuals in society (Whimster 2005; Court 1997:6), which appears to be mainly rooted in the ability of humans to interpret their environment by attaching meaning to it, deciding their action or inaction (Jones et al 2011:17). The concept of *meaning* forms the basis of a myriad of perspectives on human action and interaction, as well as traditional and contemporary communication models and related concepts. This is obvious in the symbolic interaction and social presence perspectives presented earlier in this chapter (see sections 3.6.1.4 and 3.6.1.5) and the IC approach in the next chapter (chapter 4). Cahill (2005) views social action as involving either corporate actors, “pairs of individuals” or organisations. Hence, in relation to the corporate brand perspective, communication by groups of stakeholders may collectively be viewed as a *social action*, thus affirming the relevance of Weber’s thoughts to this study. Weber’s emphasis on the exceptional aptitude of humans to make sense of their surroundings through *interpretation* (equated to *understanding*) to a certain extent correlates with the scholarly work of Mead’s theory of symbolic interactionism, as discussed below (Cahill 2005; cf. Jones et al 2011:84).

By expanding Weber’s ideas of social interaction, Parsons (1937) proposed so-called *action theory* as a general theory for the study of society (cf. Ryan 2005). It appears to adopt a sociological perspective and is built on the premise that individuals purposively fashion their actions in the context to which they assign meaning (Parsons 1937:19, 26; cf. Parsons & Shils 2012:66, 68–69). In other words, people probably choose their actions, and most likely their communication actions, according to how they interpret a certain situation (Jones et al 2011:105). In the setting of this chapter, this arguably suggests that the communication actions of the organisations’ stakeholders will be shaped according to the online environment as context and the way in which they understand or make sense of it. The initial conception by Parsons (1937) envisages *action* taking place when the individual’s action is in accordance with the following four characteristics that collectively constitute a *unit act* (Parsons 1937:43, 77): (1) it involves an agent or actor; (2) it is oriented towards achieving an *end* or ultimate goal; (3) it must commence in a particular setting or situation that is seemingly either

uncontrollable (parts over which there is no control – e.g. conversations via social media) or controllable (such as use of owned or paid media by the organisation), and which differs from the envisaged end; and (4) has a certain mode of relationship between these elements with regard to an alternative *means* to reach the desired *end*, and which is regulated by a normative orientation of action (Parsons 1937:44; cf. Cole 2017; Parsons & Shils 2012:66,68; Ryan 2005).

Means is explained as the expectations that orient an actor's actions towards achieving the *end* or desired goal (Parsons 1937:75; cf. Ryan 2005). This characteristic of action can be explained as referring to the norms and values that exist for each actor, which direct choices in terms of attaining a desired goal. According to Parsons (1937:75), the concept of normative in his theory, should be understood as referring to a *sentiment* held by the actor/s of the desired state of affairs (or end) of the action and can thus be distinguished from ethical and legal views that refer to set legal principles that guide a particular action. The view that an actor may select from an array of options and thus have a choice, seemingly qualifies it as *action* and distinguishes it from being only a behavioural response whereby a reaction does not necessitate thought (cf. Blumer 1969:13; Ryan 2005). Following this point, it is thus evident that in terms of taking a particular action or inaction, both the organisation and stakeholders would be oriented to achieving a certain goal, which would probably be set in a social media situation and influenced by various controllable and uncontrollable situations in terms of the various norms and values held. Ultimately, the organisation should anticipate that stakeholders would be allowed various choices on how to act or communicate in this environment, which would eventually determine how the organisation is being perceived.

Regardless of Parson's contributions, his approach is deemed to indicate a model of human action rather than interaction (cf. Turner 1988). This shortcoming was recognised in his later writings (Parsons 1937), and addressed in 1949, with a shift in focus to systems of interaction that comprise the consideration of acts of interaction through reconciliation the actors' orientations (Abrahamson 1981:47; cf Turner 1988). Although it is thought that mainly because of the abstract and definitional nature of his theory, few empirical studies ensued, Parsons' contributions are deemed useful as initial attempts to conceptualise the actions of individuals (Abrahamson 1981:53) and extend Weber's ideas on social action to the "field of action theory" (Ryan 2005).

The literature underscores the importance of interaction in creating and transforming *meaning* (cf. Franzoi 2007; Griffin 2009:60), which seemingly points to the meanings people associate with a certain situation or environment, symbols or words used in communication and the degree of consensus about their meaning. There is a high degree of consensus on the idea

that what a symbol or word stands for will therefore suggest that the meaning is clear, and vice versa, and people will presumably act in relation to such meaning/s (cf. Jones et al 2011:17; Davetian 2010; Mead 1934:72–73, 76). Proponents of the perspective argue that meaning originates from the processes of social interaction relating to human interaction, such as, but not limited to, interpretation, interaction through symbols and role-taking (cf. Blumer 1969:59). The argument is that people do not exist in a *meaningless environment* and that no object, human, abstract concept or process is devoid of meaning, which requires interpretation followed by some sort of act towards or in relation to it (cf. Crable 2009). These meanings may in actual fact be regarded as *subjective* because they are presumably based on the individual's personal beliefs and not on the objective truth (Crossman [sa]; cf. Weber 2012:237; Blumer 1969:13; Gecas 2009; Parsons 1937:46). In other words, people's actions are influenced by the personal meanings they assign to words and symbols, and they are based on their own beliefs that cannot necessarily be regarded as objective.

The significance of interaction, as realised by Parsons in 1949, is therefore closely related to human action and in the same way forms the focal point of Goffman's (1959, 1956, 1967) scholarly contributions. Goffman (Cahill 2005) is regarded as a prominent advocate for dealing with social interaction as a subject per se, mainly through his dramaturgical theory (Leeds-Hurwitz 2009; Macionis & Gerber 2010:133; Franzoi 2007). This scholar favoured the idea that communication connects people, rather than only considering the *inner nature* of individuals, as propounded by Weber (cf. Fuchs 2014a). According to Goffman (1956, 1959), selves are instituted through *actors'* performances and the responses of other, thereby emphasising the social nature of people (Sandstrom 2011; cf. Griffin 2009:64; Sandstrom 2003). The concept of social interaction mainly alludes to the mutual influence on individuals' actions. Although communication between the organisation and stakeholders in a social media environment could arguably be regarded as anonymous (Godes et al 2005:416), thereby implying the impossibility of individuals' actions affecting others, it is refuted by the notion that social media allows unrestricted conversations between all participants about the organisation. Although these actions cannot be *observed* as such, it is thus fair to expect that they would be known through the connections created by social media and consequently affect others' actions and their communication (see sections 2.3.1, chapter 2 and 3.5.2). Goffman (1956:2–8, 10) furthermore underscores the need for individuals to leave the right impression on others and to feel validated, which is seemingly dependant on and determined by the feedback received from them (Davetian 2010; cf. Nowak 2013:1456; Franzoi 2007; Jones et al 2011:198). Moreover, he compares social life to a theatrical performance in which people act out certain roles in order to manage their desired impressions on others (Franzoi 2007).

According to Jones et al (2011:17), action theory focuses on the way individuals interact with others, which is thus deemed useful in considering how the interaction between organisations and their stakeholders will eventually impact on a corporate brand. Furthermore, it is alleged that the action that humans are able to take could be unintentional or intentional (Jones et al 2011:17). Unintentional action is explained as being *purposeless* or instinctive such as, say, blinking, or feeling excited or tired, whereas *intentional* action appears to be voluntary and purposive, and aimed at achieving a predetermined purpose or goal (*ibid*; cf. Sandstrom, Martin & Fine 2001). This notion was deemed more appropriate to the current study. Action theory suggests that in cases of intentional action, the *interpretation* of the situation or setting around people is essential (as echoed by Weber and Parsons), which, in most instances, is *social* in the sense that other humans are involved, which qualifies it as *social action* (Jones et al 2011:18; cf. Leeds-Hurwitz 2006), and focused on self-presentation (as emphasised by Goffman (1956, 1959). Of significance is the idea that in terms of the interpretation of a situation or setting, others might have a predetermined intention in mind of how they wish others to interpret their actions (Jones et al 2011:19; Goffman 1959, 1956; Habermas 1987). This then can arguably be exploited by organisations in their endeavours to create a favourable reputation by arranging their communication in such a way as to ensure their stakeholders perceive them in a desired way. On this particular point, it is argued that the use of linguistic symbols (or words – written and verbal) could be used effectively by humans, and hence organisations for that matter, to create a particular impression by symbolising how they wish to be interpreted (cf. Kornblum 2012:16; Jones et al 2011:19; Argyle 1969:15).

In sum, it is can be said that these theories and views contribute to the understanding of social media brand communication because they provide insight into elements that might compel stakeholders to act and the connection between meaning, social interaction, action and social media. Stakeholders' actions, explicitly in this context, might include, say, supporting the non-profit organisation cause, using certain social media platforms, engaging in conversations and spreading information about the corporate brand (WOM and eWOM). Of significance is the notion that stakeholders act (support, converse about or discuss the corporate brand) following an interpretation of a particular environment and situation and the meaning they attach to it. Such meaning, as per Rosengren's (2000) earlier definitions, therefore encapsulates the collective way/s in which a given phenomenon is understood, explained and so on, by people (section 3.6.1.4). The key role of social interaction to create meanings, which in a social media environment takes place in an unrestricted fashion, is also emphasised.

Since it has been affirmed that social media facilitates and accelerates social interaction, its usefulness in promoting meaning that ultimately drives people to act in some way in an online environment, is evident. As initially proposed by Weber, the awareness that emotional factors

such as feelings and affects could in fact convince stakeholders to act is closely linked to a corporate brand's objective to create emotional links with stakeholders. In terms of a corporate brand, establishing emotional links with stakeholders may compel people to, *inter alia*, converse and share information about the corporate brand that could be attributed to the presence of emotional factors. It is thus essential that a non-profit organisation should contemplate the inclusion of emotional factors throughout its corporate brand communication (see section 2.6.1.3, chapter 2). Lastly, it can be concluded that provided the corporate brand holds emotional value for the stakeholders, their interaction on social media platforms could assist stakeholders to attach favourable meaning to this online interaction and drive stakeholders, apart from actively supporting a cause, to create and engage in positive conversations about the non-profit organisation. The prerequisites formulated by Parsons (1937) in a *theory of action* could be interpreted as follows, in the context of the current study: (1) the presence of actors, such as a non-profit organisation and stakeholders; (2) attempts to attain a desired goal, namely achieving a positive corporate brand by the inclusion, *inter alia*, of conversations on social media platforms; (3) occurring in a setting such as an online environment; and (4) having expectations that orient the action towards achieving goals (as stated in (2) above).

In terms of *online* interactions, one would need to consider the point by Gefen and Straub (2004:407) that these interactions largely contribute to social uncertainty, which refers to ambiguity regarding the "understanding, predicting, and controlling the behavior of other people". Such uncertainty could probably be ascribed to the unrestricted environment in which stakeholders use social media to communicate, including the obvious absence of formal rules and customs. The above authors (2004) maintain that *trust* could successfully assist stakeholders to understand and, to a certain extent, predict the behaviour and actions of others. Hence this allows for an understanding of their social environment, and as such, the expectation of others to behave in a socially responsible manner (Gefen & Straub 2004:408; Deutch 1958:266). According to Deutch (1958:266), "an individual may be said to have trust in the occurrence of an event if he expects its occurrence and his expectation leads to behaviour which he perceives to have greater negative motivational consequences if the expectation is not confirmed than positive motivational consequences if it is confirmed". In other words, if there is an expectation that an event of motivational relevance will occur, then trust is likely to be at play. Also, according to Deutch (1958:265), unfulfilled trust is often associated with unpleasant consequences.

The literature discloses the need to reflect the ways in which people construct their own social worlds and the assumptions of communication as a social process, in addition to the scholarly

viewpoints on human action, interaction and action theory that were presented in this section. The next section focuses on relevant perspectives on symbolic interaction that outwardly underline the presence of interaction, humans and the role of individuals in constructing their own worlds.

3.6.2.3 Contemporary perspectives on symbolic interaction/interactionism (Mead 1863–1931)

Symbolic interaction can be explained as the “way we learn to interpret the world” (Griffin 2009:61) by considering humans as “active agents who create shared meanings of symbols and events and then interact on the basis of those meanings” (Ballantine 2014:51; Gecas 2009; Chriss 2005; cf. Kornblum 2012:16; Griffin 2009:60). This echoes the insights of Weber, namely that people’s actions are based on the interpretation of their environment (cf. Crossman [sa]). Jones et al (2011:105) describe symbolic interactionism as the “interaction of humans via the use if symbols” (cf. Franzoi 2007), and therefore support the proposition that human life is naturally *symbolic* and *social* (Gecas 2009). Meads’ (1934) early presentations of the concept of *symbolic interactionism* are arguably the most prominent, which were ultimately termed as such by his student, Blumer, in 1937 (Blumer 1969; cf. Davetian 2010; Griffin 2009:59; Gecas 2009; Crable 2009; Sedo 2005; Littlejohn 2002:145–146; Neuliep 1996:46; Stacks et al 1991:187). Scholarly works reveals concepts that are commonly associated with symbolic interaction, including “*meaning, interaction and human agency* [emphasis added]” – concepts that are already eminent in the seminal views discussed (Sandstrom & Kleinman 2015; cf Blumer 1969:3; Griffin 2009:60), “*the self*, and the ways in which the self is constructed through interaction with others [emphasis added]” (Gecas 2009; Crable 2009; Leeds-Hurwitz 2006; Chriss 2005).

A main emphasis in this theory appears to be on the role of individuals in constructing their own social worlds – those situations that are based on their interpretation thereof (Chriss 2005:51; Jones et al 2011:104) and centred on an external stimulus, a cognitive process of interpreting the meaning of the stimulus, and then responding accordingly (Chriss 2005). Human action as an outcome of the interpretation of certain settings was highlighted earlier in the perspectives on action and social interaction and assumed to be an essential part of communication and thus of symbolic interaction. Emphasis on the active participation of people suggests that individuals are both *recipients* and *senders* of responses from and to others and active *creators* of their own social world (cf. Ballantine 2014:51; Crable 2009; Abrahamson 2981:21). Of importance is the idea that people’s *reality* is thus socially constructed and constantly in flux because it is created through ongoing social interactions (Staller 2010). This point therefore relates positively to the key characteristic of social media

to allow unhindered participation of all participants in the communication process. Symbolic interactionism is deemed to underscore interaction as a two-way process that centres around the interpretations of all participants, and the view of action correspondingly as a *product* of the behaviour that was interpreted and as an *effect* on the person/s whose behaviour was interpreted (Jones et al 2011:104, 105). This view therefore emphasises interaction as a dynamic and evolving process.

Central to Mead's (1934) thoughts is also the belief of *mind* – the emergence and development of one's thoughts, identity and the self as a response to and part of interaction with others, the roles that other people take and recognition of the selves from others' perspectives (Mead 1934:133; Griffin 2009:62,161; Gecas 2009; Sedo 2005; Chriss 2005). According to Blumer (1986:1). Similarly, Goffman's (1959) theory of action posits that the selves are instituted through other *actors'* performances and the responses of others, thereby emphasising the social nature of people (Sandstrom 2011; cf. Sandstrom 2003). In light of the above background, one could assume that Mead's conceptualisation of *mind* and Goffman's view of the selves with reference to communication on social media in non-profit organisations is twofold, namely to intensify stakeholders' expectations to fulfil both the roles of creator and consumer, and in a sense, to authorise the execution of these roles.

The fundamental role of communication in symbolic interactionism is deemed to provide certain presuppositions about communication as a social process, mainly for the following reasons: (1) communication occurs during the sharing of symbols; (2) people (the selves) are created through communication; and (3) understanding and negotiating the "meanings of others" may lead to social action (Sedo 2005). According to Sandstrom and Kleinman (2005), social action relies on and emerges through communication and interpretation (or understanding). Hence it would be fair to assume that symbolic interaction allows an interpretation of certain settings, enabling all participants to create and consume content in an online environment, and this supports unhindered interaction and conversation with the organisation and others.

In terms of this approach to human action, people are allowed to coordinate their action through their actions with others, and likewise to understand the interaction of organisations and groups (Ballantine 2014:53; Chriss 2005).

3.6.2.4 Contemporary perspectives on social presence

In light of the above overview of symbolic interaction, its value in terms of social presence is seemingly to clarify how individuals define their own social reality (Franzoi 2007) and determine appropriate action, according to this reality (Jones et al 2011:20). An earlier view

by Adoni and Mane (1984:325) aptly describes the construction of reality as *social* as it is arguably performed through social interaction that can be regarded as “a dialectical process in which human beings act both as the creator and as products of their social world” (cf. Leeds-Hurwitz 2009). This *reality*, as argued by Mead (1934) in his seminal work, *Mind, self, and society*, depends on the shared views and clarifications of those who observe it, rather than the perspectives of a single individual (cf. Davetian 2010). The primary assumption is thus that interaction with others enables people to continuously create and recreate their social lives – or social reality – by means of symbols through which meaning is assigned and a social presence is constructed, and then to act accordingly (Franzoi 2007; cf. Leeds-Hurwitz 2006; Gergen 1994:267).

The view of social presence adopted earlier (see section 3.6.1.5) denotes it as the inkling of togetherness or being *in the presence* of an organisation and others, irrespective of any spatial or time-related boundaries. This comprehension of a sense of presence is directly linked to reality and the expectation of humans that their communication through social media takes place in the real world (cf. Lombard & Ditton 1997). It is contended that social presence comprises “one's sense of self and one's perspectives of others” (Oztok, Zingaro, Makos, Brett & Hewitt 2015:20; cf. Goffman 1959). This is supported by Rettie (2005:357–358), who maintains that the presentation of self, as conceptualised by Goffman (1959), is closely linked to social presence in that *performances* are constantly created by the individual to achieve a certain perspective or reality. With the above views in mind, it would be reasonable to say that social interaction between the organisation and stakeholders in a social media environment in which all participants actively participate, will contribute to stakeholders' definition of their social reality. This might then urge stakeholders to congregate in online spaces in the presence of others.

Social presence theory is widely accredited to the contributions by Short et al (1976), who, in an attempt to explicate the attributes of communication mediums, suggested that it contains the qualities of being personal, sociable, warm, sensitive and intimate (Oztok et al 2015:19; Gooch & Watts 2013; Wei et al 2012; Mennecke, Triplett, Hassall & Conde 2010:1; LaMendola 2010:11; Griffin 2009:138; Kehrwald 2008; Rettie 2005:257; Sallnas et al 2000; Tu 2000; Lombard & Ditton 1997; Gunawardena 1995:150). Short et al's (1976:76) definition of this concept refers to “the degree of salience of the other person in a mediated communication and the consequent salience of their interpersonal interactions”, and mainly supports the opinion that it is a sense of an awareness of others. Notwithstanding this assertion, other beliefs of the meaning of this concept are evident in the literature, as mentioned earlier (see section 3.6.1.5). Leeds-Hurwitz (2009) identifies two elements that are essential to

communication, which merit consideration by the organisation in its communication endeavours, namely that people – or stakeholders for that matter – construct representations (or models) of the social world to make sense of their experiences, and moreover that reality is mainly constructed through language, also referred to as constellations of verbal and non-verbal cues (Short et al 1976; cf. Chen et al 2011:533; Mead 1959).

In light of the views discussed in this section, it would be reasonable to say the social interaction between the organisation and stakeholders, through conversation and in a social media environment in which all participants actively contribute, will contribute to the stakeholders' definition of their social reality. Furthermore, these views, in conjunction with the overview of the perspectives of human action and interaction that support the notion that all action of humans is really communication, underscore the fact that social presence can be accepted as a fundamental consideration of social media brand communication.

Table 3.10 summarises the main theoretical propositions presented in this section that might serve as factors that govern the action/s of both the organisation and stakeholders, when using social media to communicate. In light of insufficient social media theory, particularly from a communication perspective, this set of theoretical assumptions of social media brand communication cannot be assumed to be comprehensive.

Table 3.10: Theoretical propositions for social media brand communication

1 Perspectives on human action and interaction

- interpretation (understanding) of the communication environment on social media
- importance of trust to ensure social certainty through interpretation, understanding and confirmation of a specific expectation
- importance of intentional action – voluntary, interpretative and social – which emphasises the *interpretation* of surrounding environment
- existence of *means* (expectations) to achieve *ends* (set goal/s)
- individuals' actions affect others or determine the action of others (for example WOM and eWOM)
- takes place in a specific setting/situation
- evolved to the idea that people are connected through communication
- importance of meaning that social interaction enables individuals to act on social media platforms

2 Perspectives on symbolic interaction

- relates to how the world is interpreted
- action is based on the meanings things/situations have for them
- meaning is derived from the social interaction with others
- people are allowed to coordinate their action through their actions with others
- no object, process, person and so forth – hence communication is devoid of meaning and will thus determine the future conduct or action
- comprises *meaning, interaction* and *human presence*
- importance of self-presentation

3 Perspectives on social presence

- essential to define one's own social reality
- social interaction permits the creation of social reality
- being in the *presence* of others and an organisation in an online environment
- perceiving others and the organisation as *real* and *being together*
- experiencing the interaction as personal, sociable, warm, sensitive and intimate to fulfil the emotional needs of stakeholders
- affords the organisation opportunities to project a desired *self* that could impact on how it is being perceived

Attempts to ensure a thorough and relevant overview included a synopsis of seminal theoretical theories and perspectives on human action and interaction as the foundation, and to follow their progression to more contemporary views. However, this overview provided a valuable explanation of the parts that could constitute social media brand communication. In terms of the definitions of social media brand communication and social media adopted for this study, it is evident that social media includes all communication activities by means of an interactive platform that links organisations and stakeholders. This overview also explained the significance of social media for communication, that is, connectedness, participation, interactivity, sociality, social interaction, social presence, conversations and content.

3.7 THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CORPORATE BRANDING

Although there is consensus on the benefits of technological advances, studies on the relationship between social media and corporate branding are noticeably scarce. A recent study by Vernuccio (2014) provides valuable insight into this matter. Vernuccio (2014:216) notes two prominent approaches associated with the use of social media to communicate corporate branding, namely *interactivity* and *openness*, that presumably contribute to coordinating the organisation's vision, culture and image. Vernuccio (2014:227) relates interactivity to dialogic communication, and his study concluded that there is a *subtle* transition from one-way to two-way communication. The *openness* approach was explored in terms of the extent to which organisations allow stakeholders to co-create brands with less positive results representing high levels of control, which is a challenge (*ibid*:227-228). The Vernuccio study displays similarities to the focus of the current study regarding the need to incorporate conversations of stakeholders through dialogue and also allow them to participate in this dialogue, which are deemed pertinent to creating favourable corporate brands for non-profit organisations in South Africa. Of significance is Arvidsson's (2011) perception that brands may well evolve into *productive communities* in which all stakeholders will act as consumers and producers. This relates favourably to the unrestricted connection of people to participate in content generation as allowed by social media. According to Arvidsson (2011), to attract stakeholder participation, the organisation needs to articulate clear and attractive values

commonly associated with corporate branding, and to act accordingly (Arvidsson 2011) (see section 2.8, chapter 2). As discussed in chapter 2, corporate brand values serve to assure stakeholders that the organisation's actions are aligned with their own expectations, and they can hence willingly elicit participation in communicating with and on behalf of the organisation through the creation of different social media content (Daw et al 2011; see section 2.6.1.1, chapter 2; see section 3.5.2).

Another relevant study in three different sectors was conducted by Bruhn et al (2012) to examine the relative impact of social media and traditional media on the creation of brand value. Their findings suggest that both types of communication media have a significant impact on creating assets in the "minds and hearts" of stakeholders, but that their contributions are different (see section 2.5, chapter 2). It was concluded that social media strongly influences the way the corporate brand is viewed, while traditional media has a stronger impact on the recognition of the brand. Bruhn et al (2012) concur that combining these social media and traditional media could significantly benefit the creation of brand equity. Moreover, the relevant outcomes of this study included the notion that social media allows communication about a brand to take place publicly, which could strengthen its visibility and allow it to be openly discussed, and interestingly, the results showed the correlation between high brand involvement and positive eWOM.

Vernuccio (2014:212) acknowledges the views of a number of researchers who evidently agree that no new theory is needed for an online brand, apart from considering the different ways in which the brand is executed that might imply less control by the organisations and active participation by stakeholders. The assumption concerning less control and the active participation and engagement of stakeholders, is obvious in the theoretical elements of social media, as explained in section 3.6 above. In the framework of this study, this underscored two vital points, namely that stakeholders are allowed to actively participate in communication, and conversely, that such participation might to some extent occur in an uncontrolled fashion, which would merit consideration by the non-profit organisation. eWOM or earned media as explicated previously, acknowledges the existence of unrestricted conversations by stakeholders that cannot be overlooked because of their perceived impact on the corporate brand. This ties in with the idea in the current study that the incorporation of stakeholders' voices is relevant. Also, this idea appears to be in accordance with the new vision of "*open source branding*" [own emphasis], as formulated by Fournier and Avery (2011:194), which is seemingly provided by social media. Open source branding refers to the notion that all conversations facilitated by and stakeholders who are linked through social media should contribute equally to the building of the corporate brand (Fournier and Avery 2011:194).

In conclusion, and with due consideration of the corporate brand perspective clarified in chapter 2, the proposed benefits of the social media elements for corporate branding for this particular study are summarised in table 3.11 below.

Table 3.11: The proposed benefits of social media branding for non-profit organisations

The nature of social media	Social media elements	Corporate branding
permits stakeholders/participants to initiate communication by allowing connection with others, and to create, use and share content unhindered	social interaction/interactivity/participation/conversation/social media content/connectedness/ <i>sociality</i>	to purposely reflect the corporate brand that endorses the products or services the customer will acquire
creates a “24/7 collaborative world” in which modifications to content are speedy and effortless	connectedness/participation/social media content	concedes that every endeavour and interaction between and with the brand and various stakeholders is communication
allows organisations and individuals to communicate with broad global audiences who have access to social media and information	connectedness/ <i>sociality</i> /conversation/interaction	to differentiate and identify the corporate brand, and purposefully create a preference with stakeholders to favour one organisation over another
creates a feeling between the corporate brand and stakeholder of <i>being real</i> and <i>together</i> – associated with a sense of belonging	social presence/ <i>sociality</i>	an increased focus on the emotional level – stakeholders’ sense and emotions – to capitalise on this and support of the corporate brand humanise the corporate brand
acknowledges that social media content is “of the user, by the user, and more importantly for the user” (Bonsón & Flores 2011:34) becoming productive communities through unrestricted connections and allowing stakeholders to be community members	interactivity/participation/ <i>sociality</i>	to allow stakeholders to co-create and share communication about a corporate brand allows all to participate as consumers and producers through articulation of corporate brand values
connects stakeholders through communication by acknowledging that every communication endeavour or action and interaction is communication	connectedness/interaction/conversation/ <i>sociality</i>	revealing the story of the corporate brand and anticipating that stakeholders might feel compelled to share it and thus advance the corporate

3.8 SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter was to explore *social media* as the main focus of the study by investigating prevalent social media definitions, exploring the historical development of social media, identifying key elements of the concept and examining the theoretical foundations of the social media. It was argued that this exploration would provide valuable insight into the elements associated with the use of social media by non-profit organisations to communicate.

An analysis of explicit definitions and dimensions of social media underlined the complex nature of and varying perspectives on the meaning of the concept and its foundational elements.

The concise overview of the historical development confirmed social media as a communication platform that evolved from the Internet (hence an online media) and built on the technological foundations of Web 2.0. Apart from the technical elements, the progression was also characterised by a transition from an information only initiative to an information exchange and community building initiative, which, *inter alia*, represents novel ways to connect and communicate. Communication on social media is stakeholder (user) driven and adopts a participatory approach to the creation of social media content and interactions which, over time, contribute to the democratisation of communication and allow broad connectivity.

The broad classification of social media considered related concepts that are often equated with social media, namely digital, online and new media, and existing classifications of the concept. The classification of social media lacks consensus, and an extensive perspective was proposed for the arrangement of these tools.

The foundational elements of social media were identified as Web 2.0 (users and technical elements), UGC, and human interaction (or community). Incidentally, these elements were implied by the analysis of social media definitions and their dimensions.

Exploring key elements and the theoretical foundation of social media served a twofold purpose, namely to highlight key elements of the concept found in the social media literature through deductive reasoning, and secondly, to elaborate on these elements by providing a concise overview of the theories relating to the concept by means of inductive reasoning, particularly in light of the absence of social media theories. The following key elements of social media were identified: participation, social media connectedness, the *social* of social media, social interaction, social presence, interactivity, social media conversations and social media content. In addition, classical theoretical views, and the theory of and perspectives on human action, symbolic interaction and social presence, were explored to discover theoretical preconditions of social media brand communication. Furthermore, exploring the social media

phenomenon allowed for the identification of social media elements and suggestions of the proposed benefits of these elements for corporate branding in table 3.11.

Chapter 4 explores an integrated approach to social media brand communication. This is followed by the identification of certain elements for a conceptual framework to integrate non-profit organisation's social media brand communication. These elements are subsequently measured and verified through empirical research.

CHAPTER 4: CONCEPTUALISING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNICATION: KEY COMPONENTS AS ELEMENTS FOR COMMUNICATION INTEGRATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature reveals varied perspectives on integrated communication (IC) and its applications in multiple disciplines, which merit an investigation of the concept in order to contextualise it for the purpose of this study.

As early as 1996, Schultz (1996:140) acknowledged that integration is driven by the “total technological revolution” worldwide, which is also characterised by irreversible advances and the ability to connect boundlessly with widely dispersed groups and individuals. The current view is that social media essentially allows stakeholders to connect and communicate effortlessly with one another and the organisation, which helps the organisation to gain a strong reputation and corporate brand when social media is correctly utilised. The ability of social media to swiftly connect stakeholders further underscores the need to project the organisation as a unified brand as these social media connections allow stakeholders to participate in unrestricted conversations that could significantly affect the corporate brand and the way stakeholders perceive the organisation.

As posited in chapter 2, contemporary organisations are increasingly realising the value of portraying themselves as a coherent unit, also referred to as a unified brand that inevitably requires consistency in every interaction (verbal, visual, and behavioural) of the organisation. This continued recognition of the value of a strong corporate brand, encourages organisations to align all communication, and consider the application of newer communication technologies such as social media (cf. Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:6). As emphasised by Niemann-Struweg and Grobler (2007:57), an integrated approach to communication is arguably the most appropriate tactic to ensure brand loyalty, and the non-profit sector should also consider adopting such an approach. Consistent and uniform communication by the non-profit organisation would allow stakeholders to form a coherent impression of the corporate brand. The literature justifies the notion that such an ideal could be achieved through the integration of all the communication activities of the organisation – hence the focus of the current study to suggest elements for a conceptual framework for the integration of non-profit organisations' social media brand communication in South Africa.

As mentioned in chapters 1 and 2, IC may adopt a narrow focus, such as the integration of social media brand communication with external stakeholders, and this would therefore not

be limited to the holistic integration of internal and external communication as an organisation-wide quest (see section 2.3.1, chapter 2). Nonetheless, the integration of social media brand communication would probably require consideration of possible elements underpinned by an organisation-wide pursuit towards achieving a unified corporate brand.

The aim of this chapter is to address the following research objective:

*To describe the elements that could constitute an integrated approach to
social media brand communication*

The chapter is structured as follows: firstly, it conceptualises the IC approach of the study; secondly, it explores the origins, principles, current emphasis, driving factors and barriers to IC; thirdly, the significance of a social media strategy and suggested elements thereof is explained; fourthly, it investigates historical, South African and digital IC models; and fifthly, the proposed elements for a conceptual framework to integrate non-profit organisation's social media brand communication are identified for the purposes of measurement.

4.2 CONCEPTUALISING THE INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION APPROACH OF THE STUDY

This study supported the view of Christensen et al (2008b), Niemann (2005), and Mulder (2015) that IC can be regarded an extension of IMC, and that it inherently contains some IMC elements. It is acknowledged that multiple disciplines, such as advertising, marketing and corporate communication, are concerned with the IC concept. Owing to ambiguity in the use of the concepts of IMC and IC, the researcher's purposive selection of literature on IC was somewhat constrained. This necessitated the exploration and inclusion of related IMC literature in this chapter, provided it was in accordance with the perspectives on IC. As explained in chapter 3, the SIC perspective was not fully in line with the main research problem and secondary research of the present study. The literature identifies differences between the concepts IC and IMC that partly allow such a distinction and that could be used to recognise relevant contributions in the literature. The main views used to discern related literature for the purpose of exploring IC included the following:

- (1) The fact that IC is viewed to represent a more comprehensive perspective than IMC, occurs at corporate level and is concerned with all communication endeavours of the organisation (De Beer 2014:141; Einwiller & Boenigk 2012:336; Johansen & Andersen 2012:276–277; Smith 2012a:5; Torp 2009:201, 203; Christensen et al 2009:210, 215; Christensen et al 2008a:424, 428; McMahon 2007:273; Niemann 2005; Kitchen & Schultz 2003:67; Witkoski 2002/2003:10; Duncan & Moriarty 1997:16).

- (2) In most instances, IC appears to be aimed at *stakeholders* as opposed to IMC's more limiting focus on customers (Einwiller & Boenigk 2012:336; Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:15; Kerr, Schultz, Patti & Kim 2008:516; Christensen et al 2008a:429; Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:28; Niemann 2005:27; Grunig & Grunig 1998:147; Duncan & Moriarty 1997:16, 1998:6;). This therefore points to the inclusion and recognition of a broader range of stakeholders as stated in section 2.3.2, chapter 2.
- (3) There is an intention to engage in *dialogue* by viewing stakeholders as senders and receivers of communication (Gronstedt 1996b:295). On this point, Gronstedt (2000:34) subsequently emphasised the importance of dialogue with employees as part of the vertical or internal integration of IC (see section 4.7.1.4). The point raised by Grunig and Grunig (1998) pertaining to the importance of two-way communication in managing trust and reputation is worth mentioning because both these concepts – trust and reputation or the loss thereof – is often mentioned in conjunction with IC (cf. Einwiller & Boenigk 2012:336).
- (4) The idea is put forward that IC is driven by the mission or strategic plan of the organisation, whereas the objectives of IMC are believed to be formulated at departmental level (marketing) in relation to the different marketing communication functions such as, *inter alia*, advertising, public relations and sales promotion (McMahon 2011:260; Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008; Niemann 2005:28; cf. Kitchen & Schultz 2003:66–67).
- (5) The notion is that an IC approach could address complex communication needs and ensure coherent communication and messages, which would contribute to a strong corporate brand (cf. Einwiller & Boenigk 2012:336).
- (6) By concentrating on stakeholders, IC adopts an outside-in focus (various authors in section 2.3.2, chapter 2). The idea is that creating meaningful connections with stakeholders may contribute to achieving a favourable corporate brand.

In order to relate IC to corporate communication, corporate branding and social media, it was deemed essential to provide a succinct overview of its origins and to conceptualise an integrated approach to social media brand communication, to identify its principles and explore the current emphasis of IC.

4.3 ORIGINS OF IC

According to Christensen et al (2008b), integration in marketing communication originated in the 1950s (cf. Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:28; Van Riel 1995:15), although there are different views on the exact date of inception (Niemann 2005; cf. Einwiller & Boenigk 2012; Cornelissen 2011; Van Riel 1995). There appears to be general consensus on the first notion or the need

for the integration of communication, which emerged from advertising as a specialised function of marketing communication (MC), which for decades had received the most attentions (Belch & Belch 2009; Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:9; Niemann 2005:93; Hutton 2001:205; Duncan & Caywood 1996:13; Thorson & Moore 1996:2). Organisations recognised the need to integrate different promotional activities of the organisation, which was deemed to contribute to the emergence of IMC (Belch & Belch 2009). The idea is seemingly rooted in marketing at a time when the alignment of product, price, place and promotion was necessary to achieve behavioural outcomes such as persuading customers to purchase a product (Kerr et al 2008:514). In corporate communication, the idea of achieving a uniform picture of the organisation was promoted almost adjacent to the move to IMC, and was driven by the need to unify corporate symbolism and include the wide range of communication functions of the organisation (cf. Van Riel 1995:17). The notion was mainly based on the realisation of the need to coordinate different communication functions of the organisation perceivably attainable by adopting an IC perspective, that eventually extended to a broader communication role (Cornelissen 2011:4; see section 2.3, chapter 2). The current perception is that IMC occurs mainly at a marketing level and integrated communication at corporate brand level (Kitchen & Schultz 2003), hence suggesting an extended role of IC in the organisation that is not limited to a single communication function.

In terms of the primary objective of the study, that is, to formulate guiding points for non-profit organisations to facilitate communication in an integrated way, it was deemed necessary to gain an understanding of the meaning of an integrated approach to social media. The next section explores such an approach.

4.3.1 Conceptualising an integrated approach to social media brand communication

Section 4.1 briefly highlighted the changes in the ways organisations communicate from linear, one-way to nonlinear, two-way communication. It is assumed that an IC approach to communication allows organisations to take advantage of social media to benefit the non-profit organisation. The concept of IC is often associated with related elements, such as integration, synergy and consistency that necessitate clarity when referring to integrated communication. According to Ouwersloot and Duncan (2008:15), *integration* is the “combining of separate parts into a unified whole”. This view concurs with that of Cornelissen (2013), who calls it the orchestration and coordination of all communication and content. Cornelissen’s (2013) opinion can furthermore be expanded and aligned with the perspective adopted for this study, namely the endeavour to promote a coherent impression of the organisation through a uniform corporate brand (cf. Cornelissen 2008). In terms of this distinction, it would thus be fair to

conclude that in terms of communication integration, the current emphasis is mainly on communication that reflects the corporate brand (cf. Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:4).

Alternatively, *synergy* is described by Ouwersloot and Duncan (2008:15) as the “sum of the interaction of individual parts in a way that makes the integrated whole greater than the sum of its parts” (cf. Moriarty 1996:350). By all accounts, it can be appreciated as an outcome or end goal of communication integration (Ouwersloot & embraces 2008:15) and regarded as having a greater impact on the total communication effort than when communication occurs separately or by means of single communication efforts (cf. Moriarty 1996:350).

The concept of *consistency* is also often used in the literature on communication integration, which in a sense represents the ideals of integration (Johansen & Andersen 2012:272), and like synergy, could be regarded as an outcome of integration. It is said to refer to the need for uniformity, and in this context could refer to communication actions that are harmonised or fine-tuned to each other and do not oppose or contradict each other (cf. Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:28).

Based on the above-mentioned views, one could say with reference to integrated communication, that related concepts such as synergy and consistency might actually be regarded as the planned outcomes of the integration of communication. In other words, the organisation should be concerned with the overall coordination or combination of all communication with the aim of ensuring coherent communication that results in achieving a greater combined effect than separate communication efforts. Noteworthy are the perspectives of Torp (2009:199) and Gronstedt (2000:32) that IC does not necessarily suggest that communication to all stakeholders should be uniform, but that it needs at best to be leveraged. In other words, it suggests that all communication should consistently support the organisation's broad philosophy and goals, but need not necessarily be identical. In section 3.5.2 (chapter 3), the point was raised that each type of social media seemingly possesses its own functionality which, *inter alia*, compel organisations to personalise content for sharing on the different platforms. The challenge is therefore to ensure that the core brand message is retained in these efforts.

Of relevance to the idea of an integrated approach to social media brand communication, is the notion that communication integration could be approached from two angles (Smith 2012a:600). Smith (2012a:600) asserts that IC might mainly be debated from a mechanistic view or a philosophical perspective of which the latter has generally not been explored. In fact, the objective of reaching the “heart and mind” of stakeholders is underlined by Smith (2012a:601) as the main principle of integrated communication. The view is that although IC is generally regarded as the process of coordinating and managing communication (the so-

called *mechanics* of integrated communication), it is enabled by a philosophy or *spirit* of integration that is represented by a particular mind-set or value system of the organisation (the so-called *philosophy of integration*) (Smith 2012a:606). One could thus infer that this proposition of approaching the integration of communication from a philosophical perspective outwardly reinforces the aim of corporate branding, namely to humanise the organisation with the expectation to create an emotional connection with stakeholders (Smith 2012a:601; see section 2.7, chapter 2). Non-profit organisations might find it worthwhile to consider a twofold approach to an integrated approach by focusing on integrating the mechanics or tactics of communication (which includes various methods, tools and ways of communication) and the integration of the value systems (referring to a *philosophy of integration*) of the organisation with that of stakeholders, and *vice versa*. The case of aligning the organisation's core values and the values expected or appreciated by stakeholders, is not a novel idea and was debated in section 2.6.1.1. Hence, apart from the corporate communication perspective to strategically align the organisation's communication, the importance of aligning corporate and stakeholder values is underscored (cf. section 2.3.1, chapter 2; Urde 2009:616).

Smith (2012a:607) concludes that IC is allowed by "informal connections, social interaction and an open communication system", which are all elements that may qualify as corporate brand communication touch points and are associated with social media (see section 3.6, chapter 3).

As stated in chapter 1, and based on the background provided thus far, an integrated approach to social media brand communication can be defined as follows:

A philosophy of integration to achieve synergy and consistency of the communication endeavours of non-profit organisations on social media platforms

The section below explores the key principles and the prevailing emphases of integrated communication.

4.4 CORE PRINCIPLES OF IC

The purpose of this section is to identify the core principles of IC that could be pertinent to non-profit organisations and that need to be taken into account when considering an integrated approach to social media brand communication.

The core elements of IC that feature prominently in the literature and which were deemed valuable in demarcating the concept for the current study, are widely supported and underscore a focus on the following: (1) a broad range of stakeholders; (2) communication rather than messages; (3) employees; (4) the expansion thereof beyond traditional borders;

(5) its strategic intentions; and (6) integration as a process (De Beer 2014:137; Swerling, Thorson & Zerfass 2014:4; Antoci et al 2014:1913; Martini, Massa & Testa 2014:425; Ind & Coates 2013:86; Roser, DeFillippi & Samson 2013:22, 23; Saarijärvi, Kannan & Kuusela 2013:7, 9; Roblek, Bach, Meško & Bertoncelj 2013:555; Macnamara & Zerfass 2012:291; Capriotti & Kuklinski 2012: 620–621; Einwiller & Boenigk 2012:337; Smith 2012a:601–603, 2012b:5–6; Romenti et al 2014:14; Christensen & Cornelissen 2011:386; Cornelissen 2011:40, 42; Parent et al 2011:223; Johansen & Andersen 2012:275, 284; Johansen & Nielsen 2011:206; Waters & Lemanski 2011:153; Avery, Lariscy & Sweetser 2010a:189; De Choudhury et al 2010:62; Christensen et al 2009:213, 428; Finne & Grönroos 2009:180; Grunig 2009:9; Torp 2009:197; Hallahan et al 2007:4; Kliatchko 2008:142–149; Mengis & Eppler 2008:1290; Christensen et al 2008a:428; 2008:52; Niemann-Struweg & Grobler 2007:58–59; Kelleher 2007; Niemann 2005:28; Argenti et al 2005:83–84; Lattimore, Baskin & Aronoff 2004:385; Hatch & Schultz 2003:1047; Ehlers 2002:339; Hatch and Schultz 2001:130; Kitchen & Schultz 2001:101; Gronstedt 2000:6, 11, 14, 31; Schultz & Kitchen 2000:53; Jones & Wicks 1999:209; Donaldson 1999:238–239; Grunig & Grunig 1998:147; Kent & Taylor 1998:329–331; Duncan & Moriarty 1997:75–76; Duncan & Caywood 1996:18; Suchman 1995:574; Steynberg 1994:12; Grunig & White 1992:57).

4.4.1 Focusing on a broad range of stakeholders

This point elaborates on the concept of *stakeholder perspective* that was introduced in section 2.3.2 in chapter 2 as a key theoretical component of corporate communication, to subsequently underline its value in an IC approach. It is posited that IC urges the organisation to adopt a holistic perspective with regard to the audiences it wishes to reach. According to Kitchen and Schultz (2001:101), stakeholders are at the core of IC and comprise those groups or individuals exposed to the organisation's activities and who will eventually experience the organisation in a particular way. This purportedly implies considering all groups and individuals with which the organisation interacts (Smith 2012a:601; cf. Kliatchko 2008:145; Christensen et al 2008b; Niemann-Struweg & Grobler 2007:58; Gronstedt 2000:11, 14, 31; Jones & Wicks 1999:209; Donaldson 1999:238–239; Duncan & Caywood 1996:30-31; Jones 1995:408; Grunig & Grunig 1998:147; Freeman 1984:6; Duncan & Moriarty 1997:75-76). This principle was mentioned in the overview of corporate communication in chapter 2, and suggests that organisations should primarily consider the needs and interests of their stakeholders by adopting a broad stakeholder focus. In an IC context, such a focus is also referred to as *an audience-centric approach* by Kliatchko (2008:142), as *stakeholder integration* by Einwiller and Boenigk (2012:337) and Driessen et al (2013:1465), and as a *stakeholder perspective* by Cornelissen (2011:40). It was therefore deemed fitting to introduce these needs and interests

into the organisation, mainly as result of technological developments such as social media (cf. Driessen et al 2013:1465).

Smith (2012b:5) views stakeholders as the foundation of communication integration mainly because of their capability to access and *integrate content*. Moreover, according to Christensen et al (2009:213), the achievement of communication consistency, as intended in the philosophies of corporate communication and IC, relies on whether the receiver of communication, when assigning meaning to it, understands it as intended and subsequently interprets communication as integrated or not. This highlights the importance of considering stakeholders' communication needs, their perspectives on whether communication is integrated, and what meaning they assign to the communication received (cf. Finne & Grönroos 2009:180). In addition, one needs to consider the fact that the organisation sends powerful messages through every interaction and transaction with the stakeholder that enables the organisation to give meaning to the corporate brand (Gronstedt 2000:6; cf. Duncan & Moriarty 1998:6). In the era of social media, in which stakeholders are empowered to create, adapt and share content at will, organisations are compelled to adopt an all-inclusive approach to all stakeholders. Kliatchko (2008:143) proposes a "deep understanding of target audiences" as the starting point of communication integration, followed by the strategic management of their "needs, wants, desires and behaviour". In this sense, the focus shifts from outgoing communication to the active involvement of stakeholders, including their conversations and voices, and expectations (cf. Valos et al 2016:22). What is pertinent at this juncture, and considering the explanation in section 3.4.2 in chapter 3, is the potential of earned media, which for strategic purposes, might serve to reflect the corporate brand's success and reveal topics that are significant to the corporate brand. In line with the corporate brand perspective of the study, it could be said that organisations should consider stakeholders' needs and wants with regard to the communication they require and receive from the organisation, and the expectations they have of the corporate brand. It is essential to reflect on the possibilities these considerations hold for forming emotional connections with the non-profit organisation. Similarly, stakeholder feedback and topics of conversation should be considered in the strategic objectives of the non-profit organisation.

The above outlooks on the interpretation of content by stakeholders thus points to the issue of meaning creation, which warrants brief mention. Although the aim is not to explore the process of meaning creation per se, it should be investigated here because it relates to the interpretation of social media content. The importance and relevance of the meaning assigned to communication by the organisation needs to be considered because it persuades stakeholders to act in certain ways, for example, to create and share earned media (WOM) (cf. Theunissen 2014:613). Indeed, the theoretical assumptions in chapter 3 confirmed the

role of meaning that drives stakeholders to act. A study by Finne and Grönroos (2009), which is primarily approached from a marketing communication perspective, explores a relationship communication model in which such a stakeholder focus on communication and meaning creation is encapsulated. Their conceptual model considers a *time* dimension (comprising historical and future factors) and a *situational* dimension (comprising internal and external factors that might impact on the stakeholder's creation of meaning, based on the marketing communication messages received). Of significance is the idea that *future factors* (which these scholars see as part of the *time dimension*) could be rooted in future expectations concerning relationships with the organisation. In this context, it could point to stakeholders' expectations of the non-profit corporate brand and the promises the brand portrays in this regard. This study concluded that the consumer's creation of meaning might be influenced by some or all of these factors, and that integration is actually based on meaning.

Also of relevance to a stakeholder focus is the issue of *legitimacy* (Cornelissen 2011:40; Christensen et al 2008bb), which can in fact be linked to integrated communication, and can be explained as the organisation's right to exist. *Legitimacy* points to a "generalized perception or assumption that the action of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman 1995:574; cf. Cornelissen 2011:42). *Social legitimacy* is viewed as a more comprehensive concept with a focus on the need for organisations to be perceived as "essential and accepted members of the larger community" in which they exist (Christensen et al 2008; cf. Marchand 1998). This broader view of legitimacy is also referred to as *organisational legitimacy* and is seen as "a social constructed set of assumptions about proper behaviour" (Christensen et al 2008b) that arguably presents itself in new ways and is experienced more intensely in modern society. It can thus be concluded that the conduct of contemporary organisations, including those in the non-profit sector, is endorsed by the larger community and the broad stakeholder base they operate in that will ultimately determine their *right to exist*. In the context of the study, the non-profit organisations' purpose of being is the realisation of a social mission (Larson [sa]) that depends on adopting a stakeholder perspective to achieve legitimacy. Social media allows stakeholders to actively participate in creating, adapting and sharing social media content (see sections 3.6.1.2 and 3.6.1.8, chapter 3). Such participation, as argued by Johansen and Nielsen (2011:206), also affords stakeholders the opportunity to participate in processes of accountability and hence empowers them to decide whether the organisation is acting appropriately. Furthermore, social media allows stakeholders to interact with others and as such to be widely connected, which implies wider access to information about the organisation as well as the boundless sharing thereof (see sections 3.5.1, 3.6.1.1 and 3.6.1.4, chapter 3). Hence stakeholders are permitted to make more informed decisions on whether organisations

act as legitimate members of the community, which underscores the need to track stakeholder perceptions to determine how adeptly the organisation adds value to the stakeholder (cf. Gronstedt 2000:41). Conversely, according to Antoci et al (2014:1913), the various types of social media content – for example, blogs, tweets and Facebook posts – could be seen and used as *storage mechanisms* which, in the context here, would imply that information about stakeholders is readily available to the organisation to track their perceptions and conversations about the organisation, and thus to create value for the organisation.

New broader perspectives on *value creation* also recognise the stakeholder perspective and increased involvement of stakeholders as *co-creators* of value (De Beer 2014:137; cf. Ind & Coates 2013:86; Saarijärvi et al 2013:7), which is supposedly enhanced through increased connectivity as allowed by social media (Martini et al 2014:426; see section 3.6.1.1, chapter 3). *Co-creation* is defined as “an *interactive, creative and social process* between stakeholders that is initiated by the firm at different stages of the value creation process” [emphasis added] (Roser et al 2013:23; cf. Martini et al 2014:425). This is said to occur when stakeholders interact with the organisation and adopt an active role in shaping their experiences of the organisation (Roser et al 2013:22), and when organisations “harness the creative potential” of stakeholders through such interaction (Saarijärvi et al 2013:9). The notion is that in marketing, this new perspective focuses on the co-creation of values by and the building of relationships with stakeholders, which mainly depend on their experiences of products and services (cf. Roser et al 2013:23). This point obviously relates to the views explained thus far in this section about the *meaning* and importance of considering the future expectations communicated by the corporate brand in the non-profit sector (cf. Finne & Grönroos 2009). Moreover, such an assumption could be considered equally applicable in a corporate and IC setting in which one would expect stakeholders’ experiences with the corporate brand to contribute to their co-creation of values and building of relationships. In terms of the definition by Roser et al (2013) cited above, the perceived importance of values in a corporate brand perspective, and the theoretical foundational elements of social media discussed in section 3.6, it would be logical to conclude that social media could significantly facilitate the value creation process of both organisation and stakeholders. Hence it can be assumed that the adoption of an integrated approach to social media brand communication and a stakeholder focus might afford stakeholders opportunities to participate in and contribute to their own experiences of the organisation, through active interaction and connection. Conversely, it enables the organisation to utilise the knowledge of stakeholders to its advantage. Such a co-creation process is supposedly facilitated through dialogue (Roser et al 2013:22) or *social media conversations*, in the context of this study (see section 3.6.1.7, chapter 3; cf. Johansen & Andersen 2012:284).

Einwiller and Boenigk (2012:337) add that an essential element of IC could be regarded as the aim to create and nurture *relationships* with all stakeholders. Gronstedt (2000:7, 14) contends that IC builds the required relationships to allow organisations to be competitive, thereby underscoring the role of IC in creating relationships. One would expect organisations to strive to successfully integrate all communication functions that interact with stakeholders and to be concerned with building stakeholder relationships, in order to increase the probability of cementing desired relationships. This would ultimately ensure that stakeholders continuously receive appropriate and consistent messages that could, over time, lead to strong relationships (Einwiller & Boenigk 2012:337).

The literature suggests that a stakeholder focus necessitates knowledge of stakeholders and their communication needs and wants and how to connect with them where they meet (Einwiller & Boenigk 2012:337; Cornelissen 2011:40–41; Christensen et al 2008b; Kelleher 2007; Argenti et al 2005:83–84; see sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3, chapter 2; section 3.6.1.1, chapter 3). Besides, the indications are that stakeholders *expect* organisations to consider their opinions, engage in conversation and respond accordingly (Swerling et al 2014:4; Roblek et al 2013:555; Parent et al 2011:223). A stakeholder focus might enable organisations to apply social media to customise their communication content and delivery and meet the stakeholders' expectations in respect of their interactions with the organisation (Roblek et al 2013:555). Equally, social media's potential to communicate with broad audiences might allow organisations to successfully achieve and sustain a stakeholder focus (cf. Avery et al 2010a:189; De Choudhury et al 2010:62).

4.4.2 Focusing on communication rather than messages

According to Niemann (2005:28), IC implies a change in emphasis from integrated messages to IC, which exemplifies the presence of dialogue or two-way communication (cf. Rakić & Rakić 2014:187; Kliatchko 2008:142; cf. Niemann-Struweg & Grobler 2007:58). Christensen et al (2008b) maintain that such a focus allows the organisation to integrate the stakeholders' voices, which could lead to a wider support of their plans by society. This indicates that stakeholders obtain a voice in management decisions and participation in dialogue (cf. Grunig 2009:9). Moreover, it signifies a broad perspective on IC, as supported by Christensen and Cornelissen (2011:386), who suggest that the view of managing all "communications under one banner" represents a shift from the initial focus from merely being concerned with coordinating communication messages, to adopting a more holistic orientation towards an organisation's overall communication and by considering all actions and interactions in its endeavours to interact with stakeholders (cf. Johansen & Andersen 2012:275; Christensen et al 2008a:428; Duncan & Caywood 1996:18). Also, as Niemann-Struweg and Grobler

(2007:58) contend, emphasising all communication could contribute favourably to an organisation's brand.

As discussed in section 2.5.1.5, chapter 2, and section 3.6.1.7 chapter 3, and with reference to social media, *dialogue and dialogic engagement* can loosely be associated with *conversation* that affords organisations and stakeholders opportunities to relate to each other through two-way communication and unrestricted communication, rather than to merely disseminate and receive information through one-way communication. The definition of *conversation* in section 3.6.1.7 chapter 3, evidently suggests two-way communication interaction that, in addition to extending the exchange of information, allow participants to relate to one another and to develop a communal reality. As posited in that section, and considering the varied views on and ambiguity in the exact meaning of dialogue, for the purpose of this study and in the social media context, related concepts such as "conversation, two-way conversation, dialogue and dialogic engagement are used interchangeably to denote the use of two-way and unrestricted communication between stakeholders" (see section 3.6.1.7, chapter 3).

However, it is acknowledged that in many instances, one cannot equate dialogue and two-way communication – for example, the view that the relationship between two-way communication and dialogue can also be understood as that of *process and product*, respectively (Kent & Taylor 1998:323); and the early views of prominent public relations scholars who regard dialogue as being equal to the *communication* of issues with publics (Grunig & White 1992:57). Nonetheless, dialogue is often mentioned in relation to communication, as in the case of Rakić and Rakić (2014:187,190) who regard it as *dynamic communication* through which organisations communicate with stakeholders, stakeholders communicate with organisations and stakeholders communicate among themselves (Kelleher 2009:172). Besides, Romenti et al (2012:14) directly link dialogue to *online conversation*, when they state that it pertains to the perspective organisations choose to adopt when implementing these conversations (cf. Lattimore et al 2004:385). The pertinence of social media in dialogue and dialogic strategies has been confirmed by the number of studies on this topic, such as the following: Romenti et al (2014); Rakić and Rakić (2014); Romenti et al (2014); Carim and Warwick (2013); Kochbar et al (2012); Lee and Desai (2014; Theunissen & Wan Noordin (2012); Capriotti and Kuklinski (2012); Bonsón and Flores (2011); Solis (2010); Grunig (2009); Păun (2009); Gillin (2007); Arora and Predmore (2013); and Kent and Taylor (1998).

In an online environment, the five principles of effective dialogic communication when using the Internet, as identified by Kent and Taylor (1998), could be useful to interpret *communication* as a core element of IC (cf. Capriotti & Kuklinski 2012:620–621). Kent and

Taylor (1998) emphasise two aspects, namely *content management* and *interaction management*, which are deemed to encapsulate the following five dialogic principles: *dialogic loop; usefulness of information; generation of return visits; intuitiveness/ease of the interface; and rule of conservation of visitors*, as illustrated in figure 4.1 below. Firstly, a dialogic loop as initially conceptualised by Kent and Taylor (1998:326) signifies the starting point of dialogic communication that allows organisations to address various concerns and questions stakeholders may raise about the organisation, and further implies a commitment by the organisation to react to these issues. Of interest is the somewhat simplistic view of Waters and Lemanski (2011:153) that the proper functioning of a dialogue loop mainly depends on the ability to “give and receive feedback”. In a social media brand communication context, it can be presumed that dialogic loops point to a more inclusive view that expands the ideas of Kent and Taylor (1998), namely to *listen* to conversations on social media platforms, as opposed to merely responding to questions from or providing information to stakeholders. Secondly, organisations should consider the perceived value of providing generic and historical information that appeals to a broad group of stakeholders. This is linked to the idea that social media allows unrestricted access to information or content (see section 3.5.2, chapter 3) which, from a communication integration approach and with the focus on a broad range of stakeholders, merits consideration. Despite considering stakeholders’ communication needs (see section 4.4.1), organisations should also reflect on the fact that social media provides wide access to organisational information that could influence how the corporate brand is perceived.

Thirdly, Kent and Taylor (1998:329) value the use of credible updated information and implementing interactive strategies that truly encourage participation and conversation with stakeholders, and this is deemed to encourage dialogic communication. The generation of return visits in the context of an integrated approach to social media brand communication may well refer to the use of social media in building dialogic relationships, which, as posited by Kent and Taylor (1998), simply requires *dialogue*. Moreover, and of significance to the current study, is recognition of the different types of content the organisation can source, including deliberate efforts to involve stakeholders in content creation (see section 3.5.2, chapter 3). Fourthly, Kent and Taylor (1998:329-330) assert that access to information should be effortless, and although their study focuses mainly on websites, this issue could apply to any type of social media and access to it. On this point and in terms of some of the key elements of social media, such as participation, connectedness, the social of social media, interaction, presence, interactivity, and conversations (see section 3.6, chapter 3), it seems sensible to consider the merit of easy access to social media content to permit stakeholders’ use of this media, as well as knowledge of the various *types* of social media platforms on

which they congregate. Lastly, according to Kent and Taylor (1998:330–331), dialogic communication should be seen as the main objective of interaction with stakeholders. Regarding the current study, it could refer to demonstrating an appreciation of every stakeholder who connects and interacts with the non-profit organisation, and to engage in meaningful conversation to benefit non-profit organisations to ultimately retain their support.

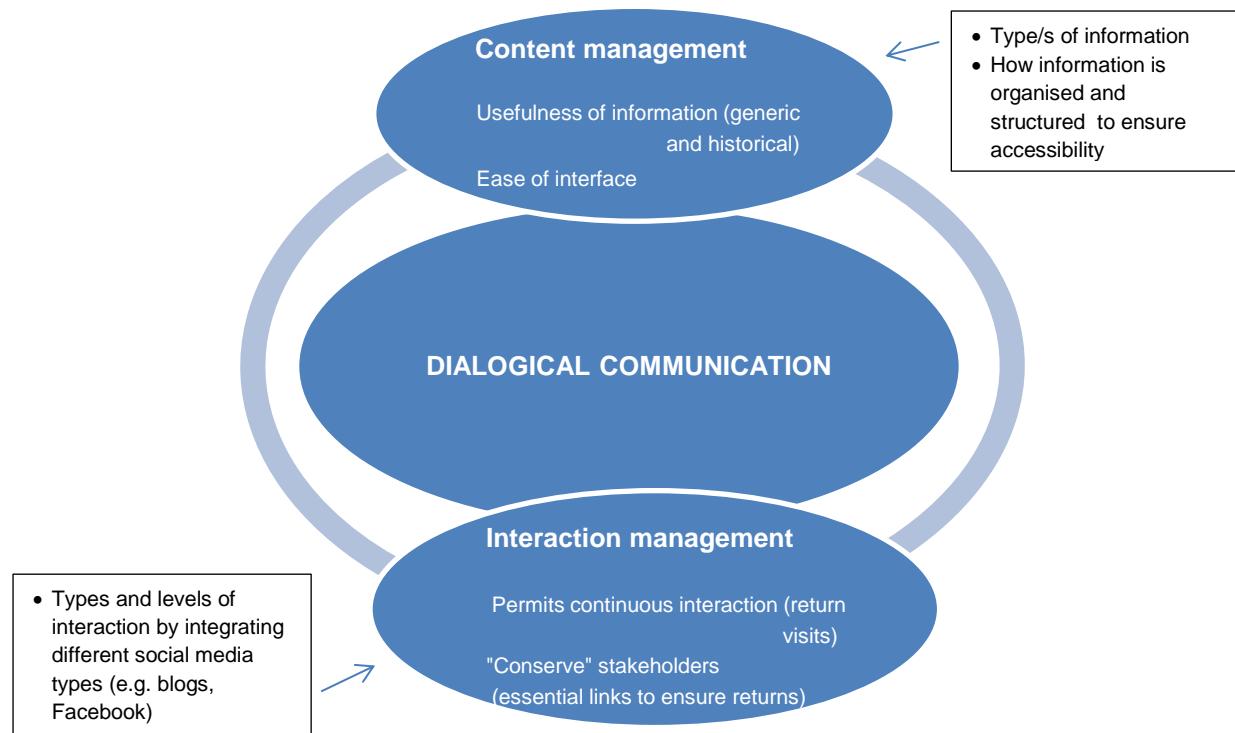


Figure 4.1: Principles of dialogic communication (own conceptualisation)

Since the two key dialogic aspects – content management and interaction management – visualised by Kent and Taylor (1998) are deemed to influence each other, dialogic communication can be understood as a process that supports the notion that communication, and thus IC, with its similar orientation, is in fact a cyclic process (Steinberg 1997:12; cf. Capriotti & Kuklinski 2012:620).

The emphasis on two-way communication inevitably points to the essence of social media that permits all participants/stakeholders to create, adapt and share content and to engage in two-way communication with a wide audience (see section 3.6.1.7, chapter 3). It is closely linked to the notion of following a stakeholder focus in all communication – that is, being aware of the communication needs, preferences and expectations of all participants in relation to social media content and types of social media. To conclude, the focus on the integration of communication when using social media allows stakeholders to engage in dialogue or conversation about the organisation. Based on this outlook and mindful of the focus of this specific element on communication, it is propounded that an integrated approach could allow

stakeholders and organisations to engage in social media conversations or dialogue about the organisation.

4.4.3 Focusing on the employee

The increased focus on the role of the employee in IC is specifically mentioned in the literature (Smith 2012a:603; Torp 2009:197; Schultz & Kitchen 2000:53), in which their role is said to be as “integrated communication enablers” (Smith 2012a:603). This role is regarded as an important element of integration and encompasses factors such as skills, experience, and employee satisfaction (various scholars in Smith 2012a:602). In some instances, employees as a group appear to be disregarded by IMC scholars. Relating to the perspective of the study, Hatch and Schultz (2001:130) maintain that corporate branding obviously involves employees (Hatch & Schultz 2003:1047). These scholars elaborate and identify employees as one of the three key stakeholders upon which a strong corporate brand depends (see section 2.8, chapter 2). To ensure consistent communication and strengthen their corporate brand, organisations need to adopt a philosophy to achieve integration by focusing on the coordination of all communication functions in the organisation and inspiring employees to promote the non-profit corporate brand. Departments and employees should not only be linked to allow sharing of knowledge, expertise and information about the stakeholder, but they should also be motivated and mobilised to act as internal ambassadors (Daw et al 2011:108; Niemann 2005:249, Ehlers 2002:339; Gronstedt 2000:58; Duncan & Moriarty 1997:18; see section 4.4.1). Based on these views, it can be concluded that employees could also fulfil the role of brand ambassadors and this would facilitate the recognition and establishment of trust in the corporate brand.

As explained in the next section, the integration of communication is said to focus on cross-sectional integration in the organisation, which inevitably impacts on employees and the fact that they should be involved in communication on social media.

4.4.4 Focusing on crossing traditional organisational boundaries

According to Christensen et al (2008b), in considering an IC perspective, it should be recognised that communication has expanded beyond traditional organisational boundaries. In other words, apart from the awareness of IC as an intra-organisational (internally and across departments) and an outward-directed (with external stakeholders) activity, Christensen et al's (2008) view in a sense suggests an expansion beyond internal and external messages and all means of communication for that matter. The idea that all action or inaction of the organisation is perceived as communication and that the organisation interacts with many stakeholders, suggests that the organisation should also consider how its communication is perceived, especially the direct impact thereof on the image held by external groups and

individuals, including how these stakeholders conduct themselves (cf. Gronstedt 1996a:39). This could be explained, for example, by considering that the image that distributors have of the organisation or their stance on environmental issues might not be in line with the organisation's image and may well result in discord (Christensen et al 2008). This implies that IC calls for a wider consideration of the organisation's broader environment and of the impact of its communication endeavours on the way the environment collectively perceives the organisation. The pertinence of an awareness by the organisation of environmental and societal changes and demands is acknowledged by Duncan and Caywood (1996:24); Gronstedt (2000:80) and Niemann (2005:22, 260).

In addition, social media, and especially the stakeholders' *participation* as a key element thereof in creating and sharing of content, challenges organisational boundaries by removing traditional divisions between the organisation and stakeholders, thus allowing open access to information on the organisation (Plesner & Gulbrandsen 2015:155). The dependence of the non-profit organisation on donors and volunteers to achieve its mission, compels these organisations to be attentive to these factors that could impair their corporate brand and reputation.

4.4.5 Focusing on the strategic intentions of IC

The proposed strategic focus of communication integration was debated in section 2.3.3, chapter 2. It is argued that the holistic focus on the organisation's total communication validates it as a strategic organisational function (see various scholars in section 2.3.3, chapter 2). This point is supported by Johansen and Anderson (2012:276), who maintain that IC qualifies as *strategic*, based on such a holistic focus of the organisation. As posited by Cornelissen (2011:83), it involves striving towards a balance between the "mission and vision" of the organisation – stating its current and future standing, and what goals it desires to achieve.

Niemann (2005:247) raises the point that all communication of the organisation should be propelled by its long-term plans rather than, say, the departmental strategies of a communication or marketing department (cf. Macnamara & Zerfass 2012:291; Niemann 2005:28; Duncan & Moriarty 1998:6). The organisation's mission is thus seen to guide and determine how best to communicate with its stakeholders, which, in turn, is achieved by purposeful strategic communication (Hallahan et al 2007:4). Some scholars believe that communication objectives should be not only be aligned with the mission, but also with corporate objectives and strategy (Einwiller & Boenigk 2012:339) to ensure strategic integration. Niemann (2005:248) asserts that integrated communication, based on the organisation's mission, appears to contribute at a strategic level by establishing pertinent

relationships with its stakeholders. The concept of *strategic* is often associated with the organisation's need to be sensitive to stakeholder expectations, needs and concerns and to adopt a stakeholder perspective, as discussed in section 4.4.1, chapter 4 (Macnamara & Zerfass 2012:291). This is clearly in accordance with the ultimate goal of exploring elements to incorporate external communication occurring with and between stakeholders on social media platforms.

4.4.6 Focusing on integration as a process

The literature focuses on the idea that IC is a process that allegedly comprises a series of actions or steps to achieve its desired goal. The widely cited definition by the American Association of Advertising Agencies (1989) of IMC included in table 4.1 is said to emphasise it as a process aimed at ultimately attaining the maximum communication effect (Duncan & Caywood 1996:18; cf. Moriarty 1996:333). Likewise, Kliatchko (2008:140) describes it as an "audience-driven business process". Duncan and Moriarty (1997:15) group 10 strategic drivers of IC into a corporate focus, a corporate process and an infrastructure of which *corporate process* supports the view that IC can indeed be considered a process. As such, these process drivers strive to achieve integration through *strategic consistency, purposive integration, mission marketing and zero-based planning*, which are explained later in section 4.7.1.3. According to Christensen et al (2008a:428), IC as a process implies a particular starting point, either from a person or a department that may take responsibility for the communication integration. Recommendations in this regard relate to the role of a multi-skilled communicator or renaissance communicator (Niemann 2005; Gayeski & Woodward 1996) or a team of skilled communicators (Rakić & Rakić 2014; Ehlers 2002). Hence, if IC qualifies as a process, the importance of a skilled communicator or renaissance communication as stipulated by these scholars is justified.

As the point of departure to establish elements that might be considered as guidelines for an integrated approach to social media brand communication in the non-profit sector, the purpose of the next section is to reveal the prevailing emphasis of IC.

4.5 THE PRESENT EMPHASIS OF IC

Existing views in the literature suggest that IC adopts different foci, depending on the context in which it is considered. This is obvious when examining the various perspectives held by scholars and practitioners in corporate communication and marketing, particularly with regard to the proposed IC models (see section 4.3). In marketing, the concept of communication integration is approached mainly from a marketing communication perspective devised to support particular marketing objectives (McMahon 2007:271), whereas in corporate communication, the focus is on the broad communication objectives and endeavours of the

entire organisation (cf. Kitchen & Schultz 2003:66). The aim of this section is to review certain prominent IC definitions that could underline and delineate the present communication focus of a fifth evolutionary era (from 2005 onwards).

According to Niemann (2005:92), IC underwent a significant evolution after its perceived inception in the early 1980s, and the scholar substantiates this argument by exploring various prominent definitions until 2003. This effort enabled Niemann to identify, discuss and define four evolutionary eras of integrated communication. These eras were deemed significant for the current study because the development of IC could be indicative of the communication orientations held in each era, the subsequent changes from its inception to the present, and hence considered meaningful to clarify the current focus of this approach. These shifts in focus regarding IC are summarised in table 4.1 below. The evolutionary eras of Niemann (2005) serve as a framework and starting point to understand the way in IC is currently perceived. Adopting a similar approach to that of Niemann (2005), this section expands these efforts by substantiating the main interests of each era according to appropriate definitions and gaining insight into the present foci of IC, which is termed the *fifth evolutionary era of integrated communication*. In light of the aim to develop guiding points for an integrated approach for social media brand communication, it is thus argued that the prevailing definitions of IC not only highlight the evolution thereof, but may also be indicative of the prevailing communication focus held in each era, and importantly, in present times.

Table 4.1: Evolutionary eras of IC

Evolution of IC	Focus held in each era
First evolutionary era (1980s)	Campaigns Communication tactics Customer focus TO
<p>Initially used to describe advertising, media and marketing <i>campaigns</i>. Schultz (1993:10) states the following: "There is some basic advantage to the advertiser, the agency, or the media to integrate."</p> <p>The "one voice, one look" approach is perceived to standardised advertisements (Christensen et al 2008a:426; cf. Duncan 1993).</p> <p>"[IMC is a] concept of communications planning that recognizes the added value of a <i>comprehensive plan</i> that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines – for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations – and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact" [emphasis added] (American Association of Advertising Agencies and the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications – Northwestern University 1989; cf. Belch & Belch 2012:766; Du Plessis 2010:8; Schultz 2004:8–9; Schultz 1993:17; Duncan & Caywood 1996:18)</p>	
Second evolutionary era (early 1990s)	Dialogue Attitudinal and behavioural outcomes Customer focus Cross-disciplinary focus Combination of messages (synergy) TO
<p>According to Duncan (1994:40), "synergy means that various messages, if they are coordinated and consistent, add up to communication with more impact than any of the individual messages can create by themselves".</p> <p>"IMC is the process of developing and implementing various forms of persuasive communication programs with customers and prospects overtime" (Schultz 1993:17)</p> <p>Grates (1995:17) states the following: "In this new era, communication professionals in public relations and advertising will be asked less frequently for specific advice as it relates to their individual disciplines and more frequently for solutions".</p>	
Third evolutionary era (1996–1998)	Strategic process Organisation-wide Relationship outcomes Broad stakeholder base
<p>Duncan and Caywood (1996:19-20) view IC as "a concept of marketing communication planning that recognizes the 'added value' of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic role of a variety of disciplines (advertising, direct marketing, sales promotions and public relations) and combine these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact" [emphasis in the original].</p> <p>Thorson and Moore (1996:1) assert the following: "Integrated marketing communication are those messages that address multiple consumer and nonconsumer audiences and achieve synergy of messages and timing. [...] by coordinating such elements of the marketing mix as advertising, public relations, promotions, direct marketing, and package design."</p> <p>Gronstedt (1996:292) states the following: "Integrated communication uses an appropriate combination of sending, receiving, and interactive tools drawn from a wide range of communication disciplines to create and maintain mutually beneficial relations between the organization and its key stakeholders, including the customers."</p>	

Duncan and Moriarty (1997:169) define IC as “the application of analysis, communication, and evaluation techniques to create and manage integrated, multi-faceted interventions combining information, instruction, collaboration, business process design, feedback, and incentive systems to improve human performance in the workplace in order to achieve organizations’ desired missions and visions”.	TO
<p style="text-align: center;">Fourth evolutionary era (1999–2003)</p> <p>According to Gronstedt (2000:8), IC is the strategic management process of facilitating the desired meaning of the company and its brands by creating unity of effort at every point of contact with key customers and stakeholders for the purpose of building profitable relationships with them.</p> <p>Duncan (2002:8) defines the concept as follows: “A cross-functional process for creating and nourishing profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders by strategically controlling or influencing all messages sent to these groups and encouraging data-driven, purposeful dialogue with them.”</p>	Strategic, purposeful process Data-driven dialogue Unity at all points of contact Long-term beneficial relationships TO
<p style="text-align: center;">Fifth evolutionary era (2005 onwards)</p> <p>“Integrated communication is the strategic management process of organisationally controlling or influencing all messages and encouraging purposeful, data-driven dialogue to create and nourish long-term, profitable relationships with stakeholders” (Niemann 2005:99).</p> <p>Integration is “an audience-based business process of strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels, and results of brand communication programs” (Kliatchko 2008:140).</p> <p>“Integrated communications can be defined as the efforts to coordinate and align all communications so that the organization speaks consistently across different audiences and media” (Christensen et al 2008b).</p> <p>“Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is a concept that directs the processes for planning, executing, and monitoring the brand messages that create brand-customer relationships” (Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:14).</p> <p>“Integrated communications can be defined as the notion and the practice of aligning symbols, messages, procedures and behaviours in order for an organisation to continuously communicate with clarity, consistency and continuity within and across formal organisational boundaries” (Christensen et al 2008a:424).</p> <p>“[...] that recognizes the added value in a program that integrates a variety of strategic disciplines ... to provide ... maximum communication impact” (Kerr et al 2008:515).</p> <p>Meintjes, Niemann-Struweg and De Wet 2009:65 define IC as follows: “The concept of integrated communication – in brief – means unity of effort across the organisation. This does not however refer only to consistent messages – the ‘one-look-one-voice’ approach – but includes unity of rationale for the organisation, unity of organisational procedures, unity of organisational purpose, and unity of achievements within the organisation.”</p> <p>IC is a “dynamic communication practice aimed at advancing not just the marketing plan, but the overall operating or business plan of the firm and in doing so aligning <i>brand</i> with <i>reputation</i>” [emphasis in the original] (McMahon 2011:260)</p>	Strategic audience-focused process Communication consistency and alignment in terms of the total communication endeavour Long-term relationships Integration of multiple communication functions Coordination of communication Alignment of brand with reputation Purposeful dialogue Institutional-wide focus on unity TO

"Integrated communication is the strategic management process of organisationally controlling or influencing all messages and encouraging purposeful data-driven dialogue to create and nourish long-term, profitable relationships with stakeholders" (Niemann-Struweg & Grobler 2011:5; cf. Mulder 2015:7).

"Integration is a key component within communication and marketing disciplines that aspire to ideals of coherence and consistency"
(Johansen & Andersen 2012:272).

4.5.1 Conceptualising the fifth evolutionary era of IC communication

Conceptualising the fifth evolutionary era is deemed noteworthy for it provides an idea of the centre of interest in this particular era that merits consideration when non-profit organisations apply social media in an integrated way.

In terms of the definitions above, it would be reasonable to conclude that the main emphasis corroborates the corporate communication philosophy and corporate branding perspective, as conceptualised in chapter 2, which call for unity of all communication to ultimately portray the organisation as a *unified corporate brand* (see section 2.2, chapter 2; cf. Christensen et al 2008b). This is evident in the definitions of Christensen et al (2008b), Christensen et al (2008a:424), Johansen and Andersen (2012:272) and McMahon (2011:260), who explicitly refer to *aligning* and *integrating* the communication endeavours of various communication functions of the organisation in order to align corporate brand with reputation.

Furthermore, the notion that IC should be perceived as a broad institutional focus is supported by references to aspects such as “across formal organisational boundaries” (Christensen et al 2008a:424), efforts “across the organisation” (Meintjes, Niemann-Struwé & de Wet 2009:65) and advancing the “overall operating or business plan” (McMahon 2011:260). In fact, the references to purposeful dialogue in the definitions above, suggest an orientation towards integrating external communication efforts and conversations from the organisation and stakeholders.

Important principles of IC such as *dialogue*, *relationships* and an *audience-focused* process are likewise mentioned, although to a lesser extent.

4.5.2 Factors that drive communication integration

Multiple factors appear to compel organisations to coordinate their communication functions. These are also called *drivers for integration* (Cornelissen 2011:22), *drivers of integration* (Christensen et al 2009:209) or *change factors* (Niemann 2005:89). In an in-depth study on the origins and evolution of integrated communication, Niemann (2005:90) combines and reduces the many internal and external factors and forces that impact on IC to two main factors, namely management’s changing views about communication and the expansion of information technology, respectively. However, the changed focus of the fifth evolutionary era (see table 4.1 above) merits a more precise explanation of these drivers as identified in the literature. Cornelissen (2011:22) categorises these drivers of integration specifically as *market- and environment-based drivers*, *communication-based drivers* and *organisational drivers*. *Market- and environment-based* drivers supposedly relate to increased demands by stakeholders to integrate all communication functions of the organisation, and marketing and

public relations in particular. A pertinent issue is that stakeholders adopt many different roles, which with the growing demands for transparency and information, require organisations to ensure consistent communication (Cornelissen 2011:22–23). As contended in chapter 2, organisations increasingly need to differentiate themselves and to be identifiable – aspects that are deemed significant *communication-based* drivers for integration (cf. Cornelissen 2011:23). Furthermore, advances in technology organisations allows for cost-effective communication and a broad range of media (*ibid*). Cornelissen (2011:23–24) identifies four factors that are distinctly related to factors inherent in the organisation, namely the need for efficiency, accountability and strategic direction, and to present the organisation favourably to stakeholders.

Christensen et al (2009:209), in turn, emphasise an increase in “social drivers of integration”, which, in their view, illustrates the importance of corporate *credibility*.

Einwiller and Boenigk (2012) identify the following historical drivers that remain current and were deemed appropriate to this study, and in so doing, support earlier views and further expand the list of drivers:

growing globalisation and competition for global market share, emphasis on brands and branding, increasingly demanding stakeholders whose potential to gain information and control over companies is growing, rising expectations by management for communication performance and accountability (cf. Cornelissen 2011:23; Niemann 2005:90).

Based on the context of the current study, it would be sensible to specifically consider social media as a separate driver of communication integration. As clarified in chapter 3, social media is currently a reality that compels organisations to reflect on its implications and possibilities regarding communication with their stakeholders. Key elements of social media, namely participation, connectivity, interaction and conversation (see section 3.6, chapter 3) not only influence the way organisations communicate, but, in turn, also enable organisations to communicate in integrated ways by allowing organisations and stakeholders to connect, interact, converse with all participants and participate in creating and sharing content (cf. Ahlqvist et al 2008:5). In terms of these social media elements, it should be noted that communication integration in this context underlines the prominence of stakeholder conversations, which is not fully addressed in the traditional integration models. Since these traditional models mostly revolve around factors such as a customer focus (Gronstedt 1996b), internal factors (Duncan & Moriarty 1997) or the integration of different management functions, namely marketing and public relations (Ehlers 2002), it is necessary to recognise the

integration of conversations by and between stakeholders facilitated by social media as a key driver.

Niemann-Struweg (2014) acknowledges that the actual implementation of IC remains problematic and is affected by certain factors, some of which are concisely mentioned in the next section. Nonetheless, the setting here primarily necessitates a look at the integration of external communication as allowed by social media, and these limiting factors might then to a certain extent likewise inhibit this undertaking.

4.5.3 Factors that impede the attainment of IC

Perceptions exist that despite calls for the integration of all communication efforts of organisations since the emergence of corporate communication (as highlighted in chapter 2), organisations still experience difficulties in integrating their communication efforts (Niemann-Struweg 2014:185; Tindall & Holtzhausen 2012:372; Niemann-Struweg & Grobler 2007:56; Witkoski 2002-2003:7–8). This can supposedly be ascribed to a myriad of reasons that challenge the implementation of IC, of which the most pertinent in the context of this study seems to include the following: the prevailing ambiguity between the (IMC) and IC elements (Niemann-Struweg & Grobler 2007:56); the fact that IC is sometimes seen as the overarching term for all organisational communications (Niemann-Struweg 2014:184; Niemann 2005:28) and otherwise as a designated area within strategic communication, *inter alia*, alongside marketing communication, public relations and advertising (Hallahan et al 2007; cf. Tindall & Holtzhausen 2012:372); complexities regarding the actual implementation thereof (Niemann 2014:185; Niemann-Struweg & Grobler 2007:56); and the perceived disparities between the academic conceptualisation and the practice of IC (Tindall & Holtzhausen 2012:371).

Historical differences in views can probably be traced back to the roots of corporate communication (see section 2.2, chapter 2), including the emergence of the IMC and IC concepts, which allegedly contribute to the ambiguity between these concepts. It is widely acknowledged that IC is somehow related to IMC – either as an explicit element of marketing (McMahon 2011:259) by integrating the various elements of the marketing communication mix (e.g. advertising, public relations, promotions and direct marketing) or as an extension from IMC to corporate communication, aimed at achieving the corporate communication philosophy of projecting the organisation as a unified entity (Kerr et al 2008:514; Christensen et al 2008b; Cornelissen 2011:5, 15, 21; see section 2.3.4, chapter 2).

Considering the perspectives adopted in IC models, which were deemed appropriate to this study (see section 4.7 below), and the emerging elements following an investigation of these models, it can be concluded that the aforementioned ambiguities prevail because many

models at present are still approached from an IMC perspective. It is evident that the emergence of corporate communication also emphasises the challenge of merging prominent but separate communication functions of the organisation, namely public relations and marketing (Smith 2012a:600; Kliatchko 2008:135–136), and therefore revive the long-standing turf battles between these functions. The different approaches to IC can probably be directly related to marketing and corporate communication. In line with corporate communication as the foundation for the corporate branding perspective of the study, the view exists that IC is an expansion of IMC aimed at achieving cohesion of all communication efforts.

Since the inception of corporate communication, there has been a lack of agreement on whether IC even qualifies as an overarching concept that includes all communication functions of the organisation, or alternatively, is an area of strategic communication operating alongside these communication functions. This discord appears to be linked to the different views in marketing and public relations regarding the ownership of communication and, in this instance, IC. Niemann-Struweg and Grobler (2007:56) further postulate that it is evident in European and American organisations in particular, that communication integration could particularly be hindered by the way organisations structure their communication functions and perceptively hamper horizontal communication in the organisation – an argument supported by Christensen et al (2008a:426). Hence the organisational dimension and the extent to which the control structures in the organisation permit integration between communication functions will ultimately determine the success of integrating all communication and ensuring the organisation is perceived as a unified entity.

In light of the above considerations (points 1 and 2), it would be reasonable to expect these factors to hamper the execution of IC, because these uncertainties contribute to confusion about which communication function of the organisation should be responsible for integrating communication (cf. Kliatchko 2008:141; Niemann-Struweg & Grobler 2007:56).

Tindall and Holtzhausen (2012:371) specifically mention that despite the fact that the barriers between traditional communication fields, such as marketing communication, public relations and advertising, appear to be overcome in practice (Hallahan et al 2007:10), academic perspectives, including teaching in this field, tend to regard these communication functions as separate units/entities of the organisation that lead to non-integration (cf. Brønn 2008). The need for current communication theory and research on IC, and for aligning the teaching thereof with practice in this regard, can be regarded as equally important as in strategic communication to ensure the relevance of contemporary organisations (Hallahan et al 2007:10).

Despite the impression that the factors outlined above impede IC, the literature depicts specific points of accord regarding this concept. Firstly, the need for and value of communicating in an integrated way on a comprehensive scale are recognised (Christensen et al 2009:209; Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:14; McMahon 2011:260; Brønn 2008; Niemann 2005:27; Schultz 1996:139); secondly, it is agreed that IC is a *strategic function* or activity built on a stakeholder-centred approach to communication (Tindall & Holtzhausen 2012:372; see sections 4.2 and 4.4.1); and lastly, it aims to ultimately *advance the mission* of the organisation (Smith 2012a:601; cf. Hallahal et al 2007:4). As such these scholars agree that it therefore qualifies as a management function indicating the use of communication at strategic level (cf. Hallahan et al 2007:7). It is furthermore maintained that the concept is widely accepted, in the non-profit sector as well (Hallahal et al 2007:4).

A study by Dinnie, Melewar, Seidnefuss and Musa (2010:398) confirms the importance of a strategy to achieve certain objectives for integration. Accepting the strategic significance of communication integration, in line with the perspective of the current study, one could infer that the integration of social media brand communication should be guided by a *social media strategy* (cf. Cavanaugh 2009:5). Hence, one could argue that strategic reflection should culminate in a social media strategy to serve as a directive when aiming to advance the incorporation of social media brand communication. At this juncture, and in considering the strategic nature of such a strategy, an overview of this is provided in the next section.

4.6 A GENERIC SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF AN IC APPROACH

Despite the widespread adoption and application of social media, organisations appear to be generally cautious to “develop strategies and allocate resources to engage effectively with social media” (Divol et al 2012; Bonsón & Flores 2011:46; Kietzman et al 2011:242; Jue et al 2010:9). Mulder (2015:18) posits that policies and guidelines should guide the strategic direction towards the consistent integration of the organisation’s communication (cf. Barker 2013:105). Owing to the lack of insight into such a guiding document, a social media strategy could possibly fill the gap in terms of the social media focus and aim of the current study. There are a myriad of views on the elements that a social media strategy could comprise, including the views of Du Plessis (2017b:356), Breakenridge (2012), Weinreich (2012), Regan (2011), and Li and Bernoff (2008). The various perspectives in the literature on the elements of such a strategy indicate unique the approaches of organisations in this regard, that have established the impracticality of collating and presenting the different views in a generic outline of an ideal strategy. Considering the fact that an IC approach is seen as an organisation-wide orientation, it is proposed that a social media strategy is a necessity that could be included in

a broader communication strategy. The exact positioning of the strategy is unclear – hence the investigation into this in the empirical part of this study. This section thus strives to, firstly, present prominent perceptions of the elements of a social media strategy, and secondly, advance a possible framework of a social media strategy for non-profit organisations in this country.

According to Weinreich (2012), a social media strategy should be informed by the following: (1) a reflection of the overall organisational and programme objectives and the contribution of social media; (2) an identification of the target audiences and their use of this media; and (3) operational capacity concerning competent and available staff to effectively manage communication (cf. Warner et al 2014; cf. Scott & Jakca 2011; Regan 2011). Macnamara and Zerfass (2012:298) concur and suggest that (1) an outline of measurement methods, and (2) clarification of how integration of social media with traditional media will be attained, should be included.

The most crucial of these elements, according to Weinreich (2012), is a strategic decision about what communication needs to be accomplished and whether it fits in with the overall goals of the organisation. This point concurs with the assertion made in the previous chapter that the organisation should consider all paid, owned and earned media in its communication activities because these media drive one another, and thus the conversations with and by stakeholders (see section 3.5.2, chapter 3). Further, knowledge about stakeholders is apposite, and aspects such as who they are, their communication needs, the experiences driving them to communicate and the preferred places they gather, have been underlined throughout this study. The issue of operational capacity is corroborated by Brito (2013), who suggests that besides reflecting on the staff needed to engage and manage social media brand communication, the organisation should consider its operational capacity to monitor social media platforms and hence be involved in and monitor the conversations on this topic.

Li and Bernoff (2011:67, 68) specifically underscore the fact that an effective strategy needs to be a well-deliberated and planned process. They suggest the POST method as a framework to systematically construct a social media strategy. The elements of this framework include *people*, *objectives*, *strategy* and *technology*. People and strategy consider, among other aspects, the stakeholders' preferences of the platforms they prefer to use and the extent to which the organisation wishes to engage with them. Furthermore, it is essential to outline the organisation's objectives with respect to eWOM, and the platforms the organisation wishes to use.

According to Breakenridge (2012), a comprehensive approach to a social media strategy demands a dedicated communication perspective. This approach is envisaged as comprising

five foci crucial to the development of a social media strategy, which are holistically expressed in the social media strategy wheel. Central to this strategy wheel is a *social media audit* that helps to gain a universal perspective of the challenges and opportunities social media could present regarding engagement in this landscape (Breakenridge 2012:10). It is deemed crucial to gain certain insights into all existing properties including the following: (1) obtaining information of stakeholders; (2) evaluating brand guidelines on the use of corporate brand identity elements such as logos, colours, etc.; (3) identifying and evaluating the *types* of engagement with a clear focus on whether it is one-way or dialogic communication; (4) identifying the purpose of the organisation's social profile on the different platforms – creating awareness, service-oriented, research and so on; (5) determining the frequency of present conversations; (6) revealing the types of content shared on the different social media platforms; and (7) uncovering the monitoring tools available to assess social media platforms (cf. Regan 2011:22). It can thus be concluded that the primary aim of a social media audit is to determine the overall *effectiveness* of the organisation's communication efforts on social media.

The foci are expressed as strategies in the *social media strategy wheel* and deemed critical to any social media plan. These strategies are as follows: a tracking and monitoring strategy, a distributing/channel strategy, a communications/content optimising strategy, an engagement strategy and a measurement strategy (Breakenridge 2012:157–158; Regan 2011). *Tracking and monitoring* includes the key topics important to stakeholders. Knowledge of the topics of interest to stakeholders may afford the organisation opportunities to interact with stakeholders and engage in conversation, and this, in turn, enables the organisation to participate in social media communities. Since it has been established that social interaction is an essential element of social media and thought to directly impact the corporate brand, non-profit organisations are compelled to be aware of the matters raised on social media platforms (see section 2.2.1, chapter 2; section 3.6.1.4, chapter 3). Moreover, communities are a vital foundational element of social media that also require consideration as a *product of social media brand communication* (see section 3.5.3, chapter 3). According to Breakenridge (2012:157), a *distributing/channel strategy* should guide the organisation to where and on what platforms stakeholders meet. A *communications/content optimising strategy* addresses the types of content and sharing preferences of brand ambassadors, influencers and advocates to ultimately optimise the impact of social media content and messaging (*ibid*:158). An *engagement strategy* is closely linked to the participative and collaborative theoretical elements of social media, as explained in chapter 3. This could particularly benefit the organisation to uncover the best ways to engage with stakeholders and the extent to which the organisation prefers stakeholders to learn about the brand and share information about

the organisation with regard to different business outcomes (cf. Breakenridge 2012:158). This considered, connecting with social media influencers and advocates should be a key part of a social media strategy. Lastly, as Breakenridge (2012:158) contends, the value and success of the social media strategy could be measured by way of a *measurement strategy*. According to Nuccio (2013), an ideal way to measure social media success is probably through monitoring or *counting* of, for example, the shares, tweets and retweets on social media platforms. Even so, and as underlined in the previous point on *tracking and monitoring*, the significance of monitoring stakeholder conversations on social media platforms about the organisation should also be acknowledged and could effortlessly be tracked on the available monitoring tools (see section 3.6.1.7, chapter 3). In addition to such an emphasis on the volume of mentions, visits and the like, is the idea of conducting qualitative *content analysis* to identify negative comments on the organisation's activities or the corporate brand as a whole (Macnamara & Zerfass 2012:299). This could then afford the organisation opportunities to address these negative comments or respond accordingly.

An overview of non-profit literature substantiates the need for a strategic approach, particularly when non-profit organisations use social media for building non-profit brands (Regan 2011; Daw et al 2011).

Regan's (2011) research to propose a strategy for social media in the non-profit sector, falls within the ambit of the present study. The strategy seemingly contains most components advocated thus far in this section. Despite its distinct focus on the way dialogue is formed through a willingness to listen and communicate, it is seemingly distinguished from existing marketing communication strategies (Regan 2011:22). In accordance with the definition of IC adopted for this study (see chapter 1), the focus is predominantly on incorporating the communication from stakeholders – hence to listen and respond to conversations, as opposed to the one-way linear distribution of information. It thus concerns an increased consideration and integration of social media conversations on social media platforms. WOM has been given prominence by social media, as propounded thus far in the current study and confirmed by Castronovo and Huang's (2012) perspectives (discussed in this section). This concept thus merits consideration in a social media strategy (see section 2.3.1, chapter 2).

Regan's (2011) strategy comprises five components, namely goals, communication strategy, technology, resources, and evaluation and monitoring. As stated previously, *goals* refer to the objectives of the organisation regarding the use and expectations of social media. A *communication strategy* should contain, the following, *inter alia*: (1) uniform messages; (2) the way/s organisations desire to communicate on social media platforms; (3) how to best assess their communication with particular stakeholders; and (4) how to curb negative mentions and

conversations about the organisation on these platforms (Regan 2011:22). *Technology* requires an assessment of the different applications appropriate to the organisation, messages it wishes to send, and the stakeholders it plans to communicate with. In addition to these components, Regan (2011) recommends a consideration of the *resources* the organisation is willing to use, which corresponds to the views of Weinreich (2012) and Brito (2013) regarding operational capacity in respect of available finances and employees to effectively manage all communication efforts on social media. Another component that was also mentioned earlier in this section pertains to the *evaluation and monitoring* of the success of the social media strategy, and the effect on the overall corporate brand equity (Regan 2011:22).

Daw et al (2011:163, 164) validate Regan's (2011) view that the organisation's goals should be inherent in its strategic thinking, and this is possibly the first component of a social media strategy. As suggested by Daw et al (2011:163), the organisation could outline core mission objectives for communication by deliberating on how social media could contribute to achieving the overarching organisational goals. Secondly, buy-in throughout the organisation needs to be secured by way of promoting the usefulness of social media (Daw et al 2011:163). Thirdly, social media initiatives should be integrated into and aligned with existing communication strategies or endeavours to ensure that the content on these platforms is appropriate and compelling (Daw et al 2011:163–164). This point emphasises the underlying philosophy of this study, namely to commit to an integrated approach to communication by, *inter alia*, combining traditional communication media with social communication media. Lastly, supporting processes and people should be put in place to warrant the effective use of social media (Daw et al 2011:164).

Castronovo and Huang (2012) suggest the need for a sound eWOM strategy aimed at reinforcing the corporate brand message the organisation desires to communicate to its stakeholders. Hence in the present context, this refers to earned media created and driven by stakeholders on social media platforms. Since the aim of this study was to generate guiding points for the non-profit sector to integrate social media brand communication, and ultimately create an overall favourable reputation for these organisations, one would expect an eWOM strategy to be one component in a more comprehensive set of guiding points. The perspectives of Du Plessis (2017b:356) on the need for a *social media message strategy* are particularly noteworthy because such a course of action, as part of an eWOM strategy, could afford non-profit organisations opportunities to guide conversations on social media platforms.

Considering the importance of communication on social media platforms, it would be fair to conclude that a social media strategy is obviously a strategic necessity for all organisations.

Following this reflection on all the views touched on in this section, it can be concluded that a social media strategy should specifically focus on the evaluation of different issues that are at play when planning and executing social media initiatives. This includes, inter alia, the tracking and monitoring of posts, shares and tweets, a social media audit, the overall organisational and programme objectives, and the target audience.

Based on the theoretical views in this section and the conceptualisation by Du Plessis (2017) of possible generic components of a social media strategy, the researcher anticipated that a social media strategy for non-profit organisations in the context of an IC approach would contain the elements contained in figure 4.2 below. It is suggested that all elements of the strategy should incorporate both mechanistic and philosophical views on communication integration. A more comprehensive framework is proposed in figure 8.3, with a reflection of the findings from the empirical research.



Figure 4.2: A generic framework for a social media strategy for non-profit organisations (adapted from Du Plessis 2017)

In addition to insights into the current perspectives of IC and the factors that drive and impede communication integration, the researcher surmised that elements of IC models as theorised by scholars might yield valuable points to consider in an integrated approach to communication. These models are investigated in the sections below in order to identify

potential elements of an integrated approach to social media brand communication for non-profit organisations, by exploring relevant historical, South African and digital IC models.

4.7 REVIEWING RELEVANT IC MODELS TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSED ELEMENTS FOR INTEGRATING SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNICATION FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

The next section provides an overview of historical IC models, IC models in a South African setting, and lastly, IC models focusing on digital communication. The models are chronically presented to facilitate the flow of arguments. The elements for the integrated social media brand communication are then proposed, based on this overview and pertinent elements that emerged from the literature overviews in chapters 2, 3 and 4. The sole purpose is to identify elements that could serve the communication purposes of non-profit organisations in South Africa and hence merit exploration. It is assumed that guiding points for non-profit organisations on an integrated approach to social media brand communication should incorporate some of the original elements encapsulated in the above-mentioned models added to applicable theoretical elements from the theoretical chapters. The proposed elements are empirically verified and then adapted. The results are reported and interpreted in detail in chapters 6 and 7. The elements are refined and a final conceptual framework for the integration of social media brand communication for non-profit organisations is proposed and comprehensively discussed in chapter 8.

The literature uncovers various models purposely aimed at allowing organisations to integrate their communication efforts, of which three themes that were deemed relevant to this study became evident, namely prominent international implementation models, South African developed models, and integrated models with a focus on digital communication, as indicated in table 4.2 below. Particular perspectives on the theoretical orientation and focus elements of each model are revealed. Despite the fact that many of these models do not adopt pure IC or social media perspectives, the foci they share regarding the integration of communication, the importance of a strategic approach as such, and a social media and stakeholder focus in some instances, underscore their relevance here. Besides, the lack of appropriate research into the possible value of an IC approach for non-profit organisations, merited an investigation of these models. There are few references to the term “non-profit” in the literature, including ways to apply social media brand communication in an integrated fashion.

In the sections below, the IC models listed in table 4.2 are explained in accordance with the different themes.

Table 4.2: Historical and contemporary IC models

Scholar/s	Model	Perspective/s	Focus elements
Historical IC models			
Duncan & Caywood (1996)	Evolutionary model	IMC that is ultimately extended to IC	Awareness, image integration, functional, coordinated integration (database), consumer-based integration, stakeholder-based integration and relationship management integration
Gronstedt (1996b)	Stakeholder relations model	Public relations and marketing	Stakeholders, receiving tools, interactive tools and sending tools
Duncan & Moriarty (1997)	Integrated marketing (IM) business model	Integrated marketing Brand value relationship	Relationships, broad group of stakeholders, strategic consistency, purposive interaction, mission marketing, zero-based planning, cross-functional management, core competencies, integrated agencies and database
Gronstedt (2000)	Three-dimensional IC model	IC on organisation-wide level	External integration, vertical integration and horizontal integration
IC models in a South African setting			
Ehlers (2002)	Framework for structuring IC in South Africa	Public relations and marketing	Stakeholders, two-way relationships, organisation as a whole, a multi-skilled communicator, databases and communication tools
Niemann (2005; cf Niemann-Struweg & Grobler 2011)	A conceptual South African model for the implementation of strategic IC	Integrated marketing communication Integrated communication Strategic integrated communication	Organisational integration, stakeholder integration and environmental integration
Integrated models focusing on digital communication			
Guräu (2008)	Integrated online marketing communication: implementation and management	Integrated marketing communication (IMC)	Management, the message, online communication mix, audiences, feedback and database
Castronovo & Huang (2012)	Social media in an alternative marketing communication model	Marketing communication	Inputs from alternative marketing communications, outputs from other marketing communications, database and evaluation
Rakić & Rakić (2014)	Integrated marketing communications paradigm	Integrated marketing communication (IMC) digital environment	Integration of traditional and new media, integration of traditional

			and new communication methods, integration of timing, interaction possibilities, actors and content
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Considering these models, it is evident that most of them seem to adopt a somewhat narrow focus, which could be critiqued on the basis of their fragmented view of the communication functions of the organisation. Many of these models refer to IMC, which was noteworthy in the late 1990s, and seemingly evolved into IC (Niemann 2005:30). However, it is evident that although IC seems to be the preferred concept nowadays, the models such as those above still adopt IMC rather than IC perspectives. This could support/point to the difficulties or uncertainties regarding the actual implementation of IC, as explained in section 4.5 above.

The sections below provide an overview of historical IC models, similar models in a South African setting and integrated models focusing on digital communication.

4.7.1 Historical IC models

A review of the historical IC models is deemed necessary because it provides useful views of and contributions to a set of elements for integrated communication. An important consideration for selecting these models is their perceived aim and ability to support communication integration, albeit to a limited extent. A review of historical models is furthermore endorsed on the basis of the fact that the focal points of the collection of models presented in this section cannot be regarded as sequential, and hence are not regarded as developments of earlier models.

4.7.1.1 The Evolutionary Integrated Communication Model (Duncan & Caywood 1996)

This model is mainly based on the findings of two studies by Caywood, Schultz and Wang, and Duncan and Everett in 1991. The model contains concentric circles that gradually move from stage 1 outwards to the final stage (figure 4.3; Duncan & Caywood 1996:22–23). It does not prescribe a specific hierarchy of integration, and each stage is regarded as adding *value* to complete integration (*ibid*:33). It recommends that communication integration follows seven stages, with each stage containing and building on (or reinterpreting) the elements of the previous stage. Although the evolutionary model distinguishes between consumers and stakeholders, it indicates early recognition of the significance of a broader group of stakeholders than merely consumers.

(a) Stage 1: awareness

During this stage organisations are compelled to become aware of the changing and dynamic environments in which they function and recognise the need to adapt to new marketplace demands (Duncan & Caywood 1996:24). They (1996:24) further contend that these shifts constantly demand new strategies and communication tactics to strengthen existing and build new relationships with customers and stakeholders.

(b) Stage 2: image integration

This stage emphasises the importance of consistency in the communication, appearance and sense of the organisation (Duncan & Caywood 1996:25). This notion correlates with the ideals of corporate communication and corporate branding, as highlighted in chapter 2, namely that the organisation as a whole needs to curtail inconsistencies pertaining to the visual, verbal and behaviour organisation to achieve differentiation, and being perceived as distinct, authentic and transparent. Interpreted in the context of the authors' explanation of this stage, it can be concluded that the reference to image integration is not limited to image per se, but actually intended to also include other related elements such as corporate identity, because it mentions visual and verbal communication.

(c) Stage 3: functional integration

Stage 3 underscores the importance of all functional communication areas by promoting greater involvement between so-called "traditionally separated areas of communications" that supposedly include "public relations, advertising, sales promotion, and direct marketing" (Duncan & Caywood 1996:26). It is proposed that this stage commences with a strategic analysis of these communication areas in an effort to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each area to ultimately contribute to meeting the desired marketing goals ((Duncan & Caywood 1996:26).

(d) Stage 4: coordinated integration

According to (Duncan & Caywood 1996:28), at this stage, certain barriers to integration have been eliminated, and depending on the marketing goals of special marketing projects, the idea is that any of these communication functions may take the lead in the quest for communication integration. There is increased emphasis on direct marketing by including the personal selling element in the marketing effort ((Duncan & Caywood 1996:29). During this stage, the information obtained from customers' responses is seen as a fitting opportunity to start a basic database that will be expanded through a myriad of information obtained from, inter alia, past purchases, and expenditures (Duncan & Caywood 1996:29).

(e) Stage 5: consumer-based integration

Duncan and Caywood (1996:29) contend that during this stage of integration, only the customers who are purposively targeted are reached through accurate communication channels, and prospective customers may be identified by means of another more fully developed process of marketing communication. The database is further expanded by documenting the customers' contact points with the organisation, and vice versa. According to Duncan and Caywood (1996:29) and Duncan and Moriarty (1997:96), "each contact point is a message", hence supporting the conviction that every action of the organisation or opportunity for stakeholders to be in contact with the organisation, could probably be regarded as communication (cf. Christensen et al 2008b; Duncan 2005:110; Duncan & Moriarty 1997:96; 1998:6; see section 2.8.1.3, chapter 2). It can thus be inferred that these contact points impact on the customer's perception of the organisation and, in a sense, similarly indicate that every action of the customer can be seen as communication. Such communication could reveal useful information on customer interests and buying stages, which underscores the importance of having an accurate customer database.

(f) Stage 6: stakeholder-based integration

As referred to earlier, the idea is that there are possibilities that each stage contains and builds on the previous. Since the importance of documenting contact points is highlighted in stage 5, this stage incorporates the monitoring and tracking of a comprehensive group of stakeholders (Duncan & Caywood 1996:31). It focuses specifically on the fact that the organisation needs to act in a socially responsible manner and guard against acts of "exploitation, exclusions, and unintended messages" (Duncan & Caywood 1996:31). It starts with identifying and labelling the stakeholders who are deemed important to the success of the organisation and assigning selected staff to monitor and track their actions (Duncan & Caywood 1996:31).

(g) Stage 7: relationship management integration

This stage addresses the gap that perceptibly exists after the integration of communication functions, namely that communication should also be integrated at management level (Duncan & Caywood 1996:32). Section 2.3.1, chapter 2, underscored the need for integration of communication in the different management functions of the organisation. This is reiterated here and implies that communication professionals become part of the management effort.

- **Comments and critique**

The view that other functional communication areas in the organisation should mainly focus on achieving the marketing goals (stages 3 and 4), suggests that the relationship between these areas and marketing is unequal and might favour marketing as the dominant

communication function. The main focus in the first five stages is seemingly on promotional factors. Although there is a comprehensive focus on marketing, with some references to communication, the actual process of communication integration is mainly addressed during stages 6 and 7.

What is positive is the recognition of the interdependence between the organisation and its environment and the focus on the consistency in the organisation's contact and interaction with stakeholders.

It is argued that the value of this model lies in the inclusion of a broad range of stakeholders as opposed to customers or consumers – a notion expanded by Gronstedt (1996) in his Stakeholder Relations Model (Niemann-Struweg & Grobler 2007; Niemann 2005; Ehlers 2002).

Figure 4.3 below illustrates the elements of Duncan and Caywood's (1996) model.

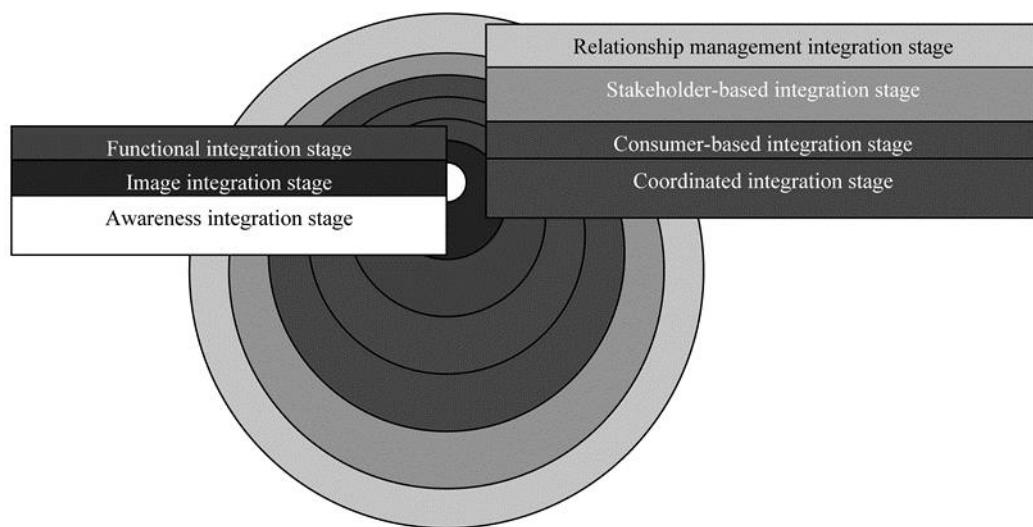


Figure 4.3: The Evolutionary Integrated Communication Model (Duncan & Caywood 1996)

4.7.1.2 The Stakeholder Relations Model (Gronstedt 1996b)

Considering the era of corporate communication, which was characterised by emerging communication functions and calls for communication synergy between the two most prominent external communication functions (public relations and marketing) to achieve its ideals of unity and communication synergy and consistency, it would be reasonable to accept that this model accurately reflects the communication orientation of organisations at that point in time. Gronstedt (1996:287, 289) based this model on the assumption that there are overlaps between these two communication functions, that their respective audiences (publics and markets) are presumably interrelated and overlap and should not be treated in isolation, and

both functions share communication tools and methods. These elements are reflected in four components of this model, namely stakeholders, receiving tools, interactive tools and sending tools as illustrated in figure 4.4.

(a) *Stakeholders*

The idea that the organisation is linked to a broad stakeholder base is illustrated in the circle in figure 4.4, and mirrors the view by Freeman (1984:6; cf. Duncan 2002:7) that the stakeholder concept could be seen as a collective concept that includes all groups and individuals who could possibly influence or could be influenced by the organisation's endeavours to achieve its objectives. The complexity of the stakeholder element is emphasised by Gronstedt (1996:294), who maintains that stakeholders are all interdependent and could fulfil "multiple stakeholder roles" such as being both a shareholder and a customer.

(b) *Receiving tools*

True to corporate branding and based on corporate communication, this model underscores the importance of a dialogic approach to communication that is essentially a core aspect of IC and social media brand communication (see section 2.3.2, chapter 2; section 4.4.2, chapter 4). According to Gronstedt (1996b:295), *receiving tools* from public relations and marketing allow stakeholders to act as senders of communication rather than traditional receivers. These tools are inherently research tools or methods primarily used to evaluate the perceptions of stakeholders, and to provide insight into the "thoughts and behaviors of various stakeholders" (Gronstedt 1996:296).

(c) *Interactive tools*

Gronstedt (1996:296) argues that two-way dialogue can be facilitated through the use and integration of *interactive tools* from both the traditional communication functions of the organisation. According to him, it represents the shift from using one-way, linear communication to two-way communication that accommodates feedback from all participants and agrees with original traditional communication models, such as that of Schram and Osgood (1954, in Schramm 1973), and is facilitated by social media.

(d) *Sending tools*

Gronstedt (1996:297) suggests that the selection of *sending tools* depends on knowledge of the key stakeholders and the communication objectives the organisation desires to achieve. This component of the model arguably allows for the actual integration of the public relations and marketing tools by creating a "single communication tool box" drawn from several communication functions of the organisation (Gronstedt 1996b:292; 297), and for the inclusion of tools that are not readily linked to a particular communication function. It is posited that the integration of the sending tools involves coordinating the communication messages and the

image the organisation desires to achieve (Ibid:298). As contended, this stage allows the integration of the selected mix of sending tools on the basis of three key elements of integrated communication, namely “consistent message and image, common creative elements, and coordinated timing” (Gronstedt 1996b:298; cf. Ehlers 2002:157). It can thus be concluded that IC reaches its pinnacle during this stage of Gronstedt’s (1996b) model.

- **Comments and critique**

Considering the corporate communication foundation and corporate branding perspective of the study, the most important critique is against the view that *customers* are regarded as being most essential to the success of and mostly affected by the activities of the organisation. As agreed earlier and in line with the notion that numerous groups and individuals interact with the organisation, the concept of stakeholder is preferred. Also, the receiving tools mainly include research tools (for example surveys, focus groups, content analysis and press clippings) that do not afford stakeholders the freedom or opportunity to become actual senders and thus to participate in unrestricted two-way communication with the organisation, despite the intention to engage in dialogue. In addition, the model does not propose or indicate ways to incorporate feedback from stakeholders. Gronstedt’s (1996) interactive tools do not represent a comprehensive mix of all the communication functions in the organisation, but it is recommended that additional tools should be included which could attend to this shortcoming by accommodating emerging new media.

Although this model graphically illustrates the presence of the organisation, it fails to attend to its possible role and/or involvement in the IC process (cf. Niemann-Struweg & Grobler 2007; Niemann 2005). In light of the fact that social media allows stakeholders to actively interact with and participate in communication with the organisation, this model offers limited opportunities in this regard, and one could infer that control over communication seemingly rests with the organisation.

The point raised by Niemann-Struweg and Grobler (2007) and Niemann (2005) pertaining to the focus of this model on external communication, could be viewed as a positive feature, bearing in mind the focus of the current study on external social media brand communication. It is proposed that the integrated use of the three types of tools would allow stakeholders to actively and interactively engage in dialogue (cf. Gronstedt 1996b:297). The model acknowledges the interdependence of a wide array of stakeholders, which is comparable to an IC approach and the idea of adopting a broad stakeholder perspective.

Elements of the Stakeholder Relations Model are depicted in figure 4.4 below.

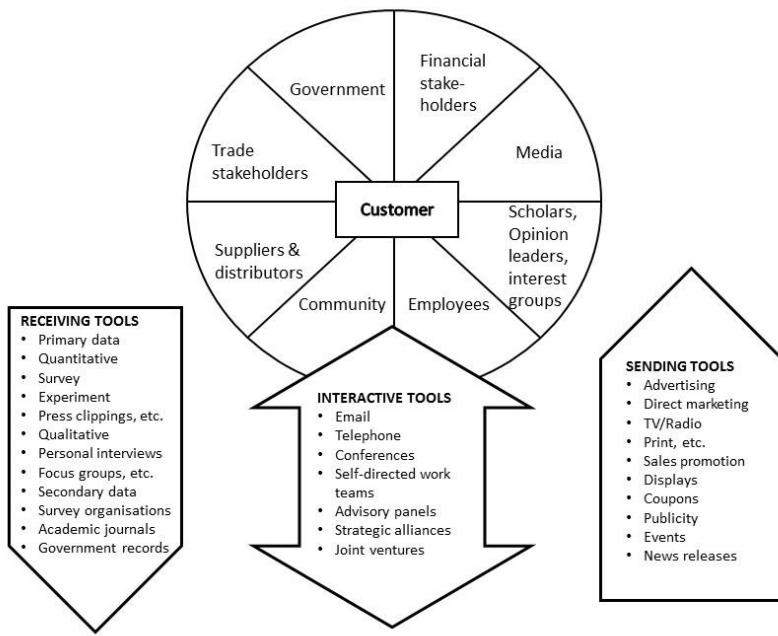


Figure 4.4: Stakeholder Relations Model (Gronstedt 1996)

4.7.1.3 Integrated Marketing (IM) Business Model (Duncan & Moriarty 1997)

Duncan and Moriarty (1997:xi) maintain that the expectations of what the organisation will deliver to stakeholders, also known as *brand value* (Argenti & Druckenmiller 2004:368; see section 2.6.1, chapter 2), depend on the organisation's ability to create and manage the relationships with its stakeholders. They posit that the environment in which these relationships exist is characterised largely by numerous stakeholders, many brand contacts – the different ways in which the organisation or brand interacts and communicates with stakeholders (Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:65; see section 2.8.1.3, chapter 2) – and the organisation's reputation (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:xi). These issues were dealt with in chapter 2. In their view, the real strategic challenge for organisations concerning their marketing communication, is creating profitable relationships as opposed to striving towards a "one voice, one look" picture only, that mainly concentrates on talking *to* stakeholders rather than *with* them (Duncan & Caywood 1996:31:xiii; see section 4.4.2, chapter 4).

Duncan and Moriarty (1997:10) identify the following specific characteristics of integrated marketing relating to their model: emphasising the importance of *communication* in the building of relationships that subsequently implies two-way communication and an attentiveness to listening and speaking in this process; acknowledging the intangible nature of brands and that it is formed in the *hearts and minds* of stakeholders (see section 2.5.1.1, chapter 2); recognising many communication functions in the organisation and the possible

impact of different brand messages on stakeholder relationships; and acknowledging the capacity of communication in building stakeholder relationships.

The IM Business Model proposes 10 drivers divided into the following categories: a *corporate focus* (“creating and nourishing relationships, stakeholder focus”), *process drivers* (“strategic consistency, purposive integration, mission marketing, zero-based planning”), and *organisational drivers* (“cross-functional management, core competencies, data-driven marketing, and working with an integrated agency”) (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:15). These drivers can be explained as follows:

(a) *A corporate focus*

A corporate focus involves the following:

- *Creating and nourishing relationships versus making transactions.* Organisations realise that it is more cost effective to know their current customers instead of attaining new ones. Knowledge of these customers and the use of such information in communicating with them might result in credibility in the long term and strengthen their relationships (cf. Khodaparasti 2009:821; see section 4.4.1).
- *Focus on a broad group of stakeholders versus merely customers or shareholders.* As mentioned previously, the quality and number of the relationships of the organisation with all its stakeholders seemingly contribute to achieving the ultimate value for the organisation (also called *brand equity*) (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:16; see section 2.6.1.1, chapter 2). This driver suggests considering the fact that all possible stakeholders (not only customers) could significantly impact on the profitability of the organisation, and in a sense urges all departments to join forces to seize every opportunity (see section 4.4.4).

(b) *Process drivers*

These drivers involve the following:

- *Strategic consistency versus independent brand messages.* According to Duncan and Moriarty (1997:17), it is imperative to realise that the total sum of the organisation’s contact with stakeholders, in other words, *all corporate brand contacts*, contains communication dimensions. This inevitably underlines the importance of appreciating all possible ways in which an organisation communicates, because every contact really communicates with stakeholders. Strategic consistency occurs when all brand contacts that affect the image or reputation of the organisation, in the hearts and minds of stakeholders, are coordinated. As the authors contend, uniformity of the corporate brand which includes elements such as core values, mission, vision and brand identity,

depends on the strategic consistency of the organisation's messages (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:71).

- *Creating purposive interactivity versus mass media monologue.* This driver is approached from the position that interactivity can be understood from the perspective of both the customer and the organisation. It is proposed that customers equate this concept with issues such as accessibility, accountability and responsiveness and that the organisation views it as an opportunity to listen and speak and thus adapt behaviour based on the feedback received (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:95). However, interactivity points to the involvement or integration of the customer in planning and development processes that will be achieved through individual contact and an equal consideration of sending and receiving messages (ibid:95). The apparent value of this driver is that it provides communication with a dialogic element that is lacking in traditional marketing (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:123).
- *Mission marketing versus product marketing.* According to Duncan and Moriarty (1997:127), *mission marketing* has two levels, namely a specific purpose or reason for existing, which necessitates the discipline to ensure its culture is actually practised, and the execution thereof in the area of social outreach with the promise of being noticed as a *good corporate citizen*. They (1997:127) claim that the organisation could successfully maximise the gains of mission marketing only if it is involved at both levels.
- *Zero-based planning versus adjusting an existing plan.* The idea is that the organisation should base its planning on future plans to improve the management of the organisations' relationships, and not on a previous assessment of what was needed (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:148). Such planning should be based on a SWOT analysis of internal strengths and weaknesses and external possibilities and threats (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:18).

(c) *Organisational drivers*

Organisational drivers involve the following:

- *Cross-functional management versus individual planning and monitoring.* This driver highlights the value of connecting all management functions of the organisation and sharing expertise and information to ensure the harmonious treatment of customers (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:18). The objective is perceivably to link the different departments and allow them to function independently but not in isolation (ibid). The notion to in some way link these departments through sharing knowledge, expertise

and information about the customer could in a sense be regarded as the essence of communication integration.

- *Creating core competencies versus communication specialisation and expertise.* The view adopted in this driver is that communication generalists are more preferred than communication experts (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:18) because generalists are more capable of planning and managing communication integration.
- *Using an integrated agency versus a traditional, full-service agency.* Duncan and Moriarty (1997:18) propose the contracting of communication agencies to coordinate the total communication of the brand. These agencies should have relationships with other expert agencies in the field when needed (*ibid*). This is in contrast to the views found in the literature, namely that the responsibility of corporate branding is perceived to be at management level and is often assigned exclusively to the CEO of the organisation.
- *Using databases to retain existing customers versus acquiring new ones.* The significant role of databases in the integration effort is emphasised by this driver and relates to a point raised in the Evolutionary Integrated Communication Model (Duncan & Caywood 1996) that customer data should be monitored and documented. Duncan and Moriarty (1997:19) refer to the need to also share this information throughout the organisation and the importance thereof in building stakeholder profiles that allow it to recognise key stakeholders.

- **Comments and critique**

This model represents a shift from adopting a rather narrow customer view to a broader stakeholder view. In terms of the main purpose of this model on business as a whole, one could say that although it does not exclusively aim to serve as a communication model, it does establish aspects notably related to corporate branding. Criticism could arguably be that this model has a clear focus on the internal arrangements or drivers regarding integration and excludes actions needed for external communication integration. The drivers deemed most appropriate here are corporate focus and process drivers. In light of the corporate communication foundation and corporate branding perspective of this study, some drivers seem inappropriate and evidently do not consider technology or communication methods. According to Niemann (2005:81), the order in which these drivers of integration were originally conceptualised by Duncan and Moriarty (1997:16), namely as infrastructure, then corporate focus, and lastly, corporate process, should be changed to reflect a concern with stakeholder relationships, as a starting point. Niemann (2005:81) proposes that the order should start with

a corporate focus, followed by corporate processes, and lastly, corporate infrastructure, thus affirming the pliable nature of this model to attain particular objectives.

Figure 4.5 indicates the main drivers of this model, namely a corporate focus, process drivers and organisational drivers.

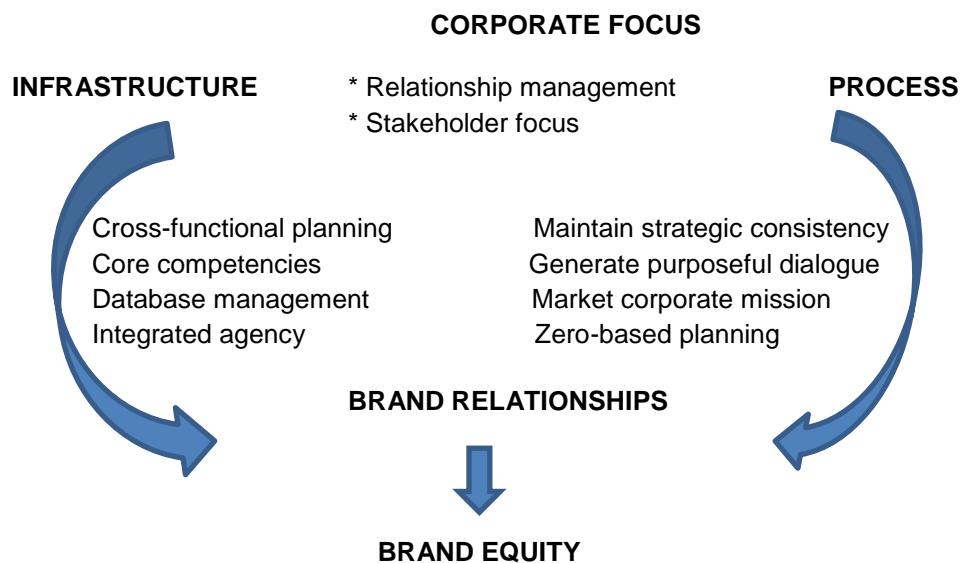


Figure 4.5: Integrated Marketing (IM) Business Model (Duncan & Moriarty 1997)

4.7.1.4 The Three-dimensional Integrated Communication Model (Gronstedt 2000)

Based on a longitudinal study of IC practices in America and Europe, this model can be regarded as a reflection of how this element could be approached in practice. According to Gronstedt (2000:80), the guiding philosophy is that organisations are increasingly dependent on their capability to cooperate with their environment and less dependent on their ability to compete as such. This model adopts the perspective that the customer (or stakeholder) should be the point of departure, but clearly stresses the need for the organisation to achieve metonymy (Gronstedt 2000:6; cf. section 2.2.1, chapter 2). Considering the explanation of this concept, it appears to be vital for organisations to be recognised as a single unit. This is supported by Gronstedt (2000:6), who acknowledges the potential for optimal performance that could be achieved by functioning as a whole, rather than efforts by individual parts of the organisation. In addition, the idea exists that the successful integration of external communication should be preceded by internal communication integration. Despite the differences in the hierarchy and nature of non-profit organisations compared to profit organisations, one can assume that internal integration should not be overlooked and could possibly be a less daunting task, especially considering their uncomplicated organisational structures.

This model comprises the following three dimensions: (1) external integration of communication with customers and stakeholders; (2) vertical communication integration between top management, middle management and employees; and (3) horizontal communication integration internally across departments, business units and regions.

(a) The external integration dimension

In a sense and in line with the focus on external communication of non-profit organisations, the first dimension is probably the most significant. The aim with this dimension is to build strong relationships between customers and stakeholders by involving all participants in “inbound and outbound communications” (Gronstedt 2000:17, 52). The process commences by identifying all key customers and stakeholders, followed by sharing information from various sources (of which complaints, enquiries, satisfaction surveys and market research are examples) throughout the organisation, and by exposing employees to the products or services and facilitating actual contact with the customers. It is also referred to as “integrating the voice of the customer” (Gronstedt 2000:58), which corresponds with the different elements of social media already explored in chapter 3, and the notion of adopting a stakeholder perspective as a principle of integrated communication.

The effective accomplishment of this dimension is reliant on the second dimension, namely vertical communication integration.

(b) The vertical integration dimension

In this dimension, employees are trained and empowered through two-way communication in the organisation with a twofold purpose, namely to keep top management in touch with the business realities and to ensure employees are familiar with the strategic purpose/objective of their work. Communication relating to the organisation’s mission is channelled from the top down, and allows for communication “upwards” through bottom-up processes (Gronstedt 2000:87). As such, this dimension can be seen as communicating to a business strategy that clearly elucidates the vision of the organisation and the values it wishes to offer to its stakeholders that ultimately provide the organisation with a sense of purpose. The author moreover highlights the need to relate these values to brand promises that can be explained as the expectation of what the stakeholder can expect from the organisation (Argenti & Druckenmiller 2004:368; see section 2.6.1, Chapter 2).

(c) The horizontal integrated dimension

It is argued that this dimension allows for true communication integration between different business units, departments and different regions whenever appropriate, and facilitated through unrestricted communication (Gronstedt 2000:117). The aim is to maximise key assets inherent in the organisation such as skills and processes through, inter alia, teamwork and the

rotation of employees in the workplace (Gronstedt 2000:117). This dimension represents the “outside-in” approach in which customers’ needs are determined, and which are ultimately used as point of departure.

- **Comments and critique**

Of interest and an important critique is the persistent reference to customers (for example Gronstedt 2000:5–7) despite an earlier stance adopted by Gronstedt (1996:292), namely that the concept of *stakeholders* might be considered more appropriate when referring to the broad stakeholder base of modern organisations. The value of this model is the adoption of a customer focus and acceptance of the vital role communication plays in sharing “understanding and meaning” (Gronstedt 2000:7). Doorley and Garcia (2007:267) view it as the mining of shared meaning, thus suggesting exploiting the meaning created through communication between the organisation and stakeholders, in order to benefit the organisation (see section 4.4.2). However, although the first dimension refers to *external integration*, it does not clearly reflect on the environmental and societal factors that the organisation should consider or possible ways of integrating feedback from external stakeholders.

Figure 4.6 illustrates the three dimensions of this model. The first dimension is of particular interest as it aptly refers to the integration of stakeholder voices, which suggests the need to listen to stakeholders’ discussions and conversations.

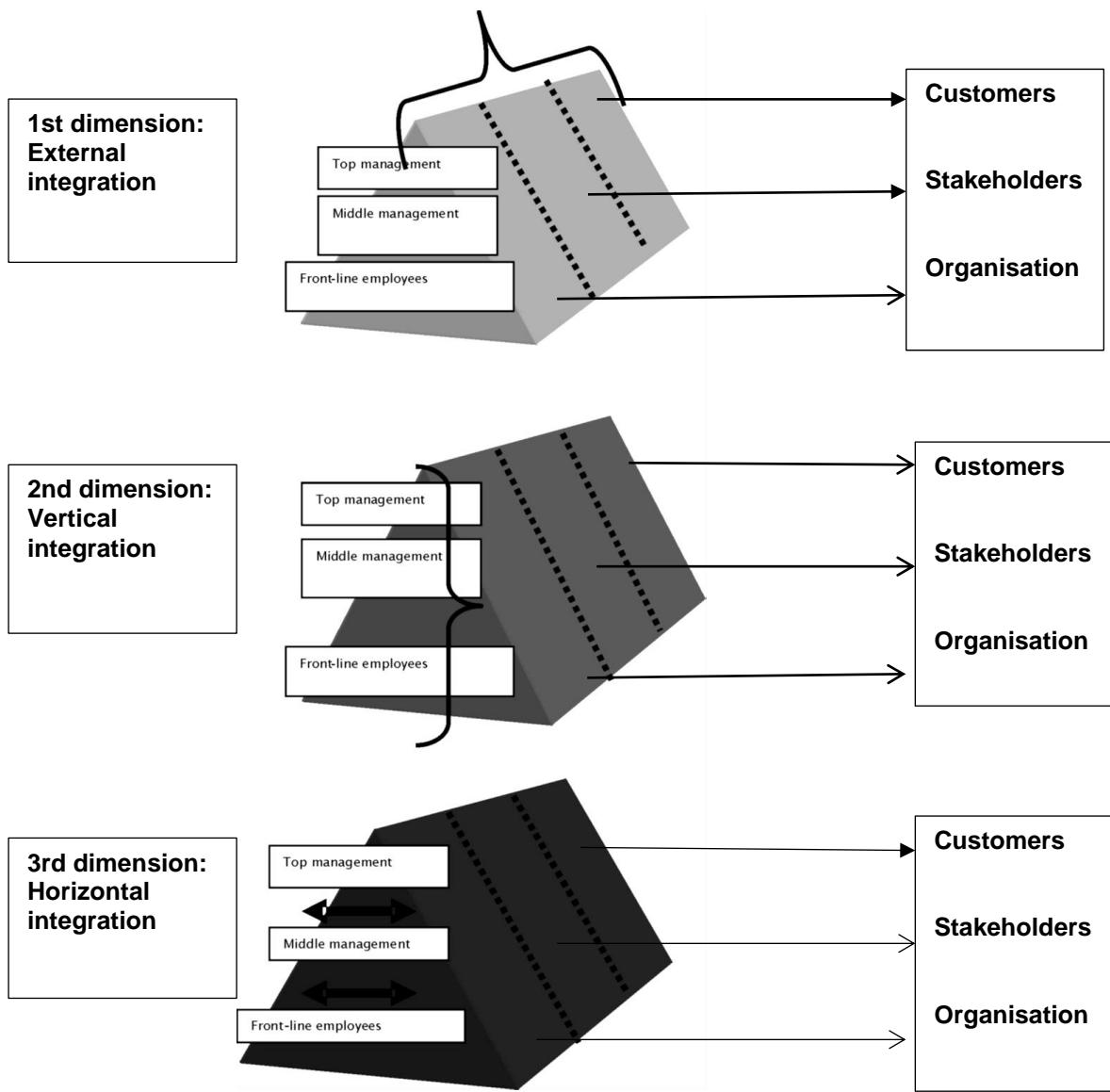


Figure 4.6: Three-dimensional Integrated Communication Model (Gronstedt 2000)

4.7.2 IC MODELS IN A SOUTH AFRICAN SETTING

In line with the context of the current study, it was deemed fitting to explore the research on IC models in South Africa. The main purpose was to investigate the specific foundational focus elements of each and thus identify the elements that are present in the models of Ehlers (2002) and Niemann (2005) presented below.

4.7.2.1 A Framework for Structuring Integrated Communication (Ehlers 2002)

The purpose of this model was primarily to investigate how South African organisations address IC by specifically focusing on their organisational structures. Ehlers (2002) adopted an IC perspective, using stakeholders as the point of departure (cf. Du Plessis & Thompson 2013:429). The framework comprises six main levels, numbered **A** to **F**.

(a) Level A

This level comprises different stakeholders of the organisation, such as financial, media, government, community, customer/consumer, suppliers and distributors, and interest groups (Ehlers 2002:337). It acknowledges the need to adopt a stakeholder approach or outside-in approach to their communication endeavours. Ehlers (*ibid*:338) also underscores the need for two-way communication that is vital for building effective relationships.

(b) Level B

This level highlights the two-way relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders and indicates the links to the *research* needed to build relationships, namely *strategic communication planning*, *databases* and a comprehensive mix of integrated *communication tools* (Ehlers 2002:338). Moreover, management should realise the importance of creating mutual understanding through proper managing communication between the organisation and the stakeholders (*ibid*).

(c) Level C

The organisation as a whole is represented (Ehlers 2002:339) with dotted lines used to indicate the inclusion of all organisational functions and to illustrate the interdependence between the stakeholders and the organisation. This level correlates with the notion of communication integration, strategic management and the need for dialogue or two-way communication, as discussed in section 2.3, chapter 2, and recognises the importance of the employees in the integration process. The consequence of also adopting an *employee focus* is key to corporate communication, corporate branding and IC, as addressed in chapter 2 and in this chapter.

(d) Level D

Level D illustrates the teams or a “multi-skilled integrated communicator” (Ehlers 2002:337) who may accept responsible for the coordination of communication. Ehlers (*ibid*:339) asserts that the number of layers in the organisations affects the holistic functioning of the organisation and gaining a competitive edge. In light of the history of corporate communication, one could infer that these *layers* in fact refer to the multiple communication functions of the organisation that could constrain the integration of communication because of the many messages sent to the stakeholders. It is proposed that a *team of integrators* – experts in the different communication functions – or a *multi-skilled communicator* – could reduce these layers and ensure flexibility (Ehlers 2002:339). Furthermore, comments that communication is deemed to fulfil a more strategic role and that it should be founded on formal research, are compelling (*ibid*).

(e) Level E

A focus on databases as an integral part of communication integration echoes the sentiments of Duncan and Caywood (1996:28) (Ehlers 2002:340). It mainly points to the collection and documentation of information on the different stakeholders that is used in communication planning and integration.

(f) Level F

The various tools available to the team or multi-skilled communicator are identified. In line with the perspective of the study, Ehlers (2002:340) combines marketing communication and public relations tools. This is justified in terms the philosophy of corporate communication and strives to allow the organisation to speak with one voice (see section 2.2, chapter 2; cf. Ehlers 2002:340). Ehlers (2002:340) underscores the importance of utilising the Internet for dialogue and relationship building and proposes that it could contribute to efforts to achieve communication integration and moreover to “become a competitive tool”.

- **Comments and critique**

The focus of this model, which falls mainly on marketing and public relations as external communication functions of the organisation, could be viewed as critique owing to the expansion of communication functions in the organisation, and the notion that communication integration is an organisation-wide endeavour. However, the findings of this particular study were deemed relevant to the current study. The suggestion that a team or multi-skilled communicator should be tasked with integrating the communication efforts of the organisation is mentioned, although it is not explicitly supported in the literature. A possible criticism on this point, could be the fact that it does not clearly demarcate the role of top management/the CEO. It is therefore unclear whether their/his or her role is visualised as part of the team of skilled integrating communicators, or as a separate role. Ehlers (2002:330) does acknowledge the influence of stakeholders on organisational functioning and the importance of two-way communication, and in so doing, to a certain degree, recognises the influence of external environmental factors. However, despite the primary focus on IC in respect of organisational structures, it fails to pertinently explore or state the possible challenges environmental factors could pose in this regard. Hence, in some instances, the need for an awareness of environmental factors is implied but not expanded upon (Ehlers 2002:339). Figure 4.7 below depicts the conceptualisation of a framework structuring IC in South Africa.

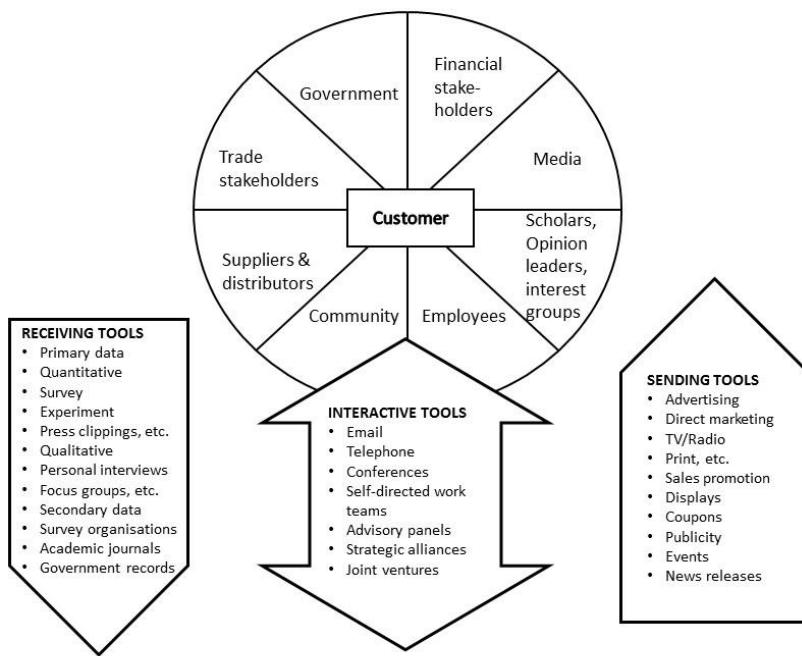


Figure 4.7: Framework for structuring IC in South Africa (Ehlers 2002)

4.7.2.2 A Conceptual South African Model for the Implementation of strategic Integrated Communication (Niemann 2005; cf. Niemann-Struweg 2014)

The model adopts a holistic view of integrated communication, namely that it considers the integration of all communication in the organisation (Niemann 2005). It espouses the view that communication can only be regarded as integrated when all the internal and external communication of the organisation is included. The model is based on the general systems theory underscored by systems thinking, that, according to Niemann (2005:21) focuses on the interactivity and interdependence of the different functions in the organisation. Also, it is proposed that the organisation forms part of a larger environmental system that directly impacts on the *wholeness* of a system (ibid:22).

The principles underlying Niemann's (2005) model include the notion that the "strategic intent of the organisation drives strategic integrated communication" (Niemann 2005:247). *Strategic intent* is explained as the "long-term strategic plan" of the organisation that is seemingly driven by the organisation's mission, and that internally serves to create unity and a consistent focus, and externally contributes to building "*brand relationships with stakeholders*" (ibid). Moreover, it is argued that the organisation should accept that it functions in a dynamic environment and that constant repositioning is required because of the changing environmental needs that may be curbed by adopting the "principles of a leaning organisation" (ibid).

Integration in the strategic IC model probably occurs in three broad areas – organisational integration, stakeholder integration and environmental integration.

(a) *Organisational integration*

Horizontal and vertical integration is addressed in this area and refers to the integration between different business units and functions within the organisation concerning “systems, process, procedures and communication”, and also between people in different units and departments, respectively (Niemann 2005:249). In addition, two distinct levels are identified and illustrated, namely a *CEO/top management* who needs to be integrated into the organisation’s communication efforts, and a *renaissance communicator* who could assist with communication solutions to key communication concerns (*ibid*). She (2005:250) bases her perception of this communicator on the original conception by Gayeski and Woodward (1996), and hence distinguishes between a CEO and renaissance communicator. Attention is paid to the significant role of the renaissance communicator which, as part of top management, should be fully informed of and comprehend all business considerations, and accept complete responsibility for marketing and public relations and the coordination between these functions (Niemann 2005:251). The effectiveness of the renaissance communicator is determined, *inter alia*, by an adequate budget, knowledge and an understanding of the core capabilities of the organisation, cross-functional planning between all departments, zero-based planning and the strategic consistency of all organisational endeavours towards unity (*ibid*:253).

(b) *Stakeholder integration*

Similar to the models of Duncan and Caywood (1996), Duncan and Moriarty (1997) and Ehlers (2002), the conceptual model for strategic IC truly recognises and emphasises the notion that *stakeholders* refer to numerous groups or individuals and not only customers or consumers who are connected to or affected by the organisation’s actions (Niemann 2005:255). It is argued that strategic IC is key to managing relationships with these stakeholders which, in turn, strive to create brand equity or the perceived value or promise the organisation offers (*ibid*).

Niemann (2005:256) envisages that stakeholder integration occurs at two separate levels, namely *interactivity integration* and *brand point integration*.

Niemann (*ibid*) also claims that *interactivity integration* encapsulates the ideas that communication should be *two-way symmetrical*, and *purposeful and personalised*. It is further asserted that interactivity integration accentuates the importance of two-way symmetrical relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders as professed by the prominent public relations scholar, Grunig (1992). According to Grunig (1992:231–233) and Grunig and White (1992:39), two-way symmetrical communication is principally aimed at creating

understanding and often expressed as telling the truth, interpreting the clients' and public's views on each other, and managing and understanding the different views of all stakeholders. Niemann (2005:257) also sees *interactivity* as being synonymous with "accessibility, recognition, responsiveness and accountability", and it basically pertains to the organisation's ability to listen and speak and hence to modify behaviour based on the feedback. In the current study, and as formerly explicated, interactivity is associated with the interchangeable communication roles stakeholders perform when using social media (see section 3.6.1.6, chapter 3). Hence this underlines the capability for dialogue and conversation by all, and the resultant integration of stakeholders' conversations. This view then supports the notion that has been highlighted thus far that the integration of social media brand communication essentially calls for the adoption of a listening orientation by considering the topics raised in conversations and incorporating them into existing communication activities. Accordingly, and as already contended, social media allows for a reversed communication approach in which stakeholders are permitted and encouraged to make their voice heard and the organisation thus accepts responsibility for listening to these conversations.

Brand point integration refers to situations in which stakeholders are afforded the opportunity to be exposed to messages from the organisation, also called *brand messages* (Niemann 2005:258). This concept is based on the following three underlying ideas: (1) all messages and incentive delivery systems must be appropriate to the stakeholder; (2) continuous dialogue is crucial to ensure optimal information about stakeholders' needs, interests and priorities; and (3) it is important to align the timing of messages with stakeholder preferences (ibid:258-259).

(c) Environmental integration

Niemann (2005:260) regards the inclusion of environmental integration as proof that the organisation is functioning in an open system that comprises "political, social, economic and related environments". The challenges organisations face regarding environmental integration pertain to keeping abreast of changes in the environment, including environmental demands (ibid).

• **Comments and critique**

In contrast to the model of Ehlers (2002), the role of the CEO/top management features prominently and adopts an inclusive stakeholder approach. The strategic integrated communication model incorporates a three-pronged approach by considering the fact that integration should occur in the organisational, stakeholder and environmental areas. Despite its main aim of integrating communication holistically – which can be understood as integrating

all communication functions in the organisation – the integration by the renaissance communicator focuses mainly on marketing and public relations, which is similar to the models of Gronstedt (1996) and Ehlers (2002). Figure 4.8 below illustrates the three main focus areas of strategic integrated communication proposed by Niemann (2005).

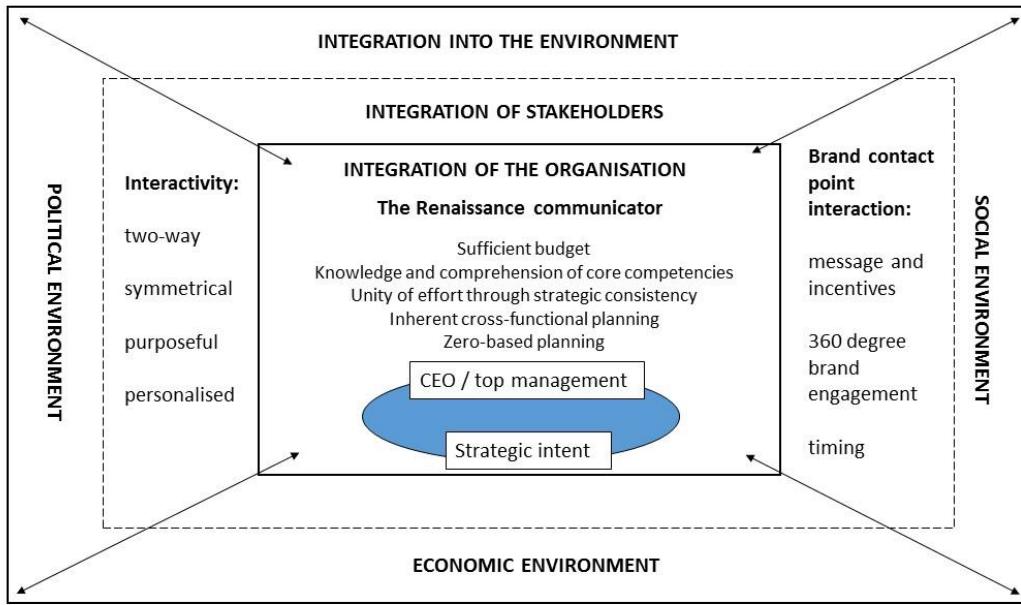


Figure 4.8: A Conceptual South African Model for the Implementation of Strategic Integrated Communication (as adapted from Niemann 2005)

4.7.3 INTEGRATED MODELS FOCUSED ON DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

At this juncture, it would be prudent to review some models on online communication to gain insight into and an understanding of the ways IC is perceived in this milieu.

4.7.3.1 *Integrated online marketing communication: implementation and management Model (Gurău 2008)*

In his study, Gurău (2008:169) attempted to address the alleged shortfall in terms of particular requisites and possible prospects for IMC in an online environment. Online communication was deemed relevant to the study because social media is regarded as an Internet application, and supposedly qualifies as online media, which justified the investigation of this tentative model (see section 3.4.1, chapter 3). Although the focus of this study was on integrated communication, the researcher decided to include a discussion of this model because of its emphasis on the integration of prominent management functions – public relations and marketing – which is in accordance with the rise of corporate communication and the

objectives of the corporate brand to achieve favourable perceptions and reputations for the entire organisation. In other words, such aspirations of the organisation prompts a broad integration of its management functions.

The recommended online IMC model is represented as a cyclic process of gathering, adaptation and implementation, based on the feedback or input from the audiences (Gurău 2008). It highlights the involvement of management, the message, the online communication mix, audiences, feedback and a database. The role of *management* is depicted as infusing the planned *message/s* with the core corporate values, followed by the adaption of the strategy and tactics accordingly, and then customisation thereof for a particular channel or audience. Such consideration of corporate values could signify that the organisation's mission is used as a point of departure to guide and determine the best way to communicate with stakeholders. The appropriate *communication mix* is selected on the basis of consideration of different aspects such as transparency, interactivity, selectivity and the characteristics of the *audience* the organisation intends reaching (Gurău 2008:178–181). The significance of *feedback* is stressed and suggests a definite focus on the stakeholder when refining and defining strategic objectives, and modifying corporate values. Similar to most of the models reviewed, the importance of a *database* to document and analyse feedback is underscored. Gurău (2008:179) maintains that such customer-related information could contribute to the personalisation of online communication and campaigns.

- **Comments and critique**

Gurău's (2008) study involved marketing or communication managers in the UK and although the findings could not be generalised, mainly because of to the relative small number of participants, the findings and subsequent model is considered to yield valuable insights into social media brand communication. The main factors deemed important are the regard for corporate values as a point of departure, and the intention to obtain feedback from customers. As explained in chapter 2, values are key assets of non-profit organisations and appreciated by their stakeholders. Although great value is placed on obtaining feedback from the audience, specific suggestions on possible methods to use are lacking, with little attention to the achievement of dialogue. In addition, conversations by stakeholders and heeding them are not addressed. In contrast to Niemann's (2005) model, there are no suggestions about consideration of environmental factors and ways to include them. There are also no propositions on the measurement of this model. The integration of social media and traditional communication methods is not considered because of the focus on online marketing communication. This model does not pertinently consider *social presence* or its value when online marketing communication is integrated, even though online communication supposedly

requires an online presence. *Feedback* suggests the importance of *listening* to stakeholders, but is not specifically addressed. Figure 4.9 indicates the perceptions of Gurău (2008) with regard to the integration of online communication.

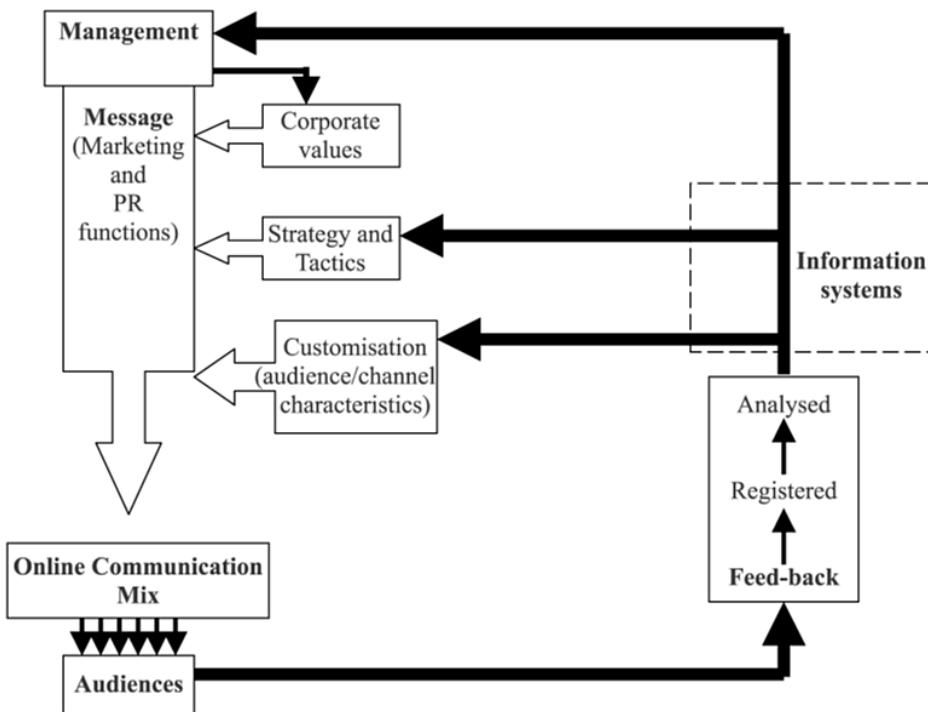


Figure 4.9: Integrated Online Marketing Communication: Implementation and Management Model (Gurău 2008)

4.7.3.2 Social Media in an Alternative Marketing Communication Model (Castronovo & Huang (2012))

This model adopts an IMC approach with the specific view of WOM, alternative marketing communications and social media as viable components of IMC. According to Castronovo and Huang (2012:117), increased recognition of the significance of the Internet as part of organisations' communication efforts, affords them the opportunity to apply more effective and efficient alternative marketing practices. They list the following examples of such alternative marketing communications as customer relationship management (CRM), brand communities, email marketing, search engine optimisation, viral marketing, guerrilla marketing, event-based marketing and mobile marketing (*ibid*). The model is accordingly an attempt to achieve the objectives of these alternative communication efforts, namely increased awareness, sales and consumer loyalty.

(a) Model components

Castronovo and Huang (2012:126) propose *social media* as the appropriate conduit to connect all marketing communication endeavours, mainly because of its ability to instantly connect a

wide array of people. Their model is based on the assumption that WOM is used to create and maintain a continuous positive interest about the organisation. Furthermore, it is suggested that any or all of the different types of social media, such as Twitter, Facebook or a corporate blog, could be included (see section 3.4.2, chapter 3) as long as it supports the organisation's objectives concerning the *content* it desires to create, the way in which it prefers to *communicate*, the extent to which consumers are engaged in two-way *conversation*, and the degree to which the organisation wishes to *convert* consumers into loyal customers (Castronovo & Huang 2012:126). Hence, as contended here, the communication mix in an alternative marketing communication model will be determined by the organisation's objectives regarding the *messages* it wishes to communicate, *how* it wishes to communicate, its willingness to engage in *dialogue* or *conversation*, and its plans to *create* loyal stakeholders.

The social media platform and selected types of social media are supported by inputs from the following forms of alternative marketing communications: guerrilla marketing, event-based marketing and search engine optimisation (SEO) (Castronovo & Huang 2012:126). *Guerrilla marketing* can be explained as those campaigns that are extremely efficient in creating a sound reputation of and positive interest in the organisation, at a low cost (*ibid*:121). This type of marketing is often applied to edgy and unconventional campaigns (Duncan 2002:558). *Events-based marketing* may include several forms of events, such as musical events, sponsorships and sports events, that supposedly contribute to building positive images and reputations, and diffuse the organisation's messages and generate interest (*ibid*). It is presumed that in an online environment in which consumers obtain online searches to obtain formation, it has become critical for the organisation to be involved in optimising *search engine programs* to ensure specific keywords are included in website or blog content, which, for example, could result in the organisation's site being listed organically in search engine results when stakeholders make specific queries (Castronovo & Huang 2012:120). In the social media environment, and to allow organisations to listen and monitor conversations on these platforms, such social media search engines are referred to as *social media monitoring tools* (see section 3.6.1.7, chapter 3). A wide array of these tools is at the organisation's disposal, of which Social Mention, Twazzup and BlogPulse are examples.

The other alternative marketing communications such as viral marketing (see section 2.3.1, chapter 2) and brand community are deemed to be and illustrated as *outputs* of the social media platform. Viral marketing or WOM is strongly associated with the customers' aspirations to share content (Castronovo & Huang 2012:120) that could be permitted by social media interaction.

Furthermore, the model provides for building a database of consumers and contacts through events-based marketing and interaction on social media. Castronovo and Huang (2012:127) maintain that a comprehensive database could contribute to an understanding of the customer and ultimately build loyalty by translating information into executable strategies, personalising marketing efforts and maintaining durable relationships (*ibid*).

There is provision for evaluation of the programme and subsequent feedback to constructively influence the effectiveness of the programme.

- **Comments and critique**

This model accentuates the value of a WOM strategy to support the message the organisation strives to disseminate (Castronovo & Huang 2012:126). Despite the value of this in generating excitement about the organisation and spreading information, it could in a sense be regarded as adopting a restricted focus of communication on social media. It also fails to address the integration of the stakeholders in light of the aspect of user-generated content specific social media content (see sections 3.5.2 and 3.6.1.8, chapter 3). Nevertheless, this model highlights the importance of understanding consumers, their conversations and where these occurs. It also proposes specific considerations for selecting the type/s of social media by focusing on *which* content and *ways* it desires to communicate, the extent to which it wishes to engage consumers in *conversation* and the planned *conversion* of consumers into customers. Unfortunately, it fails to address considerations of how consumers choose to communicate or the extent to which they wish to engage with the organisation. In figure 4.10 below, the conceptions of Castronovo and Huang (2012) are depicted. Moreover, no mention is made of the need to *listen* to conversations or propose possible strategies that could be employed. The element of *social presence* as such is also not explained or discussed, although it is implied by referring to the different social media platforms. Castronovo and Huang's (2012) views, as presented in this model, justify an increased consideration of all touch points – in particular the conversations that is predominantly WOM – between and by stakeholders.

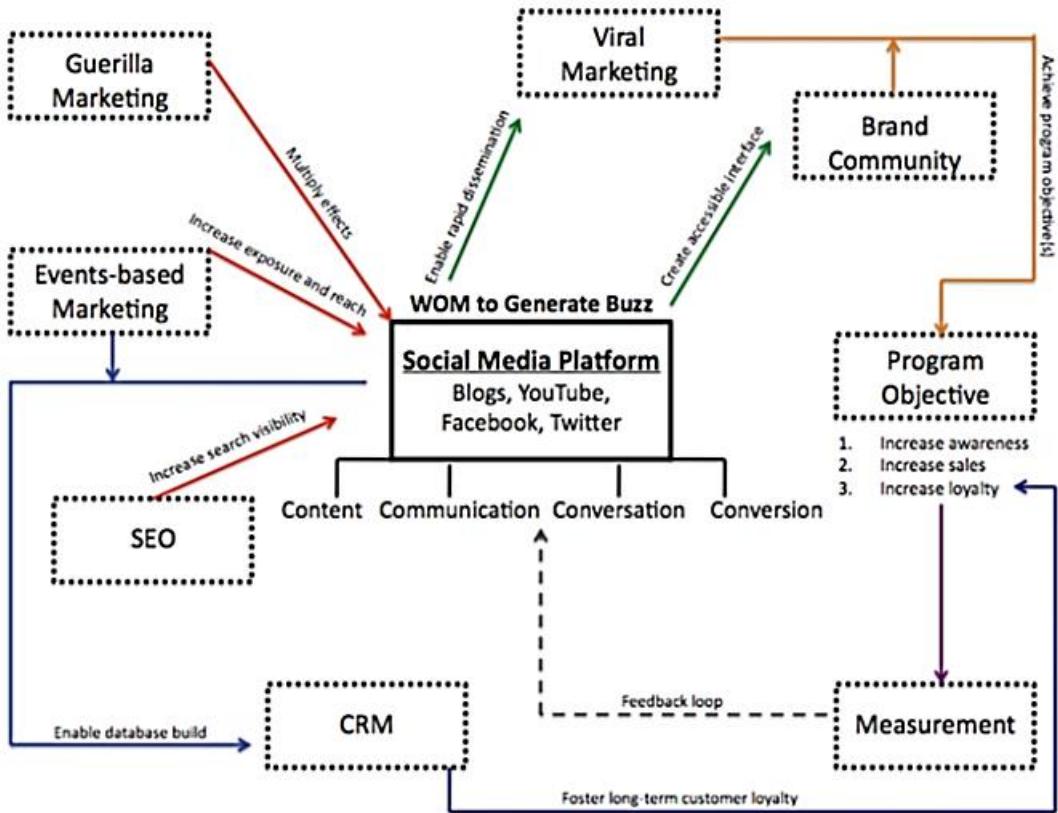


Figure 4.10: Social Media Marketing Communication Model (Castronovo & Huang 2012)

4.7.3.3 The Integrated Marketing Communications Paradigm (Rakić & Rakić 2014)

This model focuses on IMC and specifically on communication in a digital environment in which a contemporary approach to the use of newer media is posited. This pertains to the expansion of the media menu by capturing emerging technological advances rather than merely replacing traditional media (Rakić & Rakić 2014:188). It is furthermore stressed that there is a need to capture the underlying capabilities of newer technology (i.e. social media) such as engagement, participation and reach. A consideration of the different ways people refer to emerging technology leads to the need for clear distinctions between the concepts of digital, online or new media. These distinctions were made in section 3.4.1, chapter 3. As such it would be fair to say that the focus of this model on a digital environment would thus, in the context of the current study, include social media.

It is evident from the other integration models highlighted in this chapter, that few of them accommodate new media in the conceptualisation of how integration in terms of communication can be realised. The researchers underscore the importance of elements such as participation, interaction and dialogue that are enabled and accentuated by the Internet, as emphasised in sections 3.6.1.2, 3.6.1.4 and 3.6.1.7, chapter 3.

Rakić and Rakić (2014:187) consider five elements or pillars that might be considered for integration: (1) integration through media; (2), integration relating to communication methods; (3), integration in terms of timing and the possibilities of interaction; (4) integration pertaining to actors or participants in the communication process; and (5) the integration of content creation.

(a) *Pillar 1: integration of traditional and new digital media*

The first pillar of this model is based on and justified by the many views on the importance of integrating traditional and social media and the ongoing attempts to incorporate social media into communication strategies (Rakić & Rakić 2014:189). A distinction between traditional and new digital media is drawn and the need to incorporate both into the overall marketing strategy of the organisation highlighted (*ibid*). They refer to the inclusion of all possible types of *traditional media* (such as print – newspapers, broadcast media, direct-response, billboards; specific marketing media – brand, packaging; and traditional WOM [offline]) and *new digital media* (for example the Internet and mobile devices such as cell phones and ipads, digital broadcast media and eWOM [online]). Offline communication is explained as word of mouth (WOM), communication through traditional communication methods, and online (eWOM) communication through social networks of which blogs and forums are examples (Rakić & Rakić 2014:187, 191, 194; Hennig-Thurau et al 2004:39).

(b) *Pillar 2: integration of communications methods*

The purpose of this pillar is to integrate the different communication methods of IMC, which include *traditional promotional methods* (including but not limited to sales promotion, direct marketing and advertising), *digital interactions* such as via the Internet and mobile communications, and communications via digital radio and TV, and finally *WOM communications* (on- and offline) (Rakić & Rakić 2014:187; see section 2.3.1, chapter 2).

(c) *Pillar 3: Integration in terms of communication timing and possibilities for interaction*

According to Rakić and Rakić (014:189), this pillar refers to IMC as comprising *traditional communication* (monologue) and *dynamic communication* (dialogue). Their distinction appears to be based on a view of communication directed to the target audience, thus one-way communication, and communication *with* the target audience, thus engaging in dialogue or two-way communication. As propounded in section 3.6.1.7, chapter 3, in some instances, dialogue is compared to conversation that is permitted by social media.

(d) *Pillar 4: integration of actors*

Rakić and Rakić (2014:187) acknowledge the idea that many participants could participate in the communication process, and argue that it would be initiated by consumers and organisations. They, moreover, refer to the involvement of consumers in communication about

brands, which in the current study, refers to communication about the non-profit organisation. The perceived role of the consumer is deemed more comprehensive than merely being receivers of communication, and is alleged to also initiate communication, and to be an active participant or a passive observer (*ibid*:194). As key actors, consumers engage in offline and online communication or “mobile to mobile” phone, and the organisation initiates all possibly types of communication similar to those identified in pillar 2 above (*ibid*).

(e) Pillar 5: integration in terms of content creation

According to Rakić and Rakić (2014:187), IMC comprises a mix of communication that is basically based on “consumer generated content and marketing content (created by organisations)”.

• **Comments and critique**

This model can arguably be regarded as most significant in guiding the integration of social media with existing traditional media. Unfortunately, owing to the IMC perspective, it could be argued that it does in some instances need to consider a broader and more relevant approach by considering a more comprehensive mix of communication methods (pillar 2). The needs of non-profit organisations in particular might require unique communication methods. True to the IMC approach adopted in this model, pillar 5 could be regarded as limiting in the sense that it adopts the view that communication content is only created by the marketing function of the organisation and the consumer. A view on the corporate brand recommends that the organisation needs to be aware of and should consider the fact that many communication functions engage in communication with broad stakeholder groups. Figure 4.11 below illustrates Rakić and Rakić's (2014) reasoning on an integrated marketing communication paradigm.

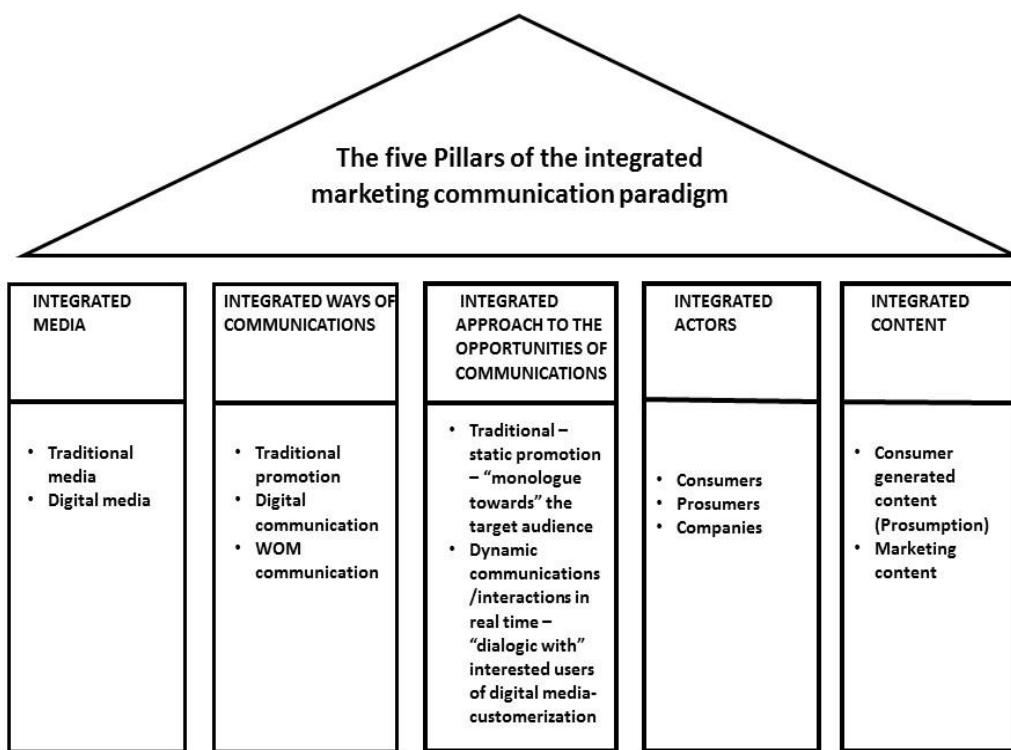


Figure 4.11: The Integrated Marketing Communications Paradigm (Rakić & Rakić 2014)

Table 4.3 below reflects the relevant aspects of the models discussed above in support of the suggested elements for social media brand communication which could be significant for non-profit organisations. Some of the elements considered vital to ensure effective communication integration and that need to be deliberated on include integration of brand positioning (content and timing, communication tools or tactics); stakeholder integration; relationship management integration; integration of the environment; database integration; cross-functional integration; and the aspects of a multi-skilled communicator or a team of communicators.

Table 4.3: Relevant aspects of IC models to support the proposed elements for integrating social media brand communication

Proposed elements for integrating social media brand communication	Guiding theoretical models
Corporate brand messages (content or messages) and timing integration	Gronstedt (1996); Duncan & Moriarty (1997); Gurău (2008); Castronovo & Huang (2012); Rakić & Rakić (2014)
Corporate brand contacts (communication tools or tactics) integration	Gronstedt (1996); Ehlers (2002); Gurău (2008); Castronovo & Huang (2012); Rakić & Rakić (2014)

Stakeholder integration, conversational integration (WOM)	Gronstedt (1996); Duncan & Caywood (1996); Duncan & Moriarty (1997); Ehlers (2002); Niemann (2005); Rakić & Rakić (2014).
Relationship management integration	Duncan & Caywood (1996); Gronstedt (2000); Niemann (2005); Castronovo & Huang (2012)
Environmental integration	Duncan & Caywood (1996); Ehlers (2000); Niemann (2005)
Database integration	Duncan & Caywood (1996); Duncan & Moriarty (1997); Ehlers (2002); Castronovo & Huang (2012)
Cross-functional integration	Duncan & Moriarty (1997); Gronstedt (2000); Ehlers (2002); Niemann (2005); Rakić & Rakić (2014)
Integration of values	Duncan & Moriarty (1997); Gronstedt (2000); Gurău (2008)
A multi-skilled communicator or team of communicator	Ehlers (2002); Niemann (2005)

In the next section, the proposed elements for a conceptual framework for integrated social media are deliberated. Views on these elements are supported throughout with references to the models investigated in section 4.7, and pertinent theoretical views in previous sections and chapters in the thesis.

4.8 PROPOSING ELEMENTS FOR A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TO INTEGRATE NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS' SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNICATION

This section sets out to highlight possible fundamental elements for integrating non-profit organisations' social media brand communication, certain avenues or ways in which such integration could occur, and the requirements that might be crucial to attain and maintain integration by non-profit organisations. It mainly aims to investigate research objective 3, namely to specifically identify potential elements for a conceptual framework to integrate South African non-profit organisations' social media brand communication. The elements are founded on and are in accordance with the emphasis placed on them in the models reviewed in section 4.7, along with applicable aspects from the theoretical views discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Hence the aim is to depict the elements that non-profit organisations need to pursue in their endeavours to achieve social media brand communication integration. The elements were proposed for a conceptual framework to be examined in the empirical part of the study. The proposed elements would thus form the focus and set the boundaries within which the empirical part of the study would be conducted, after which it would be refined into a final conceptual framework.

During the literature overview in the preceding chapters, the proposed elements were revealed, which together with theoretical models, are summarised in table 4.4 below and conceptualised into the following elements:

- Fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication by non-profit organisations
- Avenues of social media integration
- Aspects necessary to attain and maintain social media integration

Table 4.4: Proposed elements, theoretical aspects, models and viewpoints relevant to the integration of social media brand communication

Proposed elements and theoretical aspects of integrating social media brand communication	Guiding theoretical models	Theoretical viewpoints
Social presence	cf. Castronovo & Huang (2012)	Sections 2.5.1.5, 3.6.1.1, 3.6.1.5, 3.6.2 and 3.6.2.4,
Communication strategy (values and database)	Duncan & Moriarty (1997); Gronstedt (2000); Ehlers (2002); Gurău (2008); Castronovo & Huang (2012)	Sections 2.3.3, 4.6, 4.7.1.3, 4.7.1.4 and 4.7.3.1
Stakeholder integration, conversational integration and dialogue (WOM and eWOM)	Gronstedt (1996); Duncan & Caywood (1996); Duncan & Moriarty (1997); Gronstedt (2000); Ehlers (2002); Niemann (2005); Castronovo & Huang (2012); Rakić & Rakić (2014)	Sections 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 3.5.2, 3.5.3, 3.6.1.4, 3.6.1.7, 3.7, 4.4.1, 4.4.2, 4.6, 4.7.1.1 and 4.7.3.2
Corporate brand messages (content or messages) and timing integration	Gronstedt (1996); Duncan & Moriarty (1997); Gurău (2008); Castronovo & Huang (2012); Rakić & Rakić (2014)	Sections 3.5.2, 3.6.1.8, 4.4, 4.4.1, 4.4.2, 4.4.6, 4.5, 4.7.1.2, 4.7.1.3, 4.7.3.3, 4.8 and 4.8.3.2
Corporate brand contacts (communication tools or tactics) integration	Gronstedt (1996); Ehlers (2002); Gurău (2008); Castronovo & Huang (2012); Rakić & Rakić (2014)	Sections 4.4, 4.4.1, 4.5, 4.7.1.2, 4.7.3.1, 4.7.3.2, 4.7.3.3, 4.8 and 4.8.2.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media in conjunction with traditional media • Interaction through media convergence 	Rakić & Rakić (2014) Jenkins (2006)	Sections 2.3.1, 3.4.2, 3.7, 4.5.2, 4.5.3, 4.6, 4.7.1.2, 4.7.3.3, 4.8.2.2, 4.8.2.3 and 4.8.2.3.1 Sections 3.4.2, 3.5.1, 3.5.2, 3.5.3, 3.6.1.8, 4.8 and 4.8.2.3.2
A social listening orientation	Castronovo & Huang (2012); Gurău (2008)	Sections 2.6.1.1, 3.5.2, 3.5.3, 3.6.1.3, 3.6.1.7, 3.6.1.8, 3.8.1.7, 4.6.1.7 and 4.8.3.2
Community	Castronovo & Huang (2012)	Sections 2.3, 2.6.1.4, 3.5.2, 3.5.3, 4.4.1, 4.7.3.2 and 4.8.3.3
Environmental and cross-functional integration	Duncan & Caywood (1996); Ehlers (2002); Niemann (2005); Duncan & Moriarty (1997); Gronstedt (2000); Ehlers (2000); Rakić & Rakić (2014)	Sections 2.3.1, 4.5.3, 4.4, 4.4.1, 4.4.3, 4.4.4., 4.7.1, 4.7.1.1, 4.7.1.2, 4.7.1.3, 4.7.1.4, 4.7.2.1, 4.7.2.2, 4.7.3.3 and 4.8.3.4
Management of synergy and consistency of communication endeavours by a multi-skilled individual or a team of communicators	Niemann (2005); Ehlers (2002); Duncan & Moriarty (1997); Gronstedt (1996); Duncan & Caywood (1996)	Sections 2.6.1.1, 4.3.1, 4.4.6, 4.7.1, 4.7.1.3, 4.7.2, 4.7.2.2, 4.7.2.1, 4.7.2.2, 4.7.3, 4.7.3.1, 4.8.3.1 and 4.8.3.5
Evaluation	Gurău (2008); Castronovo & Huang (2012)	Sections 4.8 and 4.8.3.6

The identified elements for integrating non-profit organisations' social media brand communication are explained in the next section, on the basis of the following theoretical aspects: social presence; communication strategy; stakeholder integration; social media content; social media brand communication mix; social media in conjunction with traditional media; interaction through multiple social media platforms; the need for a multi-skilled communicator or a team of communicators; a social listening orientation; community, environmental and cross-functional integration; synergy and consistency of communication endeavours; and evaluation.

4.8.1 ELEMENT 1: FUNDAMENTALS FOR INTEGRATING SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNICATION BY NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

The purpose of this element is to investigate the theoretical aspects that could serve as the foundation for integrating social media. The reasoning in terms of the literature review, is that there is a need to have a social media presence that will allow organisations to be active and to communicate on these platforms. In addition, the idea is that a social media presence should be directed by strategic planning.

4.8.1.1 Social presence

Social presence is identified as a key element of social media and the reasons for considering it as a fundamental element of social media brand communication were provided in chapter 3. The reasoning is that a social presence alludes to a specific place where people meet while being in the presence of others, which, in the context of this study, points to a communal online environment in which the organisation and the stakeholders interact. It is therefore vital for the non-profit organisation to develop and attend to an online space such as on a social media platform where stakeholders could assemble.

As a starting point, non-profit organisations should select the most appropriate social media platforms that could truly add value to the organisation and establish and maintain a presence on such platforms. Since true engagement is linked to in-depth conversations between the organisation and stakeholders, it stands to reason that the organisation should be active on and effectively use the social media platforms to connect with stakeholders and be involved in continuous conversation. Efforts to invite stakeholders to interact and collaborate with the organisation to create and share social media content and to engage in conversation on these platforms should be initiated. It is posited that knowledge of the different platforms, and which of these stakeholders would prefer and use, are key to establishing a social presence.

4.8.1.2 Communication strategy

The value of a strategy to ensure strategic alignment of all communication efforts with the organisational objectives was highlighted in section 4.6 above. An IC philosophy comprising the integration of communication resources across traditional communication functions in the organisation, and the combination of traditional media with types of social media, require dedicated planning to achieve the organisation's mission and set organisational objectives. Hence, it is evident that some sort of guiding plan is required to ensure the organisation's communication resources are managed in order to ensure effective and efficient use thereof.

In section 4.6 above, different views on the composition of a social media strategy were mentioned. These views, however, do not provide a clear indication of whether the overall aims for communication on social media platforms and their attainment should be integrated into a broader communication strategy or attended to in a social media strategy. The need for a strategic communication directive is acknowledged, and irrespective of whether or not it is included in a broader strategy, it will be termed a *communication strategy* for the purposes here. This said, it seems imperative that non-profit organisations should specially consider guidelines of their communication by way of social media. Besides, one would expect an organisation-wide IC perspective to encourage these organisations to incorporate social media brand communication into a broader communication strategy. The empirical part of this study therefore set out to investigate the status quo in non-profit organisations to provide more clarity on the way these organisations strategically arrange their social media brand communication planning.

Of relevance is the notion that the overall organisational and communication objectives should serve as points of departure when the organisation undertakes the strategic planning of its communication initiatives (see section 4.6 and figure 4.2). Furthermore, this point suggests the need to achieve consistency when portraying the organisation's core values, including the alignment thereof with expected values held by its stakeholders. To integrate social media brand communication, the organisation should thus consider the perception of Smith (2012a), namely that it should have a twofold focus on the *mechanics* and *philosophy* of integration. Consideration of *corporate values* as key assets is equally significant in the non-profit context and should therefore be incorporated into a communication strategy.

4.8.2 ELEMENT 2: AVENUES OF SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION

The aim of this element is to discover insights into the ways in which non-profit organisations could advance towards social media integration. The opportunities for introducing social media integration as discussed in the literature, include the following: the integration of stakeholders; stakeholder integration; social media content such as sourcing, planning and scheduling; and

the application of social media in combination with traditional media; and the use of media convergence.

4.8.2.1 Stakeholder integration

This element arguably forms a key component of this study because it points to a focus on stakeholders of the non-profit organisation as prosumers of social media content which, inter alia, embraces the conversations with and between them. The integration of stakeholders' voices through a focus on the communication has been emphasised in this chapter, and is deemed crucial to the endeavours to integrate social media brand communication and achieve stakeholder integration in particular. At the core of this study was the stance that the synergy and consistency of communication with stakeholders on social media could be attained by way of social media brand communication integration. However, it is recommended that a focus on stakeholder conversations and the integration thereof could likewise serve as a way to integrate the organisation's stakeholders when non-profit organisations reflect on and respond to discussions on social media platforms. This assumption was made in section 4.7.2.2 above, where the necessity of two-way communication, responsiveness, the ability to listen and continuous dialogue were emphasised.

Another consideration is the creation of value through tracking and monitoring stakeholders' perceptions and their conversations about the corporate brand.

The multiple participants in the communication process are also referred to as *actors* who are more appropriately called *stakeholders*. Their role in the communication process appears to be to initiate communication, participate in or observe conversations and interactions on social media platforms, as opposed to being merely passive receivers of communication. Chapter 3 provided a detailed exploration of social connectedness, participation and social interaction as key elements of social media that confirm the appropriateness of integrating stakeholders' conversations.

Most of the models studied in this chapter focus on the value of documenting important information about the organisations' stakeholders. Although not entirely approached from a social media context, the points raised in the overview of the historical and contemporary communication models in the chapter provide insights into their value. It is evident that a database could provide an awareness of the stakeholders' online contact with the organisation and identify their interests and communication preferences. As emphasised, a comprehensive database could allow the documentation of different stakeholders for communication planning and integrating (section 4.7.2.1), allowing the organisation to ultimately maintain lasting

relationships (section 4.7.3.2) and document and analyse stakeholder data (sections 4.7.1.3 and 4.7.3.1).

An integrated approach to communication warrants a stakeholder focus that is required to protect the way the corporate brand is perceived and is therefore regarded as a pertinent issue.

4.8.2.2 Social media content

It is postulated that organisations can achieve communication alignment by consciously coordinating (or integrating) the content that is communicated to stakeholders, including the timing thereof. The coordination of content development and sharing across the organisation agrees with the notion to unify all communication activities. Breakenridge (2012:62) emphasises the value of a universal sharing system such as using *universal calendar* to reveal different events, common keywords and different focus areas of other departments that could be promoted on the organisation's social media platforms. The notion is that such a document should consider the critical issues of stakeholders, community, brand ambassadors and influencers and knowledge of the types of content they prefer and in which formats (Breakenridge 2012:158).

An early perception by Schramm (1973:83) is that information informally refers to the "stuff of communication". The connection to content and the value of such information (or content) in reducing uncertainty and aiding decision making is evident in Schramm's definition as "whatever content will help people structure or organize some aspects of their environment that are relevant to a situation in which they must act". As stated in sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.6 above, *content* in IC emanates from knowledge and understanding of the broad range of markets that a programme aims to address. This is not a novel idea and is actually based on calls for a stakeholder perspective and the importance of being aware of their communication needs and including them as active *subjects* by taking into account their future expectations of the corporate brand, as emphasised in sections 4.4 and 4.4.1 above. As explained in chapter 3 and the examples cited concerning social media, *content* may take many different forms, for example, those in tweets, blogs or Facebook postings, storytelling, images, slide presentations, podcasts, YouTube videos and so forth, which when combined on different types of platforms to distribute corporate brand messages, can be referred to as *content convergence*. Different sources may also create and share social media content.

Social media content precipitates interaction on social media platforms and was classified for the purposes of this study on the basis of the categories discussed in chapter 3 as *created* and *repurposed*, *co-created*, and *curated*. Non-profit organisations should have a clear focus

on the ratio they wish to apply when deciding on content for social media, and thus the contributions by their stakeholders in co-creating social media content. Further considerations of this point pertain to the key dialogic element identified in section 4.4.2 above regarding *content management*, and in particular, the deliberation of the *types of content* and the *accessibility of the content* (see figure 4.1). In this regard, equal consideration should be given to the *repurposing* of content to be used on traditional and social media. This does not refer to the integration of the types of media (traditional or social), but has a distinct focus on the content that the non-profit organisation creates and shares with stakeholders on different platforms.

When referring to the non-profit organisation, and as indicated in chapter 3, existing social media monitoring tools could assist to monitor the topics raised and what is said about the organisation. Knowledge of the content of these discussions might enable the organisation to ensure that its corporate brand messages are aligned with the desired corporate brand and also allow them to respond accordingly when necessary. Related to this point is the assertion that the selection of appropriate social media platforms depends, *inter alia*, on the content of the corporate brand messages the organisation wishes to formulate and distribute (Castronovo & Huang 2012). Then again, organisations should consider the issue of *responsiveness* when creating social media content (Leroux Miller 2013:242). Organisations need to demonstrate that they have listened and considered the matters stakeholders raise in conversations by addressing these issues in the content they create and share.

As explained in earlier sections in this chapter, *timing* is commonly associated with content and seemingly poses unique challenges to corporate communicators in an online environment because of the accelerated pace at which communication occurs place. This subsequently challenges the successful content integration by organisations since stakeholders expect timeous responses from the organisation as well as whether the corporate brand is perceived as possessing human characteristics. In light of the fact that the objectives of short-, medium- and long-term messages might differ completely, the planning of communication requires careful consideration. In section 4.7.3.3 above, the point was made that timing also represents the *flow* of communication that refers either to one-way or traditional communication *to* the audiences, or two-way or more contemporary communication *with* the audiences. One-way communication is typically associated with monologue, while two-way communication relates to the desire to engage in dialogue or conversation as propounded by social media.

For the purpose of delimiting *social media content* and *social media brand communication mix (communication tools and tactics)*, a brief distinction between these concepts, as explained in the literature, is warranted.

In section 4.7.1.3 above, it was stated that, according to Duncan and Moriarty (1997:25), the concept of *brand position* could serve as a collective term, when referring to the different messages stakeholders receive from the organisation, and which accordingly allow them to form opinions of a corporate brand. Niemann (2005:258) terms this *brand messages*, which in line with the perspective of this study, refers to *corporate brand content* from the non-profit organisation. Integration in terms of *social media content* therefore refers to the combination of different elements, such as the management, planning, scheduling, sourcing and monitoring of social media content, the myriad of messages and various types of content the organisation wishes to communicate by means of social media. The connection between messages and content was explained in section 3.6.1.8, chapter 3. However, the premise that every action and/or inaction of the organisation qualifies as communication correspondingly demands a broader view than merely dealing with messages, as mentioned above. It basically includes all possible ways in which stakeholders and organisations have contact with one another and is also referred to as *points of contact* (Gronstedt 2000:14) or *brand contact* (Duncan & Caywood 1996:31; Duncan & Moriarty 1997:17). This corresponds to the views of Gronstedt (1996), Gurău (2008) and Rakić and Rakić (2014), who perceive the communication mix as an aggregate of all methods, tools, mechanics or tactics used by the organisation to communicate, and this is henceforth referred to as the *social media brand communication mix (communication tools and tactics)*. Following this reasoning, one could thus infer that the concept of *social media content* constitutes content or messages, while the *social media brand communication mix (communication tools and tactics)* signifies the communication tools, methods and tactics applied by the organisation. In the context of this study, *corporate brand communication* was deemed the appropriate concept when referring to the numerous ways in which non-profit organisations connect with their stakeholders (see section 2.6.1.2, chapter 2).

4.8.2.3 Integrated social media brand communication mix (communication tools and tactics)

Gronstedt's (1996) view of the elements that should be integrated in a stakeholder relations model encapsulates so-called *receiving tools*, *interactive tools* and *sending tools*, as dealt with in section 4.7.1.2 above (see sections 4.4, 4.5, 4.7.3.3 and 4.8). Regardless of the somewhat exclusive focus by Gronstedt (1996) on customers as opposed to stakeholders, this author's model combines possible communication tools from marketing and public relations into a single *tool box*, which, in an IC approach needs to be coordinated with traditional (or linear) and social media brand communication tools. This could probably be regarded as an early initiative towards communication integration, despite the fact that the receiving communication tools, in most instances, could qualify as pure marketing research tools. According to Kliatchko

view (2008:149), communication tools and methods can also be referred to as *channels* and are perceived to include multiple channels and contact points from different disciplines, including *new media* (digitisation) such as different types of social media.

The literature reveals distinct views on the most appropriate measures to implement when deciding on the types of communication tools to apply and that need to be integrated in an IC perspective. The opinions expressed in sections 4.7.3.1 and 4.7.3.2 above and with special reference to social media platforms, suggest that such communication tools and tactics can collectively be called the *social media brand communication mix*. This term is used when referring to the comprehensive collection of communication methods, tools, mechanics or tactics the organisation uses to communicate and that need to be integrated. The points raised in section 4.7.3.2 pertaining to which elements should constitute a communication mix are particularly relevant in this regard.

Rakić and Rakić's (2014:187, 189, 191–193) view, as expressed in section 4.7.3.3 above, is that in respect of the communication mix, integration should embrace all possible *types* of media (traditional and social media platforms) and different communication *methods* of which personal selling, promotions, email, eWOM are examples, which point to a holistic view of all communication. Although their perceptions are mainly based on an IMC context it was deemed useful to consider their views in the currents study, because an integrated approach to social media also calls for consideration of the conversations about the corporate brand.

(a) Social media in conjunction with traditional media

The notion of integrating traditional and social media has been expressed in early IC models, as stated in section 4.7.1 above. In fact it points to integration at two distinct levels, namely at a strategic and philosophical level in respect of the removal of traditional boundaries between traditional communication fields that is central to the philosophy of an integrated approach to communication, and integration at a tactical level, which suggests the coordination of traditional and newer types of communication media. Considering the views on this issue, it is necessary to distinguish between traditional and newer types of media and to incorporate both into an overall strategy in the form of a *single communication toolbox*, as discussed in sections 4.7.1.2 and 4.7.3.3 above.

(b) Interaction through media convergence

It is contended that technological advances have contributed to the integration of communication in many ways and on different social media platforms. This appears to signify the *joining together* of distinct types of communication platforms, which provide combinations

of data, voice, image and video, as opposed to traditional ways of communication on single platforms (chapter 3). The fact that social media connects people across geographic spaces and times compels organisations to use multiple communication methods to spread their message and to thus extend their communication reach beyond a single method or single form of content. This said, it is evident that interaction through different media therefore requires the convergence of *content* as well. The distinction between the different types of content, as explained in section 3.6.1.8, chapter 3, together with the use of multiple types of media, underscores the need to repurpose content for use on different social media platforms. Hence, *content convergence*, which is understood as the use of particular *content* (a story, a topic, YouTube videos, images, etc.) in different forms in order to promote the corporate brand, may increase interaction and thus conversation via social media when multiple social media platforms are applied.

4.8.3 ELEMENT 3: THE ATTAINMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNICATION INTEGRATION

Following the integration of social media according to the theoretical aspects mentioned in section 4.8.2, it is logical to maintain such integration by adhering to the certain factors apparent in the literature and mentioned in this section.

4.8.3.1 A *social listening* orientation

The need to adopt a listening approach to determine what is being said about the corporate brand was highlighted in section 3.6.1.7, chapter 3. The statements made by and the views of stakeholders about the organisation that are rapidly spread on traditional media, particularly on social media platforms, require the adoption of a listening approach to allow the organisation to understand its audience, be aware of relevant matters and identify social media influences that could spread the message. Hence stakeholders and their conversations could be integrated into the activities of the organisation. According to De Vera and Murray (2013:10), listening commences with an understanding of the organisation itself, its most important programmes and issues, and key concepts relating to these programmes that will ultimately point to the popular topics on the social media platforms. In terms of a stakeholder focus as suggested by an IC view, this emphasises, to the same extent, the importance of being informed of the topics about the corporate brand that are raised by others on social media. Social listening seemingly provides opportunities to monitor and participate in conversations that are informed by knowledge of where stakeholders assemble, and of the topics they raise and their preferred topics and social media platforms (see section 3.6.1.7 and table 3.5, chapter 3). The perceived benefit of evaluating stakeholders' interactions with the brand content is furthermore affirmed by Du Plessis (2017b:364).

4.8.3.2 Community

The foundational elements of social media, as conceptualised by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), were elaborated on in section 3.5.3, chapter 3, by identifying and clarifying *community* as a third cornerstone of social media. The supporting arguments are founded on the characteristics of social media, including the capabilities of social media to allow people to gather and communicate unhindered.

The view that community serves the need of humans to belong, share common interests and communicate, as expedited by social media, underscores the significance of creating a feeling of community to maintain and sustain an integrated approach to social media brand communication. Based on the perception that stakeholders are the basis of communication integration because of their ability to retrieve and integrate content and to drive conversation, it would be fair to assume that the organisation should focus on creating a corporate brand community when aspiring to integrate brand communication on social media. Section 3.5.2, chapter 3, explained the importance of *brand ambassadors*, *brand influencers* and *brand advocates*, who seemingly form part of such community and who are crucial when sharing their brand experiences and increasing brand awareness and conversation about the corporate brand on social media. It is assumed that brand communities, through their connections with others, could serve as a platform on which experiences and opinions are shared and thus attain commitment to and widespread engagement with the corporate brand. The ultimate aim, however, should be not only to gather stakeholders around shared topics of the non-profit organisation to promote the organisation's corporate brand and cause, but also to create emotional connections that could benefit the existence thereof.

4.8.3.3 Environmental and cross-functional integration

Environmental and cross-functional integration is not emphasised by all researchers who have conceptualised integrated communication. One would nevertheless expect non-profit organisations to continuously consider their immediate environment and community when formulating their social media strategies to ensure these conditions are integrated into the planning. An intense awareness of the external environment and its dynamics that require the organisation to constantly adapt its communication strategies and tactics, is highlighted in sections 4.7.1.1 and 4.7.2.2 above. Given the focus on communication that seemingly occurs in an online milieu, it stands to reason that these organisations need to recognise and keep up with imminent challenges in the online environment, such as technological advances.

Some researchers acknowledge greater involvement between traditional communication functions in the department, but this notion is markedly absent in the more contemporary

integrated online communication models. Cross-functional integration is mentioned in some models and referred to as *functional integration*, *horizontal integration*, the *inclusion of all organisational functions* or *organisational integration*. As suggested in sections 4.3 and 4.3.1 earlier on, the integration of communication takes place either internally in the various management functions (intra-organisational) or externally when stakeholder participation is accommodated. As Duncan and Moriarty (1997:18) assert, and supported by Gronstedt (2000:58), Ehlers (2002:339) and Niemann (2005:249), different departments should be linked to allow sharing of knowledge, expertise and information about the stakeholder. This point relates to the principles of integrated communication, as a strategic and dialogic or two-way communication function as addressed earlier in section 4.4.2.

The topic of *employees* as a core principle of IC was discussed in section 4.4.3. The notion that inspired and mobilised employees can act as ambassadors of the corporate brand through cross-functional integration, further raises the possibility that such integration could achieve a sense of belonging and community within the non-profit organisation.

4.8.3.4 Management of synergy and consistency of communication endeavours by an individual or a team of communicators

The definition of an integrated approach to social media brand communication as the idea of achieving *synergy* and *consistency* in the organisation's communication activities on social media platforms, highlights acknowledgement of these concepts as the ultimate outcomes of such an approach. It basically points to the combination of all individual efforts into a whole and the uniformity of all communication actions (see section 4.3.1). Non-profit organisations should identify a responsible individual or a team to coordinate and manage the overall communication integration effort to ultimately achieve the desired outcomes, as suggested in section 4.7.2.2. When reflecting on the foci of the models that were reviewed in sections 4.7.1, 4.7.2 and 4.7.3, the issue of accountability was hardly raised. Nonetheless, this is deemed necessary for the coordination and management of the overall integration effort. Contemporary models on the integration of communication specifically stress the need to appoint a responsible individual or team to coordinate and manage the organisation's social media endeavours. Calls to appoint a *multi-skilled communicator* or a *team of communicators* are therefore supported. The responsibilities of such a team or individual could ensure the coordination of social media brand communication throughout the organisation based on sound knowledge of the organisation's mission, vision and core competencies, and a commitment to the strategic consistency of all organisational endeavours does not clearly feature in the models discussed in sections 4.7.2.1 and 4.7.2.2. This idea is supported in section 4.7.2.2, where the responsibilities of such a *renaissance communicator* were said to

include the coordination of marketing and public relations functions. This point is validated by the idea that integration is a process that should be a starting point that could be either a skilled communicator or a team of communicators who could take responsibility for managing communication integration.

4.8.3.5 Evaluation

It stands to reason that the success of the integration of social media brand communication needs to be measured in terms of the strategic objectives pursued. Such measurement should then serve to identify adjustments and how future social media integration initiatives should be included in the endeavours of the non-profit organisation. The effectiveness of social media initiatives as such should be integral to an existing social media strategy and also focus on achieving a complete overview of the communication integration initiatives. Therefore, as mentioned in section 4.6, it is necessary to determine the total number of *actions* that stakeholders perform on social media platforms, namely to actually count the actions that could be an indication of the success of the social media efforts. This said, the organisation should further aim to achieve a holistic view of its progress toward the integration of social media and in a sense gain intelligence of its success, specifically by determining the extent to which the theoretical aspects of element 2 (see section 4.8.2) have been attained. The corporate brand perspective largely dictates such measurement, because the ultimate aim is to promote the corporate brand of non-profit organisations through the incorporation of social media brand communication. It is thus necessary to determine the achievement or non-achievement of the proposed integration of social media brand communication.

An aspect the non-profit organisation should consider would be to conduct a formal *social media audit* to uncover areas of concern, strengths, opportunities and threats that could serve as a benchmark for subsequent measurement (section 4.6). A comparison with competitors could likewise serve to identify possibilities for improvement (cf. Keehley & Abercrombie 2008). Lastly, determining whether stakeholders feel their voices are being heard and considered, say, through online surveys, should be a key objective and could be addressed during an audit. This could provide an indication of the organisation's success or failure in adopting a stakeholder approach by listening to stakeholders' conversations and providing personalised responses (cf. Webster & Hume 2016).

Based on the discussion thus far, the proposed elements for a conceptual framework to integrate non-profit organisations' social media brand communication, are indicated in table 4.5 below. These elements were empirically tested in the South African non-profit environment (see chapters, 5, 6 and 7).

Table 4.5: Summary of the proposed elements and theoretical aspects of an integrated approach to social media brand communication by non-profit organisations

Element 1: Fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication by non-profit organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media presence • Communication strategy (corporate brand values and database)
Element 2: Avenues of social media integration – use of social media to integrate at various levels (where could integration ideally take place?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder integration: identify, track, monitor and assess conversations • Social media content: created, co-created, curated and repurposed content • Social media brand communication mix: owned (website, Facebook page, brochure or news releases on social media, etc., brand story and opportunities for two-way communication), paid (advertisements on social media platforms – e.g. Facebook advertisements, sponsored tweets on Twitter) and earned (conversation on social media, accessibility + solicit) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media in conjunction with traditional media (link traditional and social media platforms) • Interaction through media convergence (multiple platforms)
Element 3: The attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A social listening orientation (listening to discussions and responding) • Community (connect stakeholders and gather around pertinent topics) • Environmental and cross-functional integration • Management of synergy and consistency of communication endeavours by a multi-skilled individual or a team of communicators • Evaluation

4.9 SUMMARY

This chapter explored an integrated approach to social media brand communication for non-profit organisations in South Africa. The assumption was that the integration of social media brand communication broadly comprises among other aspects the integration of the communication mechanics or methods and an organisational philosophy or *spirit* towards integration.

The proposed elements for a conceptual framework to integrate non-profit organisations' social media integration were investigated based on the assumption that IC can be regarded as an extension of IMC. Owing to the ambiguity of this concept and the main views used to discern the concept, the following standpoints in respect of IC were considered: (1) it is a more

comprehensive approach than IMC; (2) it suggests a broader focus on *stakeholders* as opposed to customers; (3) its primary objective is to engage in dialogue by recognising stakeholders as both senders and receivers of communication; (4) the mission of the organisation drives integrated communication; and (5) it could address complex communication issues.

This chapter also investigated the relationship between IC, corporate communication, corporate branding and social media by providing a brief synopsis of the origins of IC, the conceptualisation of an integrated approach to social media brand communication and identification of the principles and present emphasis of IC. It was ascertained that the concept aims to persuade customers to buy and to achieve a uniform impression of the organisation in marketing and corporate communication, respectively. A comprehensive overview of IC revealed the following principles fundamental to integrated communication: (1) a broad stakeholder focus; (2) a concern with communication rather than messages; (3) a focus on employees; (4) a focus on the expansion beyond traditional organisational borders; (5) a consideration of its strategic intentions; and (6) a view on integration as a process. Furthermore, the current emphasis of IC was explored on the basis of the evolution of this concept, and a fifth evolutionary era was subsequently revealed on the basis of a number of definitions found in the IC literature.

Historical IC models, IC models in a South African setting and digital IC models were specifically investigated to identify potential elements of an integrated approach to social media brand communication which, in conjunction with supporting views in the literature, could be significant to such an approach. The selected models are by no means all-inclusive, because there are different perspectives on IC and applications thereof in multiple disciplines. It was argued that the importance of a unified brand, the need to align and integrate all communication efforts and the perception thereof as a broad institutional focus, dialogue, a strategic issue, relationships and the involvement of the stakeholder, is to a certain extent supported in the current era. The definitions do not highlight the importance of reaching the heart and mind of stakeholders, or the significance of corporate values that supposedly warrant consideration. Following an examination of existing IC models, it was concluded that there is in fact no uniform model for integrated social media brand communication. Hence the models identified at the beginning of the chapter were purposively selected and explored in conjunction with theoretical views in the literature, that were presented in earlier chapters. Proposed elements that emerged from the overview of these models and in the literature overview in earlier chapters were formulated. The researcher's contention was that these elements could serve the communication purposes of non-profit organisations in South Africa and were vital to the main aim of the study. The elements were as follows: (1) a social media

presence; (2) a communication strategy; (3) stakeholder integration; (4) social media content; (5) social media brand communication mix comprising : (a) social media in conjunction with traditional media, and (b) interaction through media convergence; (6) a social listening orientation; (7) community; (8) environmental and cross-functional integration; (9) management of synergy and consistency of communication endeavours by a multi-skilled communicator or a team of communicators; and (10) evaluation.

The chapter concluded with a discussion of insights into the value of an IC approach for non-profit organisations, particularly to achieve a strong corporate brand. It was inferred that such an approach could ultimately ensure that the non-profit organisation and all its offerings are portrayed as a unified whole to stakeholders, who should also experience the organisation as such.

In the next chapter, the research methodology that guided the empirical verification of the proposed elements is outlined and justified.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters were mainly devoted to a thorough literature review of elements and concepts in extant literature of significance to the study, such as a corporate branding perspective (chapter 2), the social media phenomenon (chapter 3), and the contextualisation of an integrated approach to social media brand communication that culminated in certain elements with theoretical aspects for the purposes of measurement (chapter 4).

This chapter outlines and contextualises the research methodology to empirically verify the proposed elements for a conceptual framework for the integration of non-profit organisations' social media brand communication, as outcomes of the in-depth literature review in the previous chapters. To this end, the outline of the research methodology was followed by gathering, reporting and interpreting the views of non-profit organisations in South Africa for the practical integration of social media brand communication. The empirical findings are presented in chapters 6 and 7.

This chapter is set out as follows: firstly, the main purpose of the study and the broad research problem are highlighted; secondly, the research methodology is conceptualised by providing insight into the research paradigm and research design that guided the empirical enquiry. Thirdly, the philosophical logic and other research considerations are explained and framed in the context of the adopted research paradigm.

To achieve the main goal of this study and decide on the empirical measures to investigate the identified elements of a conceptual framework for the integration of social media brand communication, it is necessary to consider how the study has unfolded thus far. By reflecting on the purpose and broad research objectives of this study, the progression of the study is revealed, including the broad research problem and secondary research objectives that would guide the empirical investigation.

5.2 PURPOSE AND BROAD RESEARCH PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

The overall purpose of this study was to identify appropriate elements to include in a conceptual framework for social media brand communication in the non-profit sector. The researcher anticipates that such a framework would ultimately direct organisations in this sector on how to practise social media brand communication in an integrated way. Considering the focus on social media that can be applied in different disciplines, the study followed a

multidisciplinary approach and as such included a theoretical outline of corporate communication, corporate branding, social media and integrated communication.

Furthermore, and as specified in chapter 1, the development of this study took place in five phases, arranged in three sections. The progression of this study from delineating the topic under investigation, to measuring and refining the proposed elements for a conceptual framework, are depicted in figure 5.1 below. This chapter pays particular attention to phase 3.

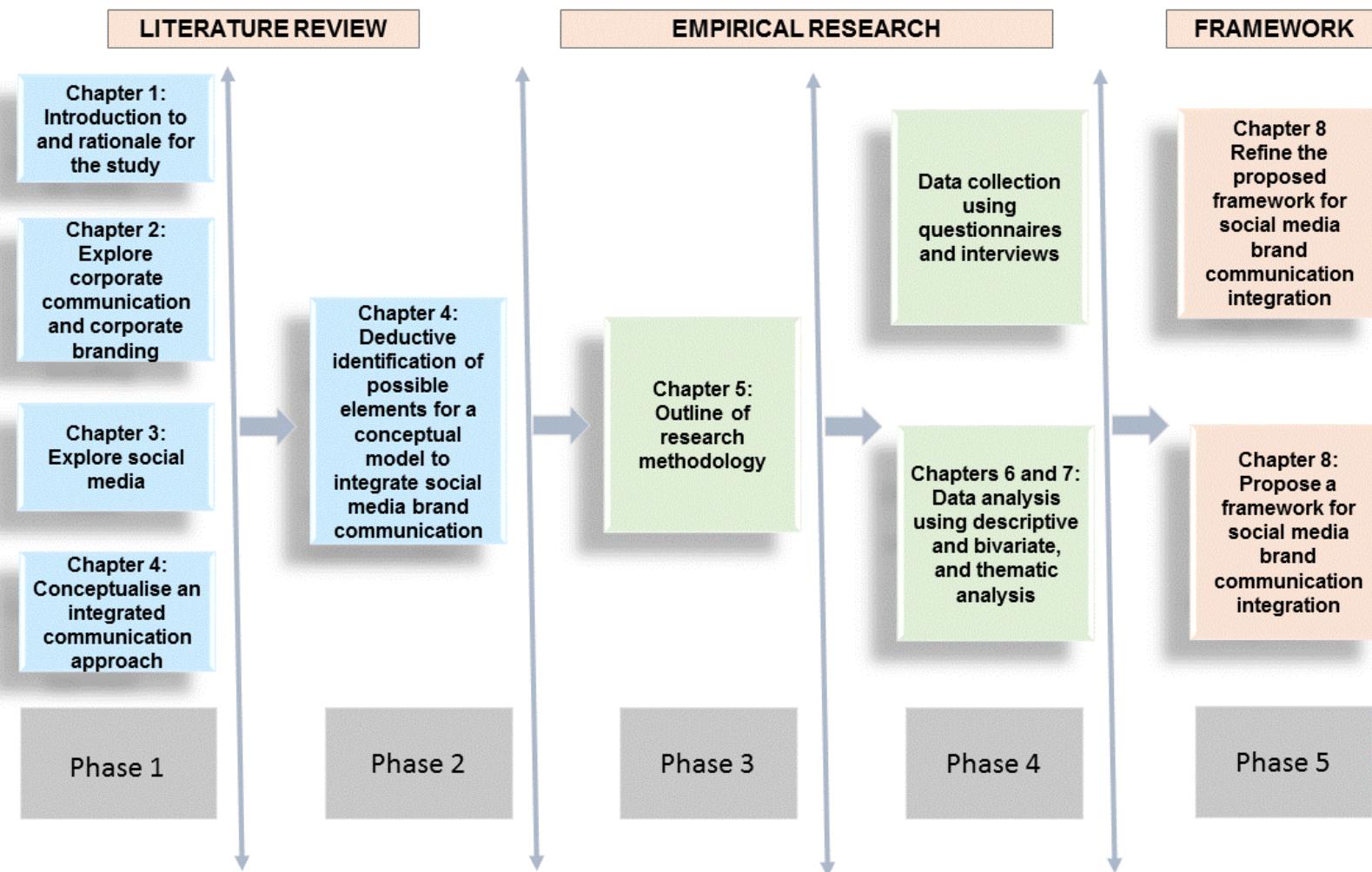


Figure 5.1: The research methodology phase of the study (phase 3)

The review of relevant literature in phases 1 and 2 revealed elements that could collectively be proposed for a conceptual framework for integrating non-profit organisations' social media brand communication. This was largely reaffirmed by investigating relevant theoretical models, identified and arranged in three broad elements depicted in table 4.5, chapter 4. These elements and references to the theoretical aspects, models and relevant sections in the theoretical review were fully described in section 4.9, chapter 4. Specific secondary research objectives and questions were formulated in section 1.5.1, chapter 1, to investigate the broad research problem. Table 5.1 below summarises the secondary research objectives, the research questions, the chapters in which they are attended to, the research method/s employed, and the research design applied thus far in the study.

Table 5.1: Secondary research objectives, research methods and research design

Secondary research objectives	Chapter	Research design
RO1: To explore the corporate brand founded on corporate communication RQ1: What aspects does the corporate brand founded on corporate communication comprise?	Chapter 2	Qualitative
RO2: To explore social media (in terms of its definitions, historical development, foundational elements and key features) in the context of non-profit organisations RQ2: What are the key elements of a social media focus in non-profit organisations?	Chapter 3	Qualitative
RO3: To describe the elements that could constitute an integrated approach to social media brand communication RQ3: What elements could an integrated approach to social media brand communication comprise?	Chapter 4	Qualitative
RO4: To explore the proposed elements of an integrated approach to social media brand communication RQ4: In what way are the proposed elements appropriate for an integrated approach to social media brand communication?	Chapter 5 Chapter 6 Chapter 7	Qualitative and Quantitative
RO5: To propose elements for the integration of social media brand communication in the non-profit sector RQ5: What are the elements for integrating social media brand communication in the non-profit sector?	Chapter 8	Qualitative

To propose elements for a conceptual framework to integrate social media brand communication, the general research problem of this study was reformulated as follows:

A cross-sectional quantitative and qualitative study to propose elements for a conceptual framework for the integration of South African non-profit organisations' social media brand communication

Gaining insight into possible elements for a conceptual framework to integrate non-profit organisations' social media brand communication, enabled the researcher to explore the ways in which the elements are presently attended to in South African non-profit organisations. This chapter explains the methodology followed, including related research considerations on which the systematic inquiry was based, in order to measure the proposed elements.

5.3 METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

This section explains the research methodology that was followed to empirically verify the proposed elements for a conceptual model for the integration of non-profit organisations' social media brand communication.

5.3.1 Pragmatism as a research approach

The approach to a research study is mainly dictated by the research approach selected which, *inter alia*, guides a study in respect of the methodology employed, the view of reality (ontology), the relationship between the researcher and the topic under investigation (epistemology) and the ethical orientation of the researcher (axiology) (cf. Chilisa & Kawulich 2012).

According to Goldkuhl (2012:2, 7), pragmatism promotes *action* as opposed to merely observing a phenomenon. As such, and in accordance with the aim of the current study to identify possible elements to integrate non-profit organisations' social media brand communication. In addition, and although not initially intended, the researcher identified specific actions that could allow these organisations to take appropriate action to improve their communication integration efforts. Hence, the *action* under investigation was the way in which non-profit organisations integrate social media when communicating with stakeholders. Underlying this point is the fact that social media promotes social connection and interaction and thus fulfils the desire of humans in this regard (see sections 3.6.1.1 and 3.6.1.3, chapter 3). In other words, a pragmatic research approach was deemed most appropriate for

investigating the integration of social media when organisations and stakeholders socially engage in real-life settings.

The point of departure in a traditional view of pragmatism is that the truth is provisional rather than a fixed or objective reality (Jacobs 2010). This view thus incorporates the notion that there are multiple views of reality, which is in a constant state of flux. Hence, bearing in mind the diversity in the non-profit sector in this country, as well as the challenges organisations in this sector face to promote their causes and create strong perceptions of their brand, the researcher's contention was that a specific paradigm such as pragmatism would be needed to explore these organisations' individual views on reality. According to Dewey (1925:40), a seminal scholar, pragmatism is a reality comprising both objective and subjective elements, or a combination thereof, which is typical of other paradigms such as the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Furthermore, a pragmatic perspective is distinguished from other approaches that advocate the existence of a single objective reality that can be determined independently of the researcher, and from those paradigms that call for the existence of multiple realities and an acknowledgement of the subjective role and perspective of the researcher in constructing multiple realities (Lichtman 2014:14; Chilisa & Kawulich 2012:55, 60; cf. Feilzer 2010:6; Terre Blanche & Durrheim 2006:6). These scholars suggest that pragmatism does not refute the existence of *reality* as such, but in fact regards it as ever changing and tentative, encompassing both objective and subjective views. Hence a pragmatic research approach does not attempt to produce knowledge that necessarily fully represents one single reality. Reality is not influenced or determined exclusively in an objective or subjective way or by the research approach adopted by the researcher. In this sense, it can be assumed to give the researcher leeway to investigate real-life issues based on the understanding that an accurate depiction of an issue or topic does not necessarily depend on or represent the most accurate depiction of reality. Pragmatism involves an *end-of-communication research perspective* that aptly questions what *practical* difference the research questions and empirical findings could make on completion of an investigation (Jensen 2010:13).

The research paradigm adopted for a particular study is deemed to be influenced by assumptions about the belief concerning the existence of single or multiple realities (ontology); considerations such as how knowledge of an aspect is gained, including, *inter alia*, the sources of knowledge and their reliability(epistemology); the methods applied (methodology); and the "value set of beliefs" of what is true and justified and that arises from our connection with things (axiology) (cf. Chilisa & Kawulich 2012:51; Terre Blanche & Durrheim 2006:6; Hiles 2008). This said, these rationales collectively typically influence the research approach a researcher

adopts to examine a topic and the methods used to gather the information (Chilisa & Kawulich 2012:52).

In the next section, the philosophical assumptions traditionally linked to research paradigms are explained, after which these assumptions are framed in accordance with the pragmatic stance adopted.

5.3.2 The philosophical rationales for this research study: epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology

The philosophical rationales typically associated with research and the paradigm selected for a research study, include *epistemology*, *ontology*, *methodology* and *axiology* (Chilisa & Kawulich 2012:51; Terre Blanche & Durrheim 2006:6; Durrheim 2006b:40). The worldview adopted by the researcher is closely linked to a particular reasoning and its underlying principles, methods and beliefs pertaining to a certain issue.

In terms of the pragmatic approach, the empirical enquiry is framed according to the ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological thinking that is also evident in other existing paradigms. These are contextualised in discussions below.

Ontology specifies the nature and form of reality, and the researcher's particular beliefs and views of a phenomenon (Byrne 2016(b); Bryman 2012:32; Bryman et al 2014:16; Terre Blanche & Durrheim 2006:6). Lichtman (2014:14) provides a simplistic explanation of ontology, namely that it is the *nature of reality*, whereas epistemology pertains to *how we get to know it* (cf. Staller 2010). The pragmatic perspective likewise thoroughly considers the *topic* under investigation in order to identify the specific methodologies needed to develop a better understanding of it (Van Grinsven 2014; cf. Hanson 2008:109).

In a more traditional view of pragmatism, as in the present instance, *ontology* acknowledges the existence of both single and multiple realities with a more pronounced slant towards explaining real-world problems. Pragmatists argue for a more profound account of how particular issues could be *useful* by attempting to show "*what it is for ... who it is for*", as opposed to being concerned with an accurate depiction of reality (Feilzer 2010:8; cf. Dennis 2011:3). Moreover, ontologically, these practical uses, as referred to by Feilzer (2010), actually determine *what* the issue or matter under investigation is. In the context of the current study, the practical uses of social media to communicate to a certain extent defined the topic, namely *what* social media brand communication *is* (cf. Dennis 2011:3). In the non-profit context, it is oriented towards solving *practical problems* experienced by organisations in this sector in

integrating their social media, which inevitably requires consideration of the topic and the selection of the most appropriate research methods.

The pragmatic approach is not prescriptive about which methodologies to apply, but is in fact focused on those that are most apt for the particular research study and topic under investigation (cf. Van Grinsven 2014). As stated in section 5.3.1 above, the approach adopted in the current study, recognised the fact that non-profit organisations have multiple views of reality that could be determined by their unique nature, stakeholders and the communication methods they deem appropriate to further their particular causes. Hence, a pragmatic view was deemed particularly apt for this study because all views were ultimately regarded as equally valid and useful to investigate the topic at hand.

Epistemology, is described as the way in which an understanding of a phenomenon can be acquired, and refers to the type of methodology and the data collection methods applied in a research study (Byrne 2016(b); Bryman 2012:27; Terre Blanche & Durrheim 2006:6; cf. Du Plooy 2002:20). Duemer and Zebidi (2009:163) concur, adding that this thinking is crucial to any given study, because it relates specifically to developing research questions and procedures to analyse the findings (cf. Burton & Bartlett 2009). According to Bryman et al (2014:12), it relates to the issue of *acceptable knowledge* – what it is or should be as a particular area of knowledge, such as communication science. Epistemology generally refers to the nature of the relationship between the researcher and reality, which in context of this study was founded on the belief that non-profit organisations have multiple views of reality and that objective truths do not exist (cf. Terre Blanche & Durrheim 2006:6).

As far as *epistemology* is concerned, pragmatists are in a sense not restricted to any particular research method mainly because of the existence of multiple realities. As Feilzer (2010:8) posits, epistemological concerns about the research methodology and data collection methods of the selected paradigm relate to the issue of the *type* of collection methods that could be employed to uncover the different aspects of a phenomenon, such as social media brand communication. Accordingly, the use of both a quantitative and a qualitative data collection method to investigate various aspects of social media brand communication from different perspectives and in more detail was deemed suitable for the current study. Hence in the context of this study, epistemology referred to the sources employed and their reliability to generate knowledge of factors such as social media brand communication and its use in an integrated fashion (cf. Staller 2010). The focus was thus not only on the selection of research methods that would most aptly investigate the phenomenon at hand, but also on the approach adopted in selecting the subset or sample from the registered non-profit organisations. This will explained in more detail in the sections to follow.

Methodology in research broadly indicates the practical ways in which a researcher studies a topic (cf. Terre Blanche & Durrheim 2006:6). It thus requires consideration of the choices relating to the types of data collection and analysis methods in a particular study. Hence methodology concerns the specific ways in which a research study is conducted. Pragmatism does not favour a particular research method/s and aims to use the most appropriate method/s to examine the existing situation (cf. Feilzer 2010:13). It basically refers to how a particular way of thinking is applied to acquire the necessary knowledge.

A possible limitation when adopting a pragmatic approach relates to the *methodological* level and which data collection methods should be used to gain a thorough understanding of the research problem (Bryman 2007:20; Duemer & Zebidi 2009:166). In other words, and in comparison with other prominent research paradigms that relate to certain research methods, a researcher adopting a pragmatic approach does not have to use specific methods to collect data. Accordingly, the use of more than one method as in this study, could be viewed as a limitation in the collection and integration of data. As Duemer and Zebidi (2009:166) contend, the use of multiple data collection methods can be both wide ranging and time consuming. Challenges in reconciling different data from multiple data collection methods, such as textual and numerical data, into an integrated research report are also mentioned (Duemer & Zebidi 2009:166; Bryman 2007:20).

Axiology or *value theory* generally refers to a researcher's set of morals or ethics (Wilson 2001:175; cf. Hiles 2008). According to Chilisa and Kawulich (2012:51), the *axiological* assumption about *what we believe is true* also influences a chosen paradigm and merits consideration. As Hiles (2008) contends, this rationale focuses directly on the value of a variety of matters such as well-being, fulfilment and knowledge. According to Bryman (2012:39; 393), because researchers cannot be expected to be totally value free or totally detached from their *personal beliefs or feelings*, they should acknowledge this and be sensitive to their position in relation to the topic under investigation. Based on the foregoing discussion, axiology appears to consider factors such as the use of a quantitative research perspective to achieve objectivity (without any *value judgements*), and the use of a qualitative research perspective that acknowledges the influence of the researcher's beliefs and background knowledge, and thus the importance of existing values (cf. Chilisa & Kawulich 2012:55; Bryman 2012:39). In this regard, one of the aims of the current study was to achieve objectivity with due recognition of the impact of the personal beliefs and feelings of the researcher when employing the online survey s and interviews.

Axiology is also concerned with the question of the *value* or *worth* of a specific investigation that demands recognition as a foundational element of a selected approach (Hiles 2008). It

thus stands to reason that the researcher needs to reflect on the merit of a given study. In relation to the present study, it is hence concerned with whether the study could be justified as being *useful* to the non-profit sector and therefore *morally fair* to conduct. Validated by the paucity of research on elements linked to social media, and communication practices and management in non-profit organisations, this study should make a contribution to the way in which social media integration could be achieved in practice.

5.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Wilson (2009), a research design is the plan to address a “set of research questions”. The purpose is to provide a framework on which the selection of the research method/s and the analysis of data are based (Yin 2014:28, 46; Rowley 2002:18; cf. Bryman 2012:46). In other words, it is a systematic plan to guide the inquiry from the phase of collecting data to that of drawing of conclusions in a particular study. A more comprehensive view is that it serves as *orientation* to conducting empirical research and as such dictates the ways in which research should be conducted and how the research results should be interpreted (Bryman et al 2014:19, 30; cf. Staller 2010).

The present study adopted a *survey research* design whereby data is collected from various sources (Mentz 2012:100). Mentz (2012:100) regards survey research as a *type* of social research that employs research methods from both the quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Bryman et al (2014:107) concur, and define *survey research* as comprising a “cross-section design to collect data by questionnaire or by structured interview”, with the specific aim of collecting quantitative or qualitative data. The researcher opted to use an *online survey* and *semi-structured interview*.

The decision to combine different data collection methods is usually prompted by the desire and need to gain a thorough understanding of the topic under investigation. Various realities influenced the current study. These included various factors such as the lack of social media theory, the dearth of research on the use of social media for communication by non-profit organisations in this country, and the need to investigate this phenomenon in as applied by the non-profit sector in practice. The primary focus to propose elements for a conceptual framework also warranted the investigation of the integration and practical application of social media in the non-profit sector.

However, the data collection methods a researcher selects should complement one another in order to gain the necessary insights (Van Grinsven 2014). Durrheim (2006b:47) concurs and maintains that by using methods from both quantitative and qualitative research, one can appreciate their strengths and weaknesses. The online survey preceded the semi-structured

interview, with the aim to explore the topic under investigation with a larger sample, followed by the interview that further explored specific issues in-depth (cf. Creswell, Clark, Gutmann and Hanson 2003:217)

Since the data collection methods selected for this study were inherently quantitative and qualitative in nature, a concise overview of these two approaches is provided in the next section.

5.4.1 Quantitative and qualitative research approaches

It is widely agreed that quantitative and qualitative research differ fundamentally in respect of their epistemological, ontological and methodological orientations, as explained in the foregoing section. The philosophical rationales that are associated with a particular research paradigm in effect prescribe certain orientations when applied in research. Of particular interest in the current study were the methodological orientations that would disclose the reasons and suitability for selecting the proposed research methods. The fact that the researcher opted to apply both a qualitative and quantitative research approach, necessitates a brief overview because such research methods have unique characteristics, foci and research paths. Both these approaches are now briefly discussed.

The quantitative research approach strives to adopt an objective view of reality as the ontological orientation and focuses mainly on the collection and interpretation of numerical data (Bryman et al 2014:31; Bryman 2012:35–36, 160; Staller 2010; Kraska 2010; Crawford 2009; Durrheim 2006:47; Terre Blanche & Durrheim 2006:6; Neuman 2006:151).

By contrast, the qualitative research approach regards reality as an unpredictable and continuously changing state created by people. It is considered to be a somewhat subjective reality mainly because of the focus on people's experiences or events to gain an understanding of social life (Bryman et al 2014:31; Durrheim & Painter 2006:132; Neuman 2006:153). This research approach focuses on examining practical concerns by collecting and interpreting non-numerical data which includes, *inter alia*, things, pictures, and spoken and written language (Bryman 2012:380; Bryman et al 2014:31; Crawford 2009; Durrheim 2006:47; Neuman 2006:151; cf. Staller 2010).

Table 5.2: Quantitative versus qualitative research approaches

Differences between qualitative and quantitative research approaches pertinent to this study	
Quantitative	Qualitative
Following a linear research path – research is structured and systematic	Following a non-linear research path – research is flexible and without a fixed sequence of steps

Appropriate to determining the extent of an issue or phenomenon	Appropriate to determining the nature of an issue or phenomenon
Numerical data – numbers and measurement	Non-numerical data – words, pictures and descriptions
Social reality as an objective reality	Social reality as a constantly shifting attribute created by people
Guided by theory and hypotheses	Aimed at the generation of theory
Drawing on large samples	Drawing on smaller samples
Neutral setting	Natural setting

Sources: Bryman et al 2014: (3, 31, 43); Lichtman (2014:17); Fouché & Delport (2011a:66); Bryman (2012:35–36); Staller (2010); Feilzer (2010:6); Crawford (2009); Creswell (2007:37–39); Ivankova, Creswell & Plano Clark (2007); Neuman (2006:152); Kumar (2005:12); Leedy & Ormrod (2005:94–97)

In line with the thinking of many seminal scholars, the quality of the research design can be judged according to specific criteria that are unique to the type of research – quantitative and/or qualitative. Researchers should therefore strive to satisfy specific criteria to ensure that their research designs are of a high standard.

5.5 TRIANGULATION

Selecting research methods inevitably involves the *logic of triangulation*, which means that research results are supported and reinforced by the use of multiple methods associated with different research paradigms (Bryman et al 2014:62; Kelly 2006:287; Rowley 2002:23). Triangulation further points to, *inter alia*, the combination of different sources of information, different methods and/or different researchers (Fox & Bayat 2007:107; Kelly 2006:287). According to Burton and Bartlett (2009), the use of triangulation to enhance validity should be of concern to all researchers regardless of the selected research paradigm (Burton & Bartlett 2009). It indicates the researcher's commitment to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular topic by approaching it from different angles using different methods, namely to triangulate by applying and using (1) different data sources, (2) different fieldworkers, (3) multiple methods, and (4) various theories (Burton & Bartlett 2009; Kelly 2006:380; cf. Yin 2014:120). To achieve triangulation, which enables the researcher to obtain different perspectives of the topic under investigation, methodological triangulation is specifically suggested for the empirical part of a study in which more than one research method is combined. The researcher thus felt that the use of triangulation would contribute to an understanding of the reality of non-profit organisations when using social media, and that this would be in accordance with a pragmatic approach.

5.6 SAMPLING DESIGN

The next section deals with the unit of analysis and time dimension, population, sampling frame and sample and sampling methods used in this study.

5.6.1 Unit of analysis and time dimension

According to Keller (2010:2), the primary unit or *unit of analysis* in a research study is probably one of the most fundamental considerations when conducting research. Adams (2008:2) concurs and describes it as the *entity* about which an inference is made. Such an entity might comprise different units of which social groups, social artefacts, individuals or organisations are examples (cf. Mouton 2002:91). In light of the aim of the present study to propose elements for a conceptual framework in South Africa, combined with the intention to determine the likelihood that these organisations would apply the proposed elements, the unit of analysis in this study was *key individuals responsible for the communication activities* in non-profit organisations in South Africa. Hence individuals working at South African non-profit organisations would serve as sources of information and would be used to investigate how the integration of social media brand communication is operationalised by non-profit organisations in South Africa. The unit of analysis thus included the respondents and participants, who were the experts responsible for the communication efforts on social media in their respective non-profit organisations, and who provided insights into how their organisations use the proposed elements.

It is also necessary to consider the *time dimension* that determines the type of study to be conducted and guides the collection and analysis of data in the empirical part of the study. Hence this study was deemed to be *cross-sectional*, which can be distinguished from longitudinal research (Bryman 2012:62–63; Bryman et al 2014:100). Cross-sectional research refers to the collection of data almost simultaneously and therefore does not examine the features of a specific phenomenon across more than one point in time (Neuman 2006:37). Moreover, cross-sectional research is commonly linked to both quantitative and qualitative research methods, which, in line with the desire to use a research method from both the traditional research paradigms, fits in well with the idea of selecting a quantitative as well as a qualitative method (Bryman et al 2014:106; Bryman 2012:59).

5.6.1.1 Population and sampling frame

A *population* is the “totality of persons, events, organisation units, case records or other sampling units with which the research problem is concerned” (Huck, Beavers & Esquivel 2010; cf. Fox & Bayat 2007:52; Strydom 2014:223). In other words, it is the larger group from which participants (interviews) and respondents (survey) of a study are selected, which for the current purposes of both the qualitative and quantitative research methods, was the total number of non-profit organisations in South Africa. A *sampling frame* is defined as the list of “all units in the population from which a sample will be selected” (Bryman 2012:187; cf. Laher

& Botha 2012:133; Maree & Pietersen 2012:147) that is a close estimation of the population (Durrheim & Painter 2006:133).

The size and geographical distribution of non-profit organisation throughout South Africa, combined with the paucity of research on the use of social media, and challenges in terms of the accuracy of the database, did not allow for the inclusion of all these organisations and necessitated the selection of the accessible population (cf. Durrheim & Painter 2006:132). For the online survey, non-profit organisations in the Prodder NGO online directory that operate in the city of Pretoria in Gauteng Province served as the *sampling frame*. The decision to focus on this city was made with consideration of the fact that the initial contact with these organisations had to be via telephone to determine whether specific selection criteria are being met, and to obtain their approval to participate in the study and disclose their email addresses. The inclusion of non-profits from other regions would have brought about considerable financial implications. From the population of 295, a sample of 230 was randomly selected. The size of the larger population of the entire country at the time of the study was 4 529. Although the organisations in the directory are classified as non-profit organisations, many in the sample indicated that they were in fact commercial organisations. The Prodder directory is managed by the Southern African NGO Network (SANGONeT). For the semi-structured interviews, 10 non-profit organisations in the Prodder directory and CharitySA database operating in the City of Johannesburg and KwaZulu-Natal Province were contacted at random and asked to participate in interviews with the researcher.

The next section deals with the sample and sampling methods in the study.

5.6.1.2 Sample and sampling methods

A sample is defined as a “subset of the population” (Huck et al 2010; cf. Strydom 2011:223–224), which is required in instances where it would be impractical to include every individual in the population in a study (Mentz & Botha 2012:203; Fox & Bayat 2007:54). Researchers often face challenges pertaining to widely dispersed individuals or organisations, limitations concerning resources or access to individuals, to name a few, which necessitate the selection of samples. The issue of sampling was pertinent to the study because the use of social media platforms by the non-profit sector in this country cannot be predicted or guaranteed. For this reason and to allow for the empirical investigation of proposed elements for social media integration, explicit *selection criteria* were set by the researcher for the selection of the sample. The rationale therefore was to ensure that the chosen organisations met the criteria and increased the possibility of obtaining the expert information needed to address the main objective of this research study. The following measures were employed to select the sample for the quantitative and qualitative phases of the empirical study, namely that the non-profit

organisation should (1) be a registered non-profit organisation; (2) be registered on the Prodder online directory; (3) be active on at least one social media platform; (4) have a dedicated person responsible for managing social media; and (4) be accessible to confirm the selection criteria (1), (2), and (3) above, and to receive a personal invitation to participate. It was therefore deemed vital for the researcher to personally contact the sample to identify non-profit organisations that would meet the selection criteria. Personal contact was deliberately used in an attempt to improve the response rate, because the use of questionnaires generally has a low response rate. These criteria were also applied to the selection of participants for the interviews, except that these individuals were not necessarily included in the Prodder directory and selected from the CharitySA database.

For the online survey, a sample of 230 out of 295 non-profit organisations was randomly selected from the directory and personally contacted by the researcher. The initial intention was to select 200 non-profit organisations, but the sampling method had to be repeated in an effort to reach more respondents who met the criteria and who were willing to participate. The following specific reasons and challenges that compelled this action, only emerged after initial contact was established with the organisations. From the outset there were various challenges, including the fact that a large number of organisations could not be reached as their telephone numbers were either incorrect or not in use. In some instances, the selected non-profit organisations in the sample informed the researcher that they were in fact not non-profit organisations. Furthermore, many organisations indicated that they did not use social media mainly because of limited resources or vacant positions. A total of 67 individuals in the City of Pretoria met the selection criteria and agreed to participate in the survey, after which the email invitation with the link to the online survey was distributed and was accessed by 50 respondents. The realised sample contained 45 respondents because five unfortunately “skipped” all the questions and did not provide any responses. In sum, 67 organisations indicated that they were non-profit organisations and met the selection criteria, with a total of 45 who actually participated. This represented a 67% response rate that was calculated as follows: those who *met the criteria and agreed to participate* and those who *completed* the survey. For the semi-structured interviews, a sample of 10 non-profit organisations was selected.

The next section focuses on the sampling methods used to select the respondents and participants for the study.

- *Random sampling*

It is widely agreed that the sampling techniques can be broadly categorised as either *probability* or *non-probability sampling*, which can be distinguished as the *random* selection of

the sample in which every individual has an equal chance, or the *non-random* selection in which not all individuals have an equal chance of being included in the sample (Bryman et al 2014:170; Laher & Botha 2012:86; Bryman 2012:181; Huck et al 2010; Fox & Bayat 2007:54, 58; Durrheim & Painter 2006:134, 139). As stated previously and in light of the distinct focus of this study on social media brand communication and the integration in non-profit organisations, particular criteria were applied to select the accessible population to investigate the proposed elements for the conceptual framework. This limited the chances of drawing a probability sample because the researcher anticipated that not all non-profit organisations would satisfy the criteria for selecting the accessible population. Moreover, the criteria set for selecting the accessible population actually implied the purposive selection of respondents who were invited to participate in survey.

For the purposes of this study, a *random sample method* was initially used to select the sample for the online survey . The sample was selected *randomly* to increase the chances of all non-profit organisations being included. However, given the fact that knowledge of the use of social media by these organisations was limited and also unknown to the researcher, the sample required further *refinement*, based on specific *selection criteria* set by the researcher and as outlined below. Random sampling was thus followed by means of a *purposive sampling* method to select a sample that was actually accessible and met the selection criteria. Research studies in South Africa in the non-profit sector are scarce and mainly unrelated to this study, which increases the challenges pertaining to sampling in this sector. In some instances, the sampling methods used in the studies are not indicated. A study by Wiggill, Naude and Fourie (2009) in the non-profit sector in this country highlighted the need to apply specific criteria to select the accessible sample from their sampling frame, but they failed to properly describe the sampling method they used. Similarly, a study by Slabbert (2012) in the private sector in South Africa, required *refinement* of the sample by applying two sampling methods to select the accessible sample. In a study by Van Grinsven (2014), this type of *refinement* is referred to as “a restrictive search” in which, after the initial sampling, a second sampling technique is used to ensure relevant data is collected.

For the *online survey*, a two-pronged approach was thus used, namely using random sampling to select the accessible population, followed by purposive sampling based on the *selection criteria* set by the researcher. The setting of selection criteria might be viewed as a constraint to the random selection of respondents, but was deemed vital to ensure that the actual sample comprised respondents who qualify in terms of experience in social media. Following the random selection, the researcher personally contacted all prospective respondents in the sample to identify the appropriate individuals responsible for communication on social media, and then to invite them to participate and obtain their email addresses. This indicates that

purposive sampling served a twofold purpose, namely to identify actual non-profit organisations, as well as those who use social media in their communication endeavours and meet the selection criteria. The criteria set by the researcher specifically aimed to select a sample to ensure that the selected respondents were *expert* communication professionals able to provide the required insights into social media brand communication integration. Respondents who are responsible for coordinating or managing the communication of a particular non-profit organisation on social media were therefore selected. Hence, the selection of the sample according to the set sampling criteria in this instance might not be regarded as being representative of the population, and as such, the findings cannot be generalised to the population. However, in terms of the explorative purpose of the study, the generalisation of the findings was not a specific objective.

Random sampling, such as in the case of the online survey, is generally associated with quantitative research aimed at generalising findings to broader population. As such, a large sample size is used to claim that the results are representative of the population (cf. Bryman et al 2014:168; Laher & Botha 2012:89; Bryman 2012:11; Ivankova, Creswell & Plano Clark 2007:255). In quantitative research a pertinent issue that merits consideration and clarification is *sample size*, which is complicated because of a lack of consensus on the minimum number of respondents required to perform statistical procedures. This said, some scholars do support the idea that a minimum of 30 respondents would be adequate for such procedures (Mentz & Botha 2011:225; Fox & Bayat 2007:61; Grinnell & Williams 1990:127). No predictions regarding the size of the sample for this study could be made because the main determining factor was the Prodder directory, and there was uncertainty about whether it is accurate and complete.

- *Purposive sampling*

Babbie, Mouton, Vorster and Prozesky (2007:184) define purposive sampling as a “type of sampling of non-probability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher’s judgment about which ones will be most useful or representative”. According to Bryman et al (2014:186), purposive sampling attempts to “sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions”. Mentz (2012:93) supports this view by stating that it normally uses “specific selection criteria to identify the most suitable individuals”. Owing to the nature of qualitative research, *purposive sampling* is often used to deliberately solicit participants for interviews, as was the case in this study (Laher & Botha 2012:93; Bryman 2012:416, 418; Fox & Bayat 2007:59; Durrheim & Painter 2006:139; Fink 2006:50; cf. Staller 2010). This type of sampling was preferable in the current study, because participants would be selected on the basis of

selection criteria, by considering the non-profit setting and with the research objectives in mind (cf. Bryman 2012:418). In this way, the participants were also selected by virtue of their availability and willingness to be interviewed.

Purposive sampling as applied to sample the respondents for the online survey was explained in the previous section.

A purposive sample method was used to select participants for the *interviews* to ensure they met the set selection criteria. After a total of 10 interviews, *data saturation* was achieved and new insights and information were obtained from the participants. Similar to the sampling for the online survey, it was vital to strategically select expert communication professionals in the non-profit sector. The *purposive* selection of the sample is recognised as a type of non-probability sampling, which, in this study, signified that the non-profit organisations in the Prodder directory and CharitySA database did not have an equal chance of being selected (cf. Fox & Bayat 2007:58). Qualitative research, unlike quantitative research, tends to use small samples, mainly because of time and cost implications (Bryman et al 2014:176; Laher & Botha 2012:87; Bryman 2012:197). Appropriate and accurate sampling appears to be regarded as a more important issue in qualitative initiatives (Laher & Botha 2012:88).

Despite the fact that the selected participants met the set criteria, except for their geographical locations, the sample might not be viewed as being representative of the accessible population or the entire group of non-profit organisations in South Africa.

In accordance with pragmatism as the guiding research approach, it stands to reason that the researcher was at liberty to select data collection methods that were deemed most suitable to investigate the integration of social media brand communication in non-profit organisations. The research method and data collection methods chosen for this study are described in the next section.

5.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

In this research study, the researcher decided to combine data collection methods from qualitative and quantitative research approaches to empirically investigate the topic at hand. In terms of the selected survey research design, the sections below outline the data collection methods selected for this study.

5.7.1 The online survey and semi-structured interview as data collection methods

An online survey and a semi-structured interview were the preferred data collection methods. The underlying rationale was to obtain a broad view by using a questionnaire to gather the expert views of a group of key individuals in non-profit organisations, and then to allow for a

more in-depth exploration of certain topics by means of interviews with experienced communication professionals in these organisations.

5.7.1.1 Online survey

Neuman (2006:43) describes a *questionnaire* simply as a research method that affords the researcher the opportunity to systematically pose identical questions to a large number of people and to record their responses (cf. Burton & Bartlett 2009). It comprises a set of questions compiled by a researcher and distributed to respondents who are required to complete it (Crawford 2009). Questionnaires are underpinned by an epistemological position that involves the collection and interpretation of numerical data, which is generally deemed to be quantitative in nature (Bryman et al 2014:31; Crawford 2009; Neuman 2006:43). In line with the nature of quantitative research, questionnaires furthermore strive to objectively collect and interpret information from large numbers of people. Singh and Burgess (2007:32) describe *online* or *web-based surveys* as a web-based data collection method that is accessed through a web browser, which allows for quick and convenient data collection and automatic downloading of responses (cf. Jansen, Corley & Jansen 2007:2). The decision to use an *online survey* was mainly determined by the advantages it provides which include a swift response, reduced costs, the electronic collection and transfer of data, the visual presentation of questions and the possibility of providing *point-and-click* responses (Singh & Burgess 2007:30). This type of data collection method, however, is limiting in that it does not allow for a more in-depth exploration or discussion of certain fundamental elements. Hence the data gathered from the online survey was supplemented by semi-structured interviews (see next section).

(a) The design of the online survey

An online survey software program, namely *SurveyMonkey* was used to design and execute the questionnaire. This web-based type of questionnaire requires respondents to complete the questionnaires themselves online – hence the designation *self-administered* questionnaires. The questionnaire was administered online and respondents were allowed access it via a link in an email invitation. The researcher was of opinion that for this study in particular, the advantages of using an online survey mainly outweighed the disadvantages, and it was deemed the most suitable method because it is the most cost-effective and a relatively easy way to distribute to a large sample (Mentz 2012:103).

(i) Types of questions used in the online survey

Questionnaires contain different types of questions that can basically be categorised as closed questions, scale-based or *ranking* questions, or open-ended questions of which *closed*

questions are commonly used to collect quantitative data (Atkinson 2012; Mentz 2012:108; Crawford 2009). Closed questions were utilised in this study for the following reasons: they present respondents with options to choose the most appropriate answer, are easier to answer, are deemed easier to process and increase the chance of comparability (Bryman et al 2014:199, 200). The main disadvantages of using closed questions for this study were that they impaired further exploration of answers and, in some instances, were restricted in that it was impossible to address all possible options (Bryman et al 2014:201). This shortcoming, however, was addressed by subsequently conducting interviews that enabled participants to freely express their views and elaborate on their answers and the topics raised in more detail. Different response formats were used that allowed the respondents "indicate/exercise" their answers when completing questionnaires, including but not limited to checklists, rankings and rating scales (see Johnson & Christensen 2014).

(ii) Response format

The response format selected for the present study was a ranking scale, namely the Likert scale. Likert scales are considered most appropriate because they are associated with self-administered questionnaires (Barnette 2010:4). The size of the Likert scale used in this study was a four-point scale, which was directional, from increasingly positive to increasingly negative (**to a great extent, somewhat, very little, not at all**). The preference for employing an even number of choices was intentional and mainly served to eliminate a neutral response by encouraging respondents to agree broadly "with" or "against" statements in the online survey (cf. Jamieson 2008:2).

Quantitative researchers are mainly concerned with external validity or generalisation and endeavour to declare that the findings apply to and represent the broader population (Bryman et al 2014:40; Bryman 2012:176). The objective of generating a representative sample, as revealed in the literature, can probably be achieved by means of probability sampling because the random selection of respondents is perceived to eliminate bias by allowing all individuals an equal chance of being selected (Bryman et al 2014:40; Bryman 2012:176). In this study, however, this was complicated by the fact that the study had a distinct focus on social media brand communication and the researcher could not accept that all non-profit organisations in South Africa had access to or used social media and would therefore be in a position to generate the required information.

To achieve the broad aim of this study, certain variables had to be measured. Field (2009:795) describes a *variable* as "anything that can be measured", and adds that it can "differ across entities or across time". The way these variables are classified will determine the measuring method to be applied. Knowledge of the way these variables are classified helps the

researcher to interpret the data and determine the most appropriate method of statistical analysis to use (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner 2012:77; Field 2009:7). Variables can be classified as either nominal, ordinal, interval or ratio and are referred to as levels of measurement. These groupings warrant brief clarification because they specifically impacted on the type of scale used in the online survey.

(b) Levels of measurement

There are four different levels of measurement ranging from the lowest to the highest precision, and these include nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio levels (Mentz & Botha 2012:77; Delport & Roestenburg 2011:178). For nominal measurement the variable should at least have two categories that are “mutually exclusive and exhaustive” (Delport & Roestenburg 2011:179). In other words, the variable should fit into only one category, such as being a non-profit organisation or not, and there should a suitable category for each case. By contrast, ordinal measurement classifies and ranks observations by categorising them from more to less, or *vice versa* (*ibid*). An interval level is a higher level of measurement and not only classifies and ranks, but also precisely indicates the intervals or distances between the ranking orders by assuming that the intervals are equal (Mentz & Botha 2012:79; Field 2009:9). Ratio levels of measurement comprise the same characteristics as interval measurement, but differ in that they have a fixed zero point (for example from 0 to 10), which allows for conclusions to be drawn about to what extent an object is faster than the rest (Field 2009:9). To illustrate this point, one could say that a ratio level measurement allows one to say how much faster one non-profit organisation would respond to social media conversations than the next.

Ordinal measurement was mainly used in this study. As explained above, this type of measurement *orders* categories by ranking them according to the numerical values assigned to them, say, from a high to a low occurrence. This provides clarity on the occurrences, in which order they took place, and indicates their positions relative to one another (Mentz & Botha 2012:78; Delport & Roestenburg 2011:178–179; Field 2009:9). Likert scales are deemed to be an ordinal level of measurement and were mainly employed to investigate the elements to integrate social media brand communication (Barnette 2010:6). The main purpose of these scales is to measure people’s perceptions and opinions, *inter alia*, by making statements and asking respondents to rate the extent to which they agree with the statements (Barnette 2010:2; Jamieson 2008:2). A biographical and demographic section was included in the questionnaire. According to Maree and Pietersen (2012:148), biographical data may also be classified as ordinal because the answers could be provided in a particular order, as was done in this study.

(c) Reliability and validity of the findings of the online survey

According to Bryman et al (2014:36–39), the criteria to be considered when forming an opinion on the quality of quantitative research designs include *reliability*, *replication* and *validity*.

Reliability is defined as “the consistency of a measure of a concept (Yin 2014:240; Mentz & Botha 2012:80; Bryman 2012:169; Fox & Bayat 2007:145) and “the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable” (Yin 2014:46; Botha 2012:46; Burton & Bartlett 2009; cf. Delport & Roestenburg 2014:177; Neuman 2006:196). A concept can be explained as the *labels* that people assign to “elements of the social world” (Bryman et al 2014:33; Neuman 2006:189) that share common features and are regarded as noteworthy. In quantitative research, concepts are usually expressed as *independent variables* that may contribute to the causes or circumstances, or as *dependent variables*, which include the aspects that warrant further investigation as result of the independent variables (cf. Field 2009:7). Miles and Banyard (2007) aptly describe reliability as whether or not a “test measures something well”. It mainly refers to three factors, namely the *stability* of a measure over time so that the results are consistent when repeated or retested by following the same procedure (Yin 2014:48; Miles & Banyard 2007; cf. Bryman et al 2014:36); the *internal reliability* or consistency of the indicators that make up an index or scale; and *inter-observer reliability* which refers to whether multiple observers are consistent when used to record observations (Bryman et al 2014:37; Miles & Banyard 2007). The value of obtaining reliability is, inter alia, to ensure consistent measurement and to contribute to more accurate calculation of relationships between concepts (Bryman et al 2014:33–34). Section 5.7.1.1(e) discusses the Cronbach alpha coefficient, which was used to determine the reliability of the research method.

Reliability is often mentioned in conjunction with the issue of the degree to which findings can be replicated (Lichtman 2014:385). According to Bryman (2012:47), *replication* refers to the exact repetition of a particular study that will yield similar findings to those of the initial study (Yin 2014; Lichtmann 2014). The value of repeating a research study could underscore the significance of a finding and is perceived to be scientific evidence of research (Tredoux & Smith 2006:237; Fox & Bayat 2007:107).

Validity mainly refers to the “degree to which the research conclusions are sound” (Van der Riet & Durrheim 2006:90), and whether it actually measures what it set out to measure (Mentz & Botha 2012:80; Miles & Banyard 2007). The main types of validity include *measurement validity*, *internal validity*, *external validity* and *ecological validity*. *Measurement validity* pertains to how well the research really measures what the researcher intended to investigate, and it is often referred to as *construct validity* (Yin 2014:45; Bryman 2012:170,171; Bryman et al 2014:38; Burton & Bartlett 2009; Neuman 2006:192). *Internal validity* is concerned with causal

relationships and concluding whether one variable really has a particular effect on another (Fox & Bayat 2007:80; cf. Yin 2014:46). *External validity* refers to the generalisation of research results (Bryman 2012:47; Fox & Bayat 2007:80; cf. Yin 2014:46). Put differently it questions whether, based on the research results, one can accept that the findings represent the views of the whole group (Bryman 2012:47; Bryman et al 2014:26). The last type – *ecological validity* – relates to real-life settings and whether the research captures what happens in the everyday lives of people (Bryman 2012:48). In the current study, the purpose of this type of validity was to practically navigate non-profit organisations' integration of social media brand communication (cf. Smith 2013:70). The question it posed basically related to whether the scientific findings or results of the research study would have a bearing on the daily and real-life activities of non-profit organisations when integrating social media brand communication. This was deemed apposite for the study because the aim was to propose elements for to integrate brand communication on social media platforms, to investigate the authentic use of social media by non-profit organisations, and finally, to validate the suggested elements.

According to Bryman (2012:173), reliability and validity are closely related, and if the measure is not reliable it cannot be assumed to be valid. In the current study, a definite effort was made to ensure the internal or construct validity of the questionnaire, as indicated in table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Measurement validity of the online survey

Element 1: Fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication by non-profit organisations	Online survey
• Social media presence • Communication strategy	Section A: Items 2 to 6
Element 2: Avenues of social media integration – use of social media to integrate at various levels	
• Stakeholder integration • Social media content • Social media brand communication mix • Social media in conjunction with traditional media • Interaction through media convergence	Section B: Items 7 to 18
Element 3: The attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration	
• A social listening orientation • Community • Environmental and cross-functional integration • Management of synergy and consistency of communication endeavours by a multi-skilled communicator or a team of coordinators • Evaluation	Section C: Items 19 to 32
Biographical and demographic data	Section D: Items 33 to 36

(d) Pretesting the online survey

Since the pretesting of the online survey could have influenced the validity of the online survey, it was piloted and improved prior to implementation. Subsequent to an in-depth scrutiny by the supervisor, the co-supervisor of the study and the statistician who worked with the questions in both research methods, the online survey was pretested among registered members of the non-profit sector. During pretesting, the communication professionals from the non-profit organisations were requested to identify ambiguous, leading and vague questions, and this afforded the researcher the opportunity to improve the content validity and determine the approximate time it would take to complete the questionnaire. Suggestions and comments about questions that were ambiguous and unclear were considered and used to improve the research methods. The respondents involved in the pretesting were not included in the sample. The adapted research method was finally scrutinised by the supervisor and co-supervisor, and input from the statistician was also obtained and any issues then addressed. Finally, the online survey was professionally edited and implemented.

The founder and CEO of a well-established non-profit organisation who fulfils the requirements of the selection criteria was firstly invited to access and assess the questionnaire online. The first issue that was highlighted was the perceived repetition in some of the questions that referred to individuals/teams and the management of social media. This concern was addressed by combining questions and therefore reducing the number of references to this issue. Another issue that was commented on was the mention of *planning* in two questions. This concern was not deemed to be particularly problematic as the questions addressed two separate issues, namely the use of a *media content plan* and the *use of online scheduling tools* that respectively allow for planning social media *postings* and the social media *content*. A final issue mentioned was the question about *timely responses* that could have been stated more clearly. The question was subsequently reworded to read as follows: *My organisation responds to social media mentions, tweets and posts of stakeholders at least once a day*. The adapted online survey was then finally tested by a communication consultant with broad experience in all sectors, including the non-profit sector.

(e) Data analysis and interpretation of the findings in the online survey

As stated previously, the level of measurement in the questionnaire largely determined the type of data analysis to perform. Correspondingly, factors such as the number of respondents, expectations in respect of generalisation and the purpose of the statistical tests required consideration in the selection of the most appropriate test/s to analyse the data (Pett 2008:2, 3, 10).

The literature suggests that parametric and non-parametric tests are the two broad types of tests available to analyse data (Pett 2008:10). The rule of thumb is that to be able to apply parametric tests, four assumptions have to be met: (1) the data must be normally distributed; (2) there must be homogeneity of variance, which means that when one tests many groups of individuals, each sample should be selected from populations with the same variance; (3) the level of measurement should be at the interval level – in other words intervals on the scale should be equal (e.g. the interval between 1 and 2, and 4 and 5 on the scale should be the same); and (4) the responses should be independent, which basically means that one respondent's answer or response should not depend on that of another (Field 2009: 9, 133, 149; cf. Tredoux & Smith 2006:218–218). If these assumptions are violated, non-parametric testing as an alternative should be considered. In the context of the current study, the sampled data suggested that the normality assumption was indeed violated, which necessitated the use of non-parametric tests to analyse the quantitative data. Non-parametric tests proved extremely useful because the study employed an independent random sampling technique that was applied to select the respondents, and the further refinement thereof identified only those organisations that met the selection criteria, and also mainly yielded ordinal level data (cf. Pett 2008:10).

Descriptive statistics are generally used in quantitative research and are used to interpret and explain the data by *describing* coherently (Fouché & Bartley 2014:252; Mentz & Botha 2012:177). The findings for the questionnaire are aptly reported and summarised in chapter 6, and deal with the median, means and frequencies. In addition, *inferential statistics* were used to identify possible general trends and correlations in the data, relating to the identified elements and theoretical elements. According to Field (2009:49), *inferential statistics* are useful to confirm or reject predictions about a certain issue. It is furthermore acknowledged that although it is impossible to say with absolute certainty that a hypothesis is correct, it does indicate the probability of such a conclusion (Field 2009:49). Inferential statistics thus test null (H_0) hypotheses, determine differences between and within certain groups, and allow for non-parametric tests (Mentz & Botha 2012:203).

In quantitative research, specific tests are used to analyse the gathered data. The following tests were employed to analyse the gathered data:

(i) *Cronbach's alpha coefficient*

In quantitative research, *consistency*, also referred to as *reliability*, is essential to determine the stability of a measurement procedure (cf. Bonnet & Wright 2014:3; Delport & Roestenburg 2011:177; Barnette 2010:7; see section 5.7.1.1(c)). The Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire as a research method. According to Delport

and Roestenburg (2011:178), *reliability* is mainly concerned with what is measured and *how well* it is measured, which contributes to dependable and consistent research results. There is consensus that no universal rule exists regarding the value range of the Cronbach coefficient, and it is broadly acknowledged that it ranges between -1 and 1 (cf. Bonnet & Wright 2014:4). Values below 0.6 are largely considered to represent unacceptable reliability, values between 0.6 and 0.7 are regarded as acceptable reliability and values equal to 0.8 and higher are deemed to indicate excellent reliability (cf. Bonnet & Wright 2014:5).

(ii) Pearson correlation coefficient

Correlation coefficient calculations, of which the Pearson coefficient is an example, measure the *strength of the relationships* between variables (Durrheim 2006:96; Fouché & Delport 2011:63). In this study, Pearson's method was used to calculate the correlation coefficients in order to determine the relationships between the variables in the questionnaire and the *strength* thereof (Field 2009:57; Fouché & De Vos 2011:96). It was essential for the researcher to determine the relationships between the elements and theoretical elements that emerged from related literature, as identified in chapters 2 to 4.

(iii) Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA by ranks test

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is generally used to compare multiple groups (McKnight & Najab 2010; Tredoux & Smith 2006:227). ANOVA is regarded as the alternative to the parametric t-test and was used to compare the different positions that the respondents who managed social media hold, the number of years they were responsible for social media and the approaches they followed when planning communication on these platforms.

Table 5.4 below identifies the process followed to design and implement the online survey.

Table 5.4: The strategy followed for the design and implementation of the online survey

ONLINE SURVEY PROCESS
<p>Design and pilot the questionnaire</p> <p>Use the Prodder directory of non-profit organisations in Pretoria to identify and remove organisations that do not meet the selection criteria before the sampling process (examples include: high commissions, embassies, unions and information that was duplicated in the database)</p> <p>Randomly select respondents from the Prodder directory based on the selection criteria</p>
<p>Before the implementation of the survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research all organisations that were sampled on the Prodder directory to confirm their non-profit status and obtain telephone contact details • Telephonically contact every organisation to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • determine whether it uses social media • determine who the person responsible for social media is • personally invite them to participate in the questionnaire and obtain email addresses

Implementation of questionnaire
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise and send the email invitation with the link to online survey • Conduct regular follow-ups with the respondents who agreed to participate (telephonically and per email) • Monitor the responses on SurveyMonkey
Following completion of data gathering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download data and export survey data to Microsoft Excel format • Discuss with statistician for statistical analysis • Use the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) program for the statistical analysis of the data • Present and interpret findings and make inferences, and on the basis of these, draw certain conclusions in the context of the study (chapter 6)
The statistical tests are specified in the paragraphs directly preceding the table
Reporting of the findings (chapter 6)

After establishing the pertinent issues relating to the online survey as a quantitative data collection method and how the data was statistically analysed and interpreted, the researcher tackled the issue of the 10 semi-structured interviews that were conducted with experienced communication professionals working in non-profit organisations.

5.7.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview was deemed a fitting research method in the current research setting to explore the elements and theoretical aspects of integrated social media brand communication in more depth (see section 4.8, chapter 4). An interview is regarded as a “social interaction between people based around the process of asking and answering questions” (Crawford 2009; cf. Nieuwenhuis & Smit 2012:133). Conducting interviews affords the researcher the opportunity to interact with participants in a less structured way (cf. Bryman 2012:470; Neuman 2006:305). Interviews are different from questionnaires because they allow face-to-face interaction. The main advantage of an interview is that it allows for further exploration of topics contained in the online survey (cf. Bryman et al 2014:201)

The aim of this empirical phase of the study was to investigate a relatively unknown concept, with the focus primarily on gathering information directly from the participants, which is possible through interviews (cf. Lichtman 2014:246; Bryman 2012:471). Even though the research interview is associated with qualitative and quantitative research approaches, for the purposes of the current study, interviews with individuals in non-profit organisations were approached from a qualitative perspective allowing for personal interaction and to explore certain elements associated with the integration of social media brand communication (Bryman 2012:209). The interview is widely acknowledged as a research method that enables a researcher to engage in conversation or dialogue with a participant, and as such it is considered to be a “conversation with a purpose” (Lichtman 2014:246) to collect information from a participant or participants on the topic at hand (cf. Thomas 2016:189). This said, the

concept of *conversation* is not the same as an ordinary conversation, but in fact emphasises the *conversational style* adopted by the researcher and participant during an interview. Qualitative interviewing focuses on the participants' perspectives on a particular topic that allows for flexibility to address significant issues as they are raised (cf. Bryman 2012:470; Staller 2010).

The literature reveals different types of research interviews, such as structured, semi-structured and in-depth or unstructured interviews, in qualitative research. A distinction between these types is seemingly based on varying degrees of formality and differences in the approach adopted by the researcher during each interview (Lichtman 2014:246; Yin 2014:248; Bryman 2012: 209, 212, 469; cf. Staller 2010). The structured interview is generally regarded as a highly standardised and structured process during which participants are not required or allowed to explain or elaborate on a specific point or question (Burton & Bartlett 2009). Semi-structured and unstructured interviews are regarded as more flexible and allow in-depth exploration of certain issues by the researcher and participant (Burton & Bartlett 2009). The focus is mainly on the participant's own account of a particular matter (cf. ibid). During unstructured interviews, the researcher uses notes as reminders of the topics that need to be investigated. The participant is permitted to answer and elaborate freely, and the researcher responds only to points that merit elaboration (cf. Lichtman 2014:248; Bryman 2012:471).

(a) Design of the interview guide

The questions in the interview guide were purposely formulated to guide the conversation and to ensure it stayed within the boundaries of the set elements for integrating social media brand communication. The broad research problem of the study and the research questions in section 5.2 above served as the foundation for the formulation of the questions (cf. Nieuwenhuis & Smit 2012:133). Bryman (2012:471) describes an *interview guide* as a document that provides some structure during interviews because it serves as a reminder of the topics that need to be addressed, and also enables the researcher to ask the same questions and use the same wording during interaction with each participant (cf. Thomas 2016:190; Nieuwenhuis & Smit 2012:133). It also aims to ensure that relevant topics and issues are addressed, in what sequence, and "hot" questions and follow-ups are posed. An interview guide for semi-structured interviews allows participants some latitude in how they reply and concurrently provides opportunities for researchers to follow up on elements not included in the interview guide, but raised during the conversations.

(i) Types of questions used in the interview guide

Since semi-structured interviews do not have a formal structure, it is fitting to use open-ended questions. Participants can therefore provide more detailed information, and this enables researchers to explore certain elements in depth (Mentz 2012:108, 109). The interview guide for this study commenced with an introductory question: “Please tell me about your position in the organisation”, which was followed by a combination of follow-up, probing, directing and interpreting questions that enabled the researcher to explore and clarify topics raised during the interview (cf. Bryman 2012:476, 478)

The purpose of the interviews was to complement the findings in the online survey, to address possible gaps and to allow a more in-depth investigation of pertinent issues. Ten interviews were conducted. For the interviews, the researcher decided to broaden the scope with regard to the geographical area to include *five* participants from the wider Gauteng region and *one* participant from the KwaZulu-Natal region. *Four* participants from the Pretoria region were selected, of which three could arguably be classified as small non-profit organisations, based on the size of their communication departments. The rationale for obtaining a broader view was to allow for a more in-depth investigation of the topic with expert communication professionals. In all instances, the interviewees are responsible for the management and coordination of the communication activities of the non-profit organisations on social media. The *seven* larger non-profit organisations (five from Johannesburg, one from KwaZulu-Natal and one from Centurion) were deliberately selected from outside the Pretoria region to allow for a comparison between the larger and smaller non-profit organisations, largely to determine whether any similarities or differences between the two groups could be identified. The larger organisations had significantly more staff in their communication departments and a more formal hierarchical structure. All the participants met the selection criteria set for the online survey, except for the seven participants from outside the Pretoria region and one participant in Pretoria who was not included in the Prodder directory for Pretoria. These organisations were not invited to complete the online survey.

Qualitative research designs, like quantitative research designs, should consider specific criteria to determine the quality of the research design such as *credibility*, *transferability* and *dependability* (Bryman et al 2014:44–45).

(b) Credibility, transferability and dependability of the findings of the semi-structured interviews
The different criteria used to measure the quality of qualitative studies include factors such as *credibility*, *transferability* and *dependability* (Bryman et al 2014:44-45; Van der Riet & Durrheim

2006:90–92). These came into play at this point because semi-structured interviews as a qualitative research method were conducted in this study.

In qualitative research, *credibility* can loosely be linked to validity in quantitative research, in that it claims to produce convincing and believable results (Van der Riet & Durrheim 2006:90–91). As stated earlier, the pretesting of endeavours or methods to understand phenomena as they occur in real-world settings compels the researchers to consider *triangulation*, which is defined as “collecting material in as many different ways and forms and from as many diverse sources as possible” (Kelly 2006:287; cf. Bryman et al 2014:45). The purpose of using multiple methods to collect data from different sources is to understand real-life occurrences from different perspectives, which ultimately contributes to the credibility of the research findings (cf. Kelly 2006:287). Specific topics in the online survey were identified for further exploration in the interviews. Owing to time constraints, not all the theoretical aspects of the elements could be included in the interview guide.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that the selected participants met the set selection criteria, except for their geographical locations, the sample might not be viewed as being representative of the accessible population or the entire group of non-profit organisations in South Africa.

Table 5.5: Measurement credibility of the semi-structured interviews

Element 1: Fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication by non-profit organisations	Interview
• Social media presence • Communication strategy	Section A: Questions 2, 3, 4 & 6
Element 2: Avenues of social media integration – use of social media to integrate at various levels	
• Stakeholder integration • Social media content • Social media brand communication mix	Section B: Questions 5, 7, 8, 9 & 10
Element 3: The attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration	
• Evaluation	Section C: Question 11
Biographical and demographic data	Section D: Question 1

According to Kelly (2006:92), *transferability* in qualitative research is achieved by the provision of rich and detailed accounts of specific contexts. Contrary to quantitative research, which focuses on the generalisation of research findings, qualitative research acknowledges the existence of various meanings in human interaction and does not particularly seek

generalisability as such (Bryman et al 2014:45; Kelly 2006:91). It would thus be fair to say that owing to the lack of knowledge about the sector and a proper classification of the non-profit organisations, one could not expect the findings for the interviews to represent the views of the broader population. Nevertheless, the findings of the interviews would yield valuable insights into the different realities of the non-profit organisations that participated.

Bryman et al (2014:45) compare *dependability* in qualitative research to reliability in quantitative research, and assert that, in essence, it refers to the extent to which findings can be repeated (cf. Kelly 2006:92). The challenge posed in this present study was that a pragmatic stance acknowledges the existence of multiple realities that are constantly in flux and that therefore seemingly cannot be repeated because of changing contexts.

Adding to the criteria that were discussed and applied above, a strategic approach was adopted to ensure that the interviews were of an acceptable quality. This is indicated in figure 5.2 below.

Figure 5.2: The interview strategy used to ensure quality interviews

-
- Ensure internal validity by ensuring that all questions address the theoretical criteria
 - Prepare and pilot the interview guide
 - Personally invite the participants and schedule the interview
 - Arrive on time
 - Develop rapport with the participants by means of an introduction, and make eye contact throughout the interview
 - Discuss the participant form and assure participants about anonymity, confidentiality issues and obtaining permission to record the session
 - Ensure an atmosphere that allows participants to answer on their own terms
 - Clarify or explain questions when necessary by rephrasing or referring to an example
 - Employ interview strategies by probing, confirming and clarifying
 - Use a audio recorder to allow for attentive listening and interaction during the interview
 - Use a professional transcriber to promote validity and ensure accuracy
 - Take notes

(c) *Pretesting the interview guide*

As stated previously, pretesting the data collection methods relates to validity or *credibility* as in the case of interviews. After the supervisor and co-supervisor had scrutinised the interview guide, it was tested by a communication professional employed in the non-profit sector. The request was to identify ambiguous, leading and vague questions to improve the credibility of the data collection method and to determine the approximate time it would take to complete. No suggestions or comments regarding questions were raised. The participant involved in the pretesting was not included in the sample. The adapted data collection method was finally inspected by the supervisor and co-supervisor. The interview guide was then professionally edited and implemented. Table 5.5 above indicated the researcher's efforts to ensure the credibility of the interviews.

(d) *Data analysis of the semi-structured interviews*

All the interviews were recorded with permission, transcribed and followed by the scanning and categorising of the participants' perspectives. The services of a professional transcriber were intentionally used to promote validity and accuracy. Qualitative data analysis is defined as the "... nonnumerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships" (Babbie 2007:378). This kind of analysis can be conducted in various ways and there is no single correct way of doing it (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos 2014:400).

The interviews were analysed using *thematic analysis*, which is a systematic approach used to identify themes in the transcripts, code the data and interpret the themes by exploring relationships, commonalities and the like (Byrne 2016(a):2; Lichtman 2014:323,3324; Bryman et al 2014:350–351; Lapadat 2010:2).

Owing to the perceived *flexibility* of thematic analysis, no particular qualitative data analysis approach was adopted, and the researcher opted for a combination of the approaches by Lapadat (2010), Braun and Clarke (2006), and Ryan and Bernard (2003). Table 5.6 below depicts the phases in which the interview data was analysed.

Table 5.6: Phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description of process
1. Familiarise oneself with the data	Transcribe the data, and interact and familiarise oneself with the data through a preliminary scanning of the transcripts (reading, rereading, and developing initial interpretations)
2. Search for themes	Deductively identify themes according to the interview guide and by seeking recurring topics. The interview guide served as point of departure, basically to keep within the boundaries of the topics raised in the questions and to remain focused on the identified and theoretical aspects that were likewise investigated

	through the questionnaire. Relevant data was marked by considering repetitions of topics. The responses were identified and noted, and recurring topics were categorised in table format.
3. Review and name the themes	Consider the elements and ensure the topics that were raised are correctly categorised
4. Identify and tabulate emerging topics	All issues and topics were classified as <i>emergent</i> if they were Raised they were raised by the participants and were related to the broad research topics, but not pertinently investigated during the interviews
5. Compile the report	Select compelling extract examples, relating back to the research questions, and write the research report

Table 5.7 below outlines the overall strategy followed for the design and implementation of the interviews, including factors relating to the achievement of credibility, and the interview guide, as explained in section 5.3.5.2.(b) above.

Table 5.7: The strategy followed for the design and implementation of the semi-structured interview

INTERVIEW PROCESS AND INTERVIEW GUIDE	
Purposively select participants based on selection criteria and prominence in the non-profit sector	
Before the interview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal invitation • Participation information sheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephonic invitation to participate in the interview • Scheduling of interviews and confirmation • Email to participant before interview to obtain his or her informed consent
During the interview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • record the interviews • make notes to record only main points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retrieve signed consent from the participant thereby obtaining permission to record the interview • thank participant for his or her participation and start with the introductory question • 10 questions were put to participants – asking factual questions before probing, directing or interpreting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductory question: Please tell me about your position in the organisation. 2. What are the main challenges when using social media? 3. In your opinion, which basic aspects should be in place when using social media to communicate with your stakeholders? 4. Who is ultimately responsible for coordinating decisions around the <i>types</i> of social media to use and the <i>content</i> on these platforms? 5. Which document/s is/are used when planning social media initiatives?

	<p>6. How does your organisation ensure that it aligns its values with those of the community? Is it at all a priority?</p> <p>7. How does your organisation <i>source content</i> for social media platforms? Do you deliberately ask stakeholders for contributions?</p> <p>8. Do you combine video, voice, visuals and data on social media platforms? For example, using a <i>Youtube</i> video in a tweet, or using <i>periscope</i> for live video streaming of an event. If so, please provide an example. If not, is there a specific reason?</p> <p>9. In your opinion, what is the main benefit of social media for your organisation – to distribute information or to engage in dialogue?</p> <p>10. Does your organisation have a database of stakeholders? Is it at all possible in a social media environment? If so, which stakeholders does it focus on? If not, what are the reasons? How do you combine traditional and social media?</p> <p>11. How does your organisation evaluate the success or failure of its social media activities?</p>
Concluding the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for additional comments • Thank participant for his or her time and input
Transcribing recordings and analysing data (chapter 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse the transcriptions according to the themes in the interview guide
Reporting the findings (chapter 7)	

Of relevance to the analysis of qualitative data is surely consideration of the involvement of more than one person in the analysis of qualitative data. Cho (2008:2) terms this issue *intercoder reliability*, and defines it as the “extent to which two or more independent coders agree on the coding of the content”. This issue mainly concerns the interpretation of the research data by more than one person. However, in the current study, only the researcher was involved in recording and analysing the collected qualitative data, which did not require the involvement of more than one coder.

5.8 SUMMARY

This chapter highlighted the research methodology deemed most suitable to gain insight into the real-life integration of social media by non-profit organisations in South Africa.

The use of pragmatism as a guiding research approach was justified against the background of specific realities that influenced this study, such as the paucity of social media theory, the lack of research on social media brand communication in the non-profit sector, and the need

to investigate the real-life application of social media when communicating with stakeholders of non-profit organisations.

Furthermore, the various considerations relating to a research study were justified. In the context of this study, the use of random purposive sampling, online survey, semi-structured interviews, and appropriate analysis methods was comprehensively discussed and justified.

The methodological approach adopted served to ascertain how the non-profit sector incorporates the identified elements and theoretical aspects of social media brand communication by focusing on how this is currently done in these organisations. The findings of the empirical part of the study are discussed and interpreted in chapters 6 and 7, which also deal with the reporting and interpretation in context of the quantitative research and qualitative research, respectively.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS OF THE ONLINE SURVEY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The research approach for the empirical part of this study was explained in the preceding chapter and subsequently implemented. At this stage and after completing the online survey and semi-structured interviews, the researcher dealt with the findings of the data collected. This chapter focuses on discussing and interpreting the findings of the quantitative research, namely the online survey.

This chapter, in conjunction with the chapter 7, addresses the following research objective:

To explore the proposed elements of an integrated approach to social media brand communication

The aim is therefore to interpret and report the **quantitative findings** and answer RQ4, namely to investigate *in what ways are the proposed elements appropriate for an integrated approach to social media brand communication?*

This chapter is set out as follows: Firstly, the biographical and demographic data is presented. Secondly, the responses of the respondents per item are stated and interpreted using descriptive statistics (mean, median and frequencies) and one-way frequency calculations. Thirdly, the results of the Cronbach coefficient alpha test and Pearson's correlation coefficient test are reported and interpreted in order to establish the internal reliability and thus the strength of the linear associations, per element. Determining the internal consistency of the items per element and for the sections as a whole was deemed vital to obtain statistical evidence of whether these could be grouped together. Fourthly, the overall internal reliability for *each individual section* is reported. The sections and items in the questionnaire represent the elements derived from the literature review (chapters 2 and 3) and analysis of specific communication models (chapter 4). Lastly, the data is interpreted by means of inferential statistics in order to determine the correlations between respondents in the most prominent positions, the different years of experience, and the approaches towards communication planning, by means of the Kruskal-Wallis test and two-way frequency calculations.

Chapter 7 deals with the findings of the qualitative research, namely the interviews conducted with experienced communication professionals working in the non-profit sector in South Africa.

The findings for the quantitative section of the empirical study (the online survey) were statistically interpreted using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) software program.

The online survey explored the proposed elements for a conceptual framework in the following four sections: Section A: Fundamental aspects of integrating social media brand communication; Section B: How social media can take place; Section C: Requirements to achieve and maintain social media brand communication integration; and Section D: Biographical and demographic data. Addendum B provides the full and final questionnaire that was administered. The questionnaire was arranged according to the elements illustrated in table 6.1 below. These items emerged from the literature review of key concepts typical to the study, such as social media and its key elements, IC and various theoretical models that were relevant to the topic and main objective of the study. Each element comprises specific theoretical aspects that were explored and for which the results are analysed and interpreted in this chapter.

Table 6.1: Arrangement of elements and items in the questionnaire

Section A (element 1): Fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication	Items
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media presence • Communication strategy 	2 to 4 5 to 6
Section B (element 2): Avenues of social media integration – use of social media to integrate at various levels	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder integration • Social media content • Social media brand communication mix <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media in conjunction with traditional media • Interaction through media convergence 	17 to 18 7 to 13 14 to 16
Section C (element 3): The attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A social listening orientation • Community • Environmental and cross-functional integration • Management of synergy and consistency of communication endeavours by an individual or team of coordinators • Evaluation 	19 to 21 22 – 25 26 to 28 29 30 to 32

As stated in section 5.3.5.1, chapter 5, a Likert scale comprising certain statements was employed in the questionnaire that requested respondents to select the option that *best describes* how a certain aspect (as per a neutral statement) is practised by their organisations. It could not be assumed that all the statements would fully represent the exact way in which the non-profit organisations practise social media. The focus was thus on obtaining an indication of *likelihood* that the proposed elements and theoretical aspects are attended to by

these organisations. The present study should be valuable in filling the gap in the existing research on the question of social media integration in non-profit organisations in this country, by soliciting the input of expert communication professionals responsible for social media in this sector.

Section D investigated the specific characteristics of the population who provided the data on which the empirical findings of the quantitative research would be based. In this section, the population was conceptualised in the context of the study.

6.2 SECTION D: BIOGRAPHICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The researcher specifically endeavoured to collect information that could impact on the way that social media brand communication is integrated in South African non-profit organisations, in order to

- gain insight into the different roles that the people responsible for social media management and coordination fulfil in the organisation
- statistically determine whether there are significant differences in the ratings of respondents for all the elements and items in the questionnaire, according to (1) their position/s, (2) their years of experience, and (3) the approach followed when planning social media initiatives.

Considering the two broad types of data analysis tests explained in chapter 5 and the assumptions that need to be met for parametric analysis, it became evident that non-parametric testing would be best suited to this part of the study (Field 2009:18,133; cf. Pett 2008:10). The reasons for using non-parametric analysis included the fact that data is not normally distributed, the present level of measurement is mostly ordinal and does not have equal interval levels, and lastly, more than one group would be compared. The Kruskal-Wallis test, which is the non-parametric equivalent of the parametric t-test procedure, was used to compare the different groups in section D, and in so doing establish whether mean differences existed between the responses of the different groups in relation to (1), (2) and (3) in the preceding paragraph.

Section D consisted of four items (33 to 36) and the frequencies relating to the biographical and demographic data will first be reported in the next section, followed by a report with the descriptive statistics based on the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test to ascertain if there were differences in the responses of the different groups.

Item 33 asked respondents to indicate their current position in the organisation. An overview of the organisational structures that are typically associated with the non-profit sector revealed

the following positions: Chief Executive Officer/Executive Chairman, operations executive, marketing manager, public relations practitioner, and project manager. These were provided as options in the item, including an option to select “Other (please specify)” to allow the respondents to identify alternative positions. The respondents were furthermore allowed to select more than one option, if applicable, to ascertain whether communication professionals in non-profit organisation are required to fulfil more than one position. It was interesting to note that only 41 of those who responded answered this item, which raised uncertainty about the possible reasons for not providing an answer.

Of significance was the unexpected number of “other” roles and the fact that many respondents were fulfilling more than one role, which required the researcher to regroup the respondents, for the present use, in such a way as to allow for actual calculations. Table 6.2 lists the five groupings that were used for purposes of this study, showing the different positions each comprised. These groups were used to determine possible differences between the responses of the identified groups below.

Table 6.2: Different positions held in non-profit organisations

Role		N
Executive management	CEO/executive chairperson, director, manager	7
Marketing	Marketing manager, creative manager	7
PR/Communications	PR practitioners, head of communication, social media coordinator, liaison officer, events coordinator, media and content developer, project manager	10
Other positions not typically associated with the management of communication on social media	Lecturer, office administrator, therapy manager, data capturer, social worker, fundraiser, membership recruitment advisor	8
Respondents with more than 1 position (the specific combinations were not explored)		9

*n = 41

The purpose of item 34 was to explore the average number of years of experience the respondents had in managing social media activities in the non-profit sector. The responses in table 6.3 below indicate the extensive experience of the respondents in this sector.

Table 6.3: Respondents' years of experience in the non-profit sector

Experience in managing social media activities in a non-profit organisation (in years)	n = 45
Two or less	17
Between 2 and 5 years	10
More than 5 years	18

Item 35 asked the respondents to identify the different types of social media used to communicate with stakeholders. Although demographics are normally associated with the specific characteristics of research participants, Stoutenborough (2008:3) asserts that the particular nature of a study might cause other information to be collected that is more relevant to the topic, and that is not typical demographic information. Insight into the different types of social media that are mostly preferred by communication professionals in the non-profit sector was deemed valuable because these are the channels that organisations use to communicate with stakeholders. Owing to the fact that some types do not permit dialogue or two-way communication, the responses could provide an indication of whether organisations use platforms that are primarily suited to information or dialogical purposes. Furthermore, since the aim of the different sections in the questionnaire was to explore the exact elements and theoretical aspects that guide social media integration, the different types of platforms and their application were not viewed as an individual point of integration, and related aspects were investigated in section B (element 2), under “social communication mix”.

The responses ($n = 42$) to this item as indicated in figure 6.1 below, clearly indicate that Facebook (100%), Twitter (64.29%), LinkedIn (40.48%), and YouTube (47.62%) are popularly used, followed by Blogs (28.57%), Instagram (26.19%) and Google Plus (21.43%). It is interesting to note that certain social media platforms, such as YouTube and Instagram, which are mainly used to distribute information (broadcast) about a certain topic featured strongly. Although these platforms do not intrinsically prioritise two-way dialogue or conversations as others would, one should bear in mind that videos and images, including the comments from others, could also initiate conversations about the organisation on other platforms. Of concern is the suggestion that LinkedIn, which is mainly designed to establish business connections, and which largely excludes the general community of the organisation, seems to be the preferred communication method.

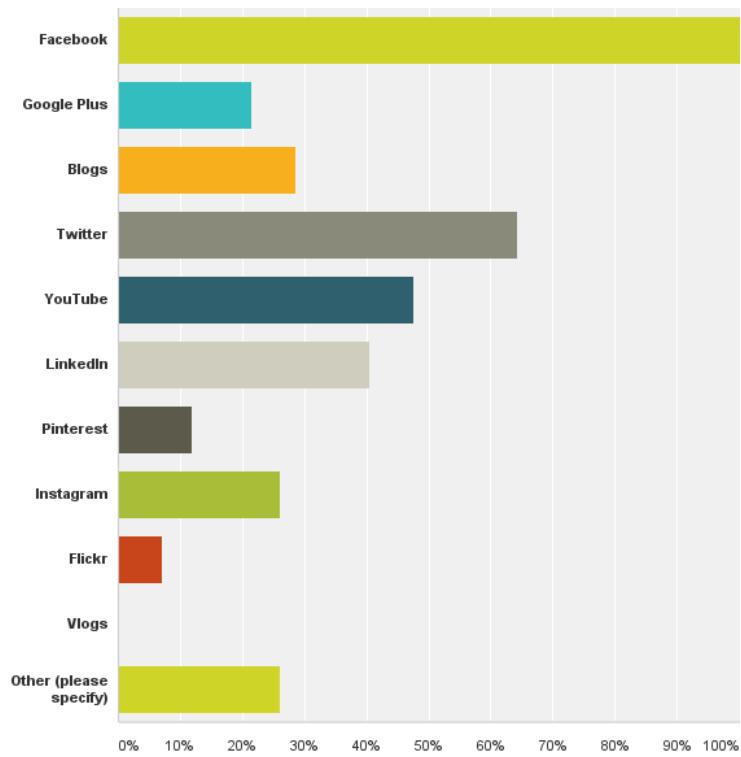


Figure 6.1: Different types of social media used by non-profit organisations

The respondents identified the following “other” examples of social media: WhatsApp, website, email, newsletters, adverts and direct mailers.

Item 36 solicited information on the type of approach the organisation adopts when planning its communication activities. Based on the topic of the study, namely the integration of social media, the options from which respondents had to choose were as follows: whether they (1) consider traditional media as the point of departure; (2) consider social media as the point of departure; (3) consider both traditional and social media as equal points of departure; and (4) other.

The respondents indicated that they mainly consider both traditional and social media as equal points of departure (66.67%). It would be fair to assume that their organisations do to a certain extent consider and apply integrated thinking in their planning of communication activities. Although some of the previous results in sections A, B and C did highlight possible shortfalls in this regard, the indication that most respondents consider both types of media was positive. Of the respondents, 16.67% considered social media as the point of departure, 11.90% regarded traditional media as the point of departure, and 4.76% indicated other approaches. As alluded to in the literature review, the ideal would be to use a combined approach instead of a one-sided approach in which only traditional or social media is used as the point of departure.

6.3 ANALYSIS OF SECTION A: FUNDAMENTALS FOR INTEGRATING SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNIATION

Section A investigated two theoretical aspects: *social media presence* and *communication strategy* as elements of the *fundamental aspects of integrating social media brand communication*.

As argued from a corporate brand perspective, the concept *corporate* signifies the fact that organisations need to have a *presence* and to *be present* when connecting with stakeholders (Urde 2013:743, section 2.5.1.2, chapter 2). In context, it suggests that social media in fact extends the brand's presence through the unrestricted connection of the organisations with stakeholders and with one another. Closely linked and specifically apt to communicating on social media, is the notion that an online presence is indicative of a *human* presence that organisations ultimately allow for an "emotional sense of belonging" (Chen 2011:530; cf. Finkbeiner 2013; Sallnas et al 2000; sections 3.6.1.3 and 3.6.1.5, chapter 3). It is, moreover, about engaging in conversation on these platforms, which is deemed to be promoted by having a presence online.

The second theoretical aspect pertains to the specific point/s at which the non-profit organisation strategically plans the alignment of its communication efforts with the organisation's objectives (section 4.6, chapter 4). The fact that communication integration and corporate branding are both seen as strategic endeavours, necessitates an investigation into where such planning occurs (Abratt & Kleyn 2012; Van Riel & Fombrun 2007, in section 2.6.1.3, chapter 2; Balmer 2010, sections 2.6 and 2.3.3, chapter 2; Johansen & Andersen 2012; section 4.4.5, chapter 4).

6.3.1 Section A: one-way frequency and internal consistency calculations

As explained in section 5.3.5.1(d), chapter 5, and in section 6.2 above, the next section deals with the findings of the empirical research by means of one-way frequency and consistency calculations.

Table 6.4: Fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication

Section A (element 1): Fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication	Items
• Social media presence	2 to 4
• Communication strategy	5 to 6

Social media presence was addressed by means of three items and the responses to questions 2 to 4 are indicated in table 6.5 below. Item 2 asked the respondents to indicate the

extent to which their organisation regards the planning of social media as strategically important. The responses show that the organisations *to a great extent* (48.89%) and *somewhat* (44.44%) regard this issue as significant. It can thus be concluded that these organisations recognise the need to identify objectives, formulate strategies and assess their social media activities. Only 4.44% and 2.22%, respectively, indicated that this item was as strategically important to a *very little* extent and *not at all*. The responses to item 3 indicated that organisations use at least one platform *to a great extent* (44.44%) on a daily basis, and that 37.78% only *somewhat* use one or more platforms daily. A total of 15.56% indicated that it is seldom done. These findings suggest that a significant number of non-profit organisations do use social media every day but that there are others that do not. Despite their use of social media, the respondents responsible for the management and coordination of social media, do not track conversations on these platforms to determine the most appropriate *types* of platforms to use (item 4). Responses were that the organisations are interested in the types of platforms their stakeholders use to a *very little* extent (42.22%), *somewhat* (31.11%), and *to a great extent* (13.33%). It is thus evident that these organisations do not always consider the places where their stakeholders meet. Of concern is the same percentage of organisations that do *not at all* (13.33%) engage in such an activity. This suggests that although the organisations regard the planning of social media as a strategic function and some use it daily, they do not necessarily align the types of platforms with their stakeholders' preferences. In the long term, this could be indicative of adopting an inside-out approach as opposed to a stakeholder focus (outside-in approach), as advocated in this study.

Table 6.5: Responses to the aspects of social media presence

	To a great extent	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all	Total
Social media planning is strategically important	48.89%	44.44%	4.44%	2.22%	45
Uses one or more social media platforms daily	44.44%	37.78%	15.56%	2.22%	45
Tracks stakeholder conversations to determine the most appropriate <i>types</i> of social media to use	13.33%	31.11%	42.22%	13.33%	45

The Cronbach coefficient alpha was used to measure the internal reliability of this set of items (2, 3 and 4). A value of **0.760073** was obtained.

A Cronbach alpha of between 0.6 and 0.7 serves as the parameters for reliability to be regarded as *acceptable*, whereas an alpha of 0.8 and higher indicated *excellent* reliability. The alpha score achieved for this set of items was thus regarded as being indicative of an

acceptable internal reliability. Hence it was presumed that all the items in this construct were correctly identified and there was statistical justification for combining these items in the *social media presence* theoretical aspect.

Items 5 and 6 measured aspects related to the *communication strategy*. Table 6.6 provides the responses to these items. The responses to item 5 indicated that the organisations do not all have a social media strategy. Most respondents revealed that their organisation has a social media strategy *somewhat* (51.11%) and *to a great extent* (26.67%). It is disquieting that 22.22% (*very little*) indicated that their organisations do have such a strategic plan. Despite the positive responses regarding the strategic importance of social media planning (item 2), these findings thus suggest that this is an element that these organisations need to deal with. Item 6 should be considered in conjunction with item 5. Item 6 focused on the inclusion of social media planning in a broad communication strategy only, rather than in a social media strategy. The assumption was that some organisations only address their social media planning in a communication strategy without having a dedicated social media strategy. It is evident that most respondents indicated that this is done *somewhat* (47.73%) and *to a great extent* (36.36%). A total of 13.64% applied it to a small (*very little*) extent and 2.27% *not at all*. Even so, there is not a strong indication of whether social media planning is presently dealt in a social media or a communication strategy (Duncan & Moriarty 1997; Gronstedt 2000; Ehlers 2002; Gurău 2008; Castronovo & Huang 2012; section 2.3.3, chapter 2; sections 4.6, 4.7.1.3, 4.7.1.4 and 4.7.3.1, chapter 4)

Table 6.6: Responses to the aspect of *communication strategy*

	To a great extent	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all	Total
A social media strategy	26.67%	51.11%	22.22%	0.00%	45
Addresses social media planning in an all-inclusive communication strategy	36.36%	47.73%	13.64%	2.27%	44

Since only these two items were associated with this element, it was not possible for a Cronbach alpha to be calculated and the correlation by means of Pearson's correlation coefficient was deemed more fitting. Use of the Pearson correlation coefficient made it possible to determine the strength of the relationships between the items.

The Pearson coefficient ($r = 0.32995$) for this subsection indicated that the two items measuring the *communication strategy* were sufficiently correlated ($p = 0.0287$) and could therefore be logically grouped together.

Lastly, the correlation of all items in **section A** as a whole was calculated and a coefficient alpha of **0.735044** was achieved (see table 6.7 below). Hence it could be inferred that because of an acceptable level of internal reliability between all items in this section, there was statistical evidence for the combination of the items in this construct.

Table 6.7: Cronbach alpha for section A

Section A	
Variables	Alpha
Standardised	0.735044

6.3.2 Typical mean scores for the responses in section A

In accordance with the aim of descriptive statistics, namely to provide an indication of the typical score of a specific variable, such as the frequency or count and the spread around the mean (average), this section focuses on the typical or average scores for the responses in this section. The same is done for the other two sections. The values are presented in table format indicating the frequency, mean value, standard deviation, 25th percentile, 50th percentile (or the median) and 75th percentile. See table 6.8 below. *Frequency* indicates how many times a response was given, whereas the *mean value* is the average score achieved for a certain item. The *standard deviation* refers to the average deviation of a score from the mean, where a small standard deviation indicates that the responses are close to the mean (or average score). Percentiles divide the data into equal parts and indicate what percentage of respondents submitted scores that tended more towards the positive or negative options in the questionnaire. The 25th percentile suggests that 25% of the respondents, and the 75th percentile indicates that 75% of them had a particular score, respectively. The 50th percentile refers to the “average score”, for example, 50% of the respondents scored an average of 2.00. Interpretation of the percentiles should be according to the scale and the weighting of each option, such as in this study, 1 = to a large extent, 2 = somewhat, 3 = very little and 4 = not at all, as indicated below every table. Hence a score of 2.00 would indicate that the respondents had selected “somewhat” as an option.

Table 6.8: Typical scores for section A

Variable	N	Mean*	Std deviation	25 th percentile	Median (50 th percentile)	75 th percentile
Social media presence	45	1.97	0.65	1.33	2.00	2.33
Communication strategy	45	1.90	0.61	1.50	2.00	2.00
Section A	45	1.94	0.54	1.60	2.00	2.20

*To a large extent = 1; somewhat = 2; very little = 3; not at all = 4

The descriptive statistics of the two theoretical aspects and section A as a whole are indicated in the above table. A typical score for *social media presence* was 1.97, and the average deviation from the mean value or standard deviation, 0.65. The 25th percentile (1.33) indicated that 25% of all respondents scored 1.33 or less, which was more inclined towards “a large extent”, while, the other 75% scored more than 1.33, which leant more towards “not at all”. The 50th percentile indicated that 50% of the respondents scored 2.00 or less, and 50% scored 2.00 or more, while the 75th percentile indicated that 75% scored less than 2.33, and 25% scored 2.33 or more. The standard deviation of 0.65 was a larger deviation compared to the other items, which highlights the fact that the values in the data set were on average, further concentrated around the mean.

In respect of *communication strategy*, the average score was 1.90, with a standard deviation of 0.61. Of the respondents, 25% scored 1.50 or less, and 75% more than 1.50. The 50th percentile indicated that 50% of the respondents scored 2.00 and less, while the same percentage scored 2.00 and more. The 75th percentile indicated that 75% of the respondents scored 2.00 and less, and 25% scored 2.00 and more. Comparing the mean values of the two theoretical aspects implies that the respondents expressed a more positive opinion about their organisations’ use of a social media and communication strategy and a lower score for the planning of social media, the daily use thereof and the tracking of stakeholder conversations. An average score nearer to 1.00 for both aspects would have been more positive.

Despite a good indication that these theoretical aspects could be grouped together, the scores did not clearly support the fact that these organisations have social media presences and social media strategy.

6.4 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS: SECTION B

The purpose of this section is to explore three aspects: namely *stakeholder integration*, *social media content* and *social media brand communication mix*.

As purported in earlier sections in the literature review, this study adopted the view that *stakeholder integration* in the social media milieu could be achieved through the integration of conversations with and between stakeholders (section 2.6.1.6, chapter 2; sections 4.4.2 and 4.8.2.1, chapter 4). Specific topics were investigated, including the identification, tracking, monitoring and assessment of conversations. The term “conversations”, for the purposes of this study, broadly served to include the dialogue or dialogic engagement between stakeholders and the organisation on social media, especially including the statements and mentions of the corporate brand on social media platforms. The inherent meaning was the exchange of messages for the mutual benefit for the stakeholder and the organisation.

The perspective that *content* is at the core of social media, and refers, *inter alia*, to extensive creation and sharing thereof by stakeholders and organisations on social media platforms, was acknowledged throughout the study (section 3.5.2, 3.6.1.2, 3.6.1.7 and 3.6.1.8, chapter 3). Key to this issue was the need to consider the interchangeable roles of all participants to act as creators, senders and receivers of social media content (section 3.6.1.8, chapter 3). In precise terms, aspects relating to both the organisations and stakeholders merited investigation for the integration of social media content (section 4.4.1, chapter 4). Specific topics that were investigated related to the following: an individual or team to oversee editorial content; a content plan for planning social media content; online scheduling tools for postings; encouraging external stakeholders to contribute to social media content; repurposing social media content for use on multiple social media platforms; sourcing content from other sources; and purposely monitoring topics on social media platforms to ensure appropriate content.

For purposes of this study, the *social media brand communication mix* referred to the combination of communication tools and tactics (section 3.4.2, chapter 3; sections 4.4, 4.5, 4.7.1.2, 4.7.3.1, 4.7.3.3, 4.8, 4.8.2.2 and 4.8.2.3, chapter 4). A distinction was made between social media in conjunction with traditional media (links to traditional media on social media platforms), and media convergence (different platforms to distribute content), which were separately explored. An integrated viewpoint regarding this aspect was based on the combination of traditional and social media on various platforms, and of text, video and audio *per se* in a single communication act, as explained in section 3.4.2, chapter 3.

6.4.1 Section B: one-way frequency and internal consistency calculations

This section discusses the findings of the empirical research for section B by means of one-way frequency and consistency calculations.

Table 6.9: The avenues or ways to achieve the integration of social media brand communication

Section B (element 2): Avenues of social media integration – use of social media to integrate at various levels	Items
• Stakeholder integration	17 to 18
• Social media content	7 - 13
• Social media brand communication mix	14 – 16

Stakeholder integration was addressed by means of two items that focused on stakeholder conversations – the tracking thereof and deliberate efforts to obtain stakeholders' participation in conversations. The majority of respondents indicated that their organisations were hardly involved (*very little*) in using analytical tools to follow stakeholder conversations (31.82%), followed by those who indicated that their organisations used these tools to a *great extent* (22.73%) and *somewhat* (22.73%) (item 17). Of significance was the 22.73% who did *not* apply analytical tools *at all*, which could signify that these organisations do not track these conversations. Monitoring the discussions and topics about the corporate brand is crucial to ensure that the organisation remains informed about what is being said about the corporate brand and to possibly participate and respond when needed. This finding seems to corroborate the findings for item 4 in section A about the inadequate tracking of conversations to identify the most appropriate types of platforms to use (cf. also Gronstedt 1996; Duncan & Caywood 1996; Duncan & Moriarty 1997; Gronstedt 2000; Ehlers 2002; Niemann 2005; Castronovo & Huang 2012; Rakić & Rakić 2014; sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, chapter 2; sections 3.5.2, 3.5.3, 3.6.1.4, 3.6.1.7 and 3.7, chapter 3; sections 4.4.1, 4.4.2, 4.6, 4.7.1.1 and 4.7.3.2, chapter 4).

Respondents were furthermore asked to indicate the extent to which stakeholders are requested to participate in conversations on social media platforms (item 18) (section 2.5.1.3, chapter 2; sections 3.6.1.2 and 3.6.1.8, chapter 3; sections 4.1 and 4.8.3.1, chapter 4). The respondents revealed that the likelihood of their organisations pursuing the participation of their stakeholders was small (*very little*) (34.09%), *somewhat* (27.27%) and *not at all* (20.45%). Only 18.18% believed that their organisations would pertinently seek stakeholders' participation *to a great extent*. These scores further support the assumption that organisations may be less interested in the conversations of their stakeholders, which could be detrimental to promoting dialogue on these platforms (see also the findings for items 13 and 31).

Table 6.10: Responses to the aspect of stakeholder integration

	To a great extent	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all	Total
Uses analytical tools to follow stakeholder conversations	22.73%	22.73%	31.82%	22.73%	44
Deliberately requests stakeholders to participate in conversations	18.18%	27.27%	34.09%	20.45%	44

The two items that were associated with this aspect required the calculation of the correlation by means of Pearson's correlation coefficient ($r = 0.46830$). The strength of the relationship between items 17 and item 18 indicated that they were sufficiently correlated ($p = 0.0013$).

The aspect of *social media content* was investigated by means of items 7 to 13, which focused on the management, planning, scheduling, sourcing and monitoring of content on social media. The respondents confirmed that their organisation *to a great extent* (61.36%) had an individual or team responsible for the editorial content on social media, followed respectively by 18.18% and 11.36%, who indicated that this issue had been addressed *somewhat and very little* (item 7). Overall, it could be concluded that organisations do recognise the importance of having a person or team to manage social media content (Ehlers 2002; Niemann 2005; sections 4.7.1, 4.7.2, 4.7.2.1, 4.7.2.2, 4.7.3, 4.7.3.1 and 4.8.3.1, chapter 4).

Regarding the planning of content for use on social media, 45.45% of the respondents indicated that their organisations used a content plan to plan and arrange social media content *somewhat* (item 8). This aspect is underscored by Breakenridge (2012), who adds that it requires consideration of the types of content stakeholders desire, as investigated in item 13 in this section. Only 18.18% indicated that they use such a plan *to a great extent*. Of concern and worth mentioning was the fact that 20.45% indicated that their organisation did not use a social media content plan at all (*not at all*) and 15.91% who responded "*very little*" to this question. In light of the fact that social media is driven by content that allows for interaction and conversation with and between stakeholders, the planning of social media content should be an area of concern because it could impact on the strategic management of the content (Breakenridge 2012; sections 4.6, 4.8.1.2 and 4.8.2.2, chapter 4).

Item 9 investigated the extent to which online scheduling tools are applied to plan postings on social media platforms. The majority of respondents stated they did not use the available online tools at all (*not at all*) (39.53%) and *very little* (27.91%). Only 13.95% indicated that online scheduling tools were used *to a great extent*, while 18.60% indicated *somewhat*. The findings suggest that organisations do not often use online tools to schedule their

communication online and apparently do not consider the value thereof, as advocated by Leroux Miller (2013) and Breakenridge (2012) (section 3.6.1.8, chapter 3; sections 4.6, 4.8.1.2 and 4.8.2.2, chapter 4).

Items 10, 11 and 12 dealt with the sourcing of content for use by the organisations on social media platforms. The respondents broadly agreed that their organisations encouraged stakeholder input and contributions by sharing their stories *to a great extent* (25.58%) and *somewhat* (30.23%). The literature review revealed that storytelling, and in particular storytelling by stakeholders, reflect positive or negative experiences with the corporate brand that consequently either promote or prevent a positive corporate brand (section 2.6.1.4, chapter 2). Moreover, the sharing of these stakeholders' stories qualifies as *co-created content* since both the organisation and stakeholders respectively participate in the sharing and creation thereof (section 2.6.1.4, chapter 2; section 3.5.2, chapter 3; section 4.8.2.2, chapter 4). This broadly suggests that the organisations have a positive attitude towards the inclusion of stakeholders in the collaborative generation of social media content. Nonetheless, 37.21% of the organisations only involve stakeholders in creation content to a small (*very little*) extent, and 6.98% *not at all*. To ensure balanced, attractive content that simultaneously allows for engagement with stakeholders, the rule of thirds could be applied (see chapter 3). The notion is that a third of content could be created by stakeholders in conjunction with the organisation, which may concurrently provide opportunities to advance interaction with stakeholders. The respondents were subsequently asked what the possibility was that their organisations repurpose content on a particular platform for use on others types – for example, repurposing a post on Facebook for use in a tweet (item 11). The findings yielded a generally positive result by indicating that organisations repurpose content for use on different social media platforms *to a great extent* (45.45%) and *somewhat* (25%). Of the respondents, 18.18% and 11.36% believed that their organisation repurposes content to a small (*very little*) extent and *not at all*, respectively. Item 12 dealt with finding content from other sources to share on traditional and social media, and the respondents mainly agreed that content is found in other sources – *to a great extent* (29.55%) and *somewhat* (38.64%). The likelihood that content is sourced from other sources was small (*very little*) (25%) and *not at all* (6.82%). To meet the constant demand for content on relevant topics, non-profit organisations could *curate* content by searching other sources (section 3.5.2, chapter 3; Cohen 2013; Leroux Miller 2013).

Lastly, item 13 asked whether organisations monitor the topics raised by stakeholders to ensure the *content* they use is appropriate. The findings suggested the probability that their organisations do so *to a great extent* (34.09%) and *somewhat* (34.09%). This finding could indicate that organisations are interested in the topics raised by their stakeholders to ultimately ensure they address these needs. This said, 27.27% indicated that they hardly focus (*very*

little) on this aspect, and 4.55% *not at all*. This finding appeared to contradict the finding for item 17, namely that these organisations do *not* track conversations. Breakenridge (2012) and Regan (2011) support the view that it is essential to gain knowledge of the topics that are of interest to stakeholders and that are raised on social media platforms (section 3.6.1.7, chapter 3; section 4.6, chapter 4).

Table 6.11: Responses to the aspect of *social media content*

	To a great extent	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all	Total
An individual or team responsible for all editorial content	61.36%	18.18%	11.36%	9.09%	44
Uses a social media content plan for the planning of social media content	18.18%	45.45%	15.91%	20.45%	44
Uses online scheduling tools to plan social media postings	13.95%	18.60%	27.92%	39.53%	43
Encourages external stakeholders to contribute to social media content	25.58%	30.23%	37.21%	6.98%	43
Repurposes social media content to use on different platforms	45.45%	25%	18.18%	11.36%	44
Finds content from other sources to share on its own media	29.55%	38.64%	25%	6.82%	44
Monitors the topics raised on social media platforms to ensure appropriate content	34.09%	34.09%	27.27%	4.55%	44

The Cronbach alpha for this element was **0.803491**, which indicates an *excellent* reliability between the items, which confirmed that the theoretical aspects were appropriately grouped.

Aspects of the integration of traditional and social media (*social media brand communication mix*) were addressed in items 14 to 16 in order to determine attempts to integrate these types of media (sections 4.8.2.2 and 4.8.2.3, chapter 4). The findings for item 14 strongly indicated that the organisations do use links to traditional media on social media to *a great extent* (47.73%) and only *somewhat* (34.09%). Of the respondents, 13.64% and 4.55%, respectively, indicated that their organisations hardly do anything (*very little*) and nothing at all (*not at all*) to integrate these two types of media.

Regarding the integration of traditional and social media (item 15), the responses suggested that 65.12% of the organisations do *not at all* use paid-for media on social media platforms.

This said, it would be reasonable to expect that such a finding might be true for non-profit organisations with limited budgets. Only 6.98% of the respondents indicated that their organisation integrated traditional and social media to a *great extent*, while 16.28% indicated *somewhat*. Of the respondents, 11.63% indicated that their organisations use traditional media on social media platforms to a small degree. One could thus conclude that non-profit organisations do not use traditional media on the social media platforms and are lacking as far as the integration thereof is concerned. The findings could be interpreted in two ways, namely that organisations really do not to any extent integrate these two types of media, or that the respondents are not knowledgeable about the ways in which traditional and social media can be combined on these platforms. This aspect was emphasised by Rakić and Rakić (2014), and in section 2.3.1, chapter 2; sections 3.4.2, 3.5.2 and 3.7, chapter 3; sections 4.5.2, 4.5.3, 4.6, 4.7.1.2, 4.7.3.3, 4.8.2.2, 4.8.2.3 and 4.8.2.3.1, chapter 4.

To further investigate the integration of traditional and social media, item 16 enquired about the use of a single set of tools combining all types of media, as explained by Agresta and Bough (2011) and commented on in sections 4.7.1.2 and 4.7.3.3, chapter 4. The respondents indicated that the likelihood of their organisations using a single communication toolbox is small (*very little*) (36.36%) and *somewhat* (27.27%). Of the respondents, 18.18% believed that this is done *to a great extent* and the same percentage indicated it is *not done at all*. The belief that 18.18% do *not* combine all possible types of media into a single set of tools *at all* could therefore indicate that these organisations do not regard the coordination of communication methods as important.

Table 6.12: Responses to the aspect of communication mix

	To a great extent	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all	Total
Uses links to traditional media on social media platforms	47.74%	34.09%	13.64%	4.55%	44
Uses paid-for media on social media platforms	6.98%	16.28%	11.63%	65.12%	43
Combines all available traditional media and social media platforms into a single communication toolbox	18.18%	27.27%	36.36%	18.18%	44

The item analysis of items 14 to 16 indicated that item 15 was not correlated with the other two items, and thus had a negative impacted on the internal consistency of these items. Although the reasons for not using paid-for media on social media platforms were not specifically explored, it could be argued that this item did not correlate with the others, because

of the unique nature of non-profit organisations and the challenges they face that differentiate them from commercial organisations. Hence, although the literature suggests a relationship between these three items, it does not appear to apply to the non-profit sector. The purpose of this section was to investigate the integration of traditional and social media on social media platforms. Paid-for media, such as advertisements, is typical to traditional media and is confirmed in marketing literature as a type of traditional media. Item 15 specifically referred to the use of paid-for media in different types of social media. Hence the finding that there was no correlation with the other items was significant from the perspective of attaining integration of social media brand communication. For the purposes of achieving internal reliability, item 15 was removed and the strength of the relationship between items 14 and 16 was calculated as $p = 0.0001$, and therefore deemed to be significantly correlated.

The Cronbach alpha for **section B** as a whole (items 7 to 18), excluding item 15, was **0.879016**, which indicates excellent reliability between all the items. This therefore indicated strong statistical justification for combining these items into one construct.

Table 6.13: Cronbach alpha for section B

Section B	
Variables	Alpha
Raw	0.877911
Standardised	0.879016

6.4.2 Typical mean scores for the responses in section B

The typical scores of specific variables in this section are presented in table format and indicate the frequency, mean value, standard deviation, 25th percentile, 50th percentile (or the median) and 75th percentile.

Table 6.14: Typical scores for section B

Variable	N	Mean*	Std deviation	25 th percentile	Median (50 th percentile)	75 th percentile
Stakeholder integration	44	2.56	0.90	2.0	2.50	3.00
Social media content	44	2.18	0.67	1.57	2.14	2.57
Social media brand communication mix	44	2.15	0.85	1.50	2.00	2.50
Section B	44	2.24	0.67	1.71	2.23	2.64

*To a great extent = 1; somewhat = 2; very little = 3; not at all = 4

The descriptive calculation indicated an average of 2.56 (between 2 and 3) for the aspect of *stakeholder integration* and a 0.90 standard deviation from this average. The 0.90 standard deviation signified a larger deviation than the other aspects and could mean that the values in this data set were, on average, further from the mean. Of all the values, the 25th percentile was equal to or less than 2.00, and 75% of the values had a score of more than 2.00. Of the values in the data set, 50% were less than 2.50 and 50% had a score of more than 2.50. Since the average score of 2.56 was between 2 and 3, but nearer to 3, it would be reasonable to conclude that the respondents' organisations do not attend to it. This means that the organisations do not adequately follow stakeholder conversations and request participation in conversations on social media. Hence, the organisations were not fully informed about the conversations about them and the topics raised on these platforms, which ultimately hampered the overall integration of stakeholders.

The mean for *social media content* was 2.18 (between 2 and 3) and the standard deviation, 0.67. The deviation of 0.67 was less than the other aspects, and implied that, on average, the values were closer to the mean. The 25th percentile of 1.57 suggested that 25% of the respondentsscored 1.57 or less, whereas the other 75% scored more than 1.57. The 50th percentile indicated that 50% or the respondents scored 2.14 or less, and the remaining 50% scored more than 2.14. The 75th percentile suggested that 75% of the respondents scored 2.57 or less, while 25% scored more than 2.57. An average score of 2.18 was an indication that the organisations do not adequately attend to this aspect. This means that, overall, limited attention is paid to aspects that are apposite for content integration, such as the use of a content plan, scheduling tools, soliciting contributions from stakeholders, and the repurposing and curating of content. The findings thus suggest a serious shortcoming in the context of this study.

The typical scores for *social media brand communication mix* indicated an average score of 2.15 (between 2 and 3) and standard deviation of 1.50. The 25th percentile suggested that 25% of scores were equal to or less than 1.50, with the 50th percentile indicating that 50% of the scores were equal to or less than 2.00, and the remaining 50% higher than 2.00. Based on the values in this data set, it could be concluded that the respondents' scores indicated a more positive involvement of their organisations in the use of links to traditional media on social media platforms and the use of a single communication toolbox, as opposed to aspects relating to stakeholder integration and communication mix.

The average score for this section indicates that the respondents' views on their organisations' involvement about the ways or avenues in which social media integration could take place, tend to be primarily *against* or uninvolved in the issues raised.

6.5 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS: SECTION C

The purpose of this section was to explore the theoretical aspects required to accomplish and maintain social media integration (items 19 to 32), mainly a *listening orientation, community, environmental and cross-functional integration, management of synergy and consistency of communication endeavours by a multi-skilled communicator or teams of coordinators, and evaluation.*

The value of a listening orientation was addressed in the literature review and the relation to eWOM or conversations and humanising the corporate brand were also explained (sections 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 2.6.1.1, chapter 2; sections 3.5.2, 3.5.3, 3.6.1.3, 3.6.1.7, 3.6.1.8 and 3.8.1.7, chapter 3; sections 4.4.1, 4.6.1.7 and 4.8.3.2, chapter 4). As stated in previous chapters, the non-profit organisation can listen to conversations through the tracking and monitoring thereof on social media. In the context of this study, it was argued that a listening approach is critical to achieve the integration of social media brand communication because the organisation keeps abreast of topics that are raised and is allowed to respond timeously to stakeholder conversations.

Community as a key element of social media was proposed in chapter 3 (section 4.8.3.2, chapter 4). It was posited that in support of non-profit organisations' quest to promote social causes, it is desirable for stakeholders to be connected by a sense of community that promotes the sharing of brand experiences and creates awareness and emotional connection with the non-profit organisation. This can ideally be achieved when stakeholders are connected by shared topics.

The idea that there has been a progression from a *siloed* focus on communication towards the broader inclusion of all communication activities across professional disciplines, was raised and substantiated in section 2.2, chapter 2. This perspective is elaborated on in the sections below by highlighting the value of this idea in representing the organisation as a whole and ensuring communication consistency. The question of *environmental and cross-functional integration* is raised in some of the theoretical models that were analysed in sections 4.7.1, 4.7.2 and 4.7.3, chapter 4.

An integrated perspective on communication underscores the achievement of *communication synergy and consistency*, which calls for the coordination and management thereof. This can be achieved by identifying a *multi-skilled communicator or a team of coordinators* to ensure that the organisation's social media brand communication is addressed at strategic level (sections 4.4.6, 4.7.2.1, 4.7.2.2, 4.7.1.3 and 4.8.3.4, chapter 4).

It stands to reason that the success of integrating social media brand communication needs to be *measured* in terms of the strategic objectives being pursued. Such measurement should therefore identify adjustments and determine how future social media integration initiatives should be included in the endeavours of the non-profit organisation. The ultimate aim of the study to promote the non-profit corporate brand through integrating social media brand communication, highlighted the need to measure the success of this communication.

6.5.1 Section C: one-way frequency and internal consistency calculations

This section presents findings of the empirical research for section C by means of one-way frequency and consistency *calculations*.

Table 6.15: The attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration

Section C (element 3): the attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration	Items
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A social listening orientation • Community • Environmental and cross-functional integration • Management of synergy and consistency of communication endeavours by a multi-skilled communicator or s team of coordinators • Evaluation 	19 to 21 22 to 25 26 to 28 29 30 to 32

The first item addressed the aspect of *social listening orientation* (items 19, 20 and 21). Item 19 asked about timely response/s to stakeholders' communication with the organisation. It is evident that the organisations do provide timeous responses to a *great extent* (40.48%) and *somewhat* (30.95%). Of concern is the 26.19% responses that only do so to a *very little* extent. Timely communication is deemed essential in conducting communication on social media platforms, and also to humanise the corporate brand by demonstrating it as a brand that listens and participates in conversations (Smith 2010; section 3.6.1.3, chapter 3; section 4.8.2.2, chapter 4). It is possible that online responses could be seen to represent a human presence.

Providing support and resources to social media influencers to listen to stakeholder conversations is mentioned in the literature review and was addressed in item 20 (cf. Holtzhausen 2014:287; Warner et al 2014:5; Vernuccio 2014:215; Mindruta 2013; Burcher 2012:188; Breakenridge 2012:41; sections 3.4.2 and 3.6.1.7, chapter 3; cf. Nuccio 2013). The majority of responses indicated that most of the organisations support their influencers *somewhat* (35.71%), while 16.67% acknowledged that this happens to a *great extent*. Of significance was the 33.33% of respondents who indicated that it hardly happened (*very little*) and 14.29% who did not provide any support at all. In terms of the responses to item 18 in section B, it is evident that contributing to social media conversations by stakeholders and

listening them are not receiving sufficient attention in the respondents' organisations. Further underscoring the importance of this item is the fact that if organisations do not invest in and recognise the worth of influencers to participate or listen to social media conversations, they cannot fully capitalise on their connections to their stakeholders.

Item 21 addressed the use of hashtags to identify important conversations (section 3.5.2, chapter 3). As explained in the literature overview, hashtags are mainly used to organise specific topics and identify and track conversations on social media. The responses showed that hashtags are used to identify conversations to *a great extent* (26.19%), *somewhat* (23.81%), *very little* (28.57%) and *not at all* (21.43%). A large number of organisations do not seem to use hashtags to recognise and track important conversations. Unrestricted conversations on social media platforms should compel the organisation to identify and monitor mentions of the organisation which, as indicated by the respondents, their organisations are seemingly not doing.

Table 6.16: Responses to the aspect of a *social listening orientation*

	To a great extent	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all	Total
Responds to social media mentions, tweets and posts daily	40.48%	30.95%	26.19%	2.38%	42
Supports social media influencers to listen to social media conversations	16.67%	35.71%	33.33%	14.29%	42
Uses hashtags to identify important conversations	26.19%	23.81%	28.57%	21.43%	44

The Cronbach alpha for this element was **0.635106**, which relates to an *acceptable* internal consistency between the theoretical aspects of this element. Statistically, this supports the grouping of these aspects together in this element.

Items 22 to 25 addressed *community* as a theoretical aspect for the attainment and maintenance of the integration of social media brand communication (sections 3.5.3 and 3.6, chapter 3; section 4.8.3.2, chapter 4). The respondents indicated that their organisations consider the interests of their stakeholders *somewhat* (46.34%) in attempts to create community (item 22). Only 21.95% felt that their organisation did so to a *great extent* and 24.39% to a *very little* extent, with 7.32% of the respondents indicating that their organisations do *not* make efforts to consider the interests of their stakeholders *at all*. As purported in the literature review, social media allows communities to form around common interests, which in a non-profit context could be beneficial for quick and effective

communication, provided their communication and platform needs and preferences are understood (section 3.5.3, chapter 3).

Item 23 addressed the issue of identifying prominent stakeholders. Brand ambassadors, influencers and advocates are identified as stakeholders who can promote the corporate brand by sharing their experiences of a brand (section 3.5.2, chapter 3). The necessity to identify these groups is thus evident. Those responsible for the social media in their organisations thought that the organisations do identify prominent stakeholders *to a great extent* (35.71%) and *somewhat* (40.48%). Noteworthy was the 11.90% who pay *very little* attention to this issue, and the same percentage who do not focus at all on prominent stakeholders. However, the responses did suggest a positive tendency towards identifying key stakeholders.

Aspects of community building were further investigated by asking the respondents to what extent their organisations assist brand ambassadors to build community, for example, by providing resources and support (item 24). The results indicated that the organisations seem to be hardly involved (*very little*) (38.10%) in empowering their brand ambassadors with support community building in particular. This is notwithstanding the fact 16.67% indicated that they do support the brand ambassadors *to a great extent*, and 23.81% who *somewhat* provide such support.

The responses regarding acknowledging important stakeholders such as donors and volunteers by posting appreciations were generally positive, with 52.38% indicating that they do so *to a great extent*, and 28.57% who indicated that the organisation acknowledges these stakeholders *somewhat* (item 25). Of the respondents, 19.05% indicated that they hardly (*very little*) acknowledge these stakeholders. Considering that non-profit organisations rely greatly on the contributions and involvement of donors and volunteers for their survival, it is concerning that 19.05% of the respondents' organisations only appreciate their involvement on social media platforms to a small extent. In terms of the value of community, as conveyed in the literature, and assuming that non-profit organisations endeavour to gather stakeholders around their causes, it would make sense to create communities of donors and/or volunteers.

In calculating the overall correlation between items in this element, items 22 and 25 did not correlate with the other items and were subsequently removed from further calculations of the element. Further qualitative research would therefore be necessary to gain an understanding of this incongruity. Item 22 explored a purposeful focus on the interests of stakeholders to build community. It therefore indirectly addressed the adoption of an outside-in focus or stakeholder perspective by considering the interests of stakeholders to create community. Although the questionnaire was tested by two communication professionals with experience in this sector, the researcher acknowledged that the item might have been misunderstood. It

was therefore proposed that the essence of this item could be stated more clearly in future studies and could possibly be reworded as follows: *My organisation deliberately focuses on stakeholders' interests to create community*. Item 25 addressed the posting of appreciation to donors and volunteers on social media. The responses were overwhelmingly positive, and suggested that organisations do realise the importance of appreciating their donors and volunteers. It could thus be assumed that, although not correlated with other items in this element, this item is in fact relevant to the practices of non-profit organisations.

Table 6.17: Responses to the aspect of *community*

	To a great extent	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all	Total
Deliberately gathers stakeholders around common causes by focusing on their interests	21.95%	46.34%	24.39%	7.32%	41
Identifies prominent stakeholders	35.71%	40.48%	11.90%	11.90%	42
Empowers brand ambassadors to assist with community building	16.67%	23.81%	38.10	21.43%	42
Acknowledges important stakeholders such as donors and volunteers	52.38%	28.57%	19.05%	0%	42

The calculation by means of the Pearson coefficient ($r = 0.49004$), excluding items 22 and 25, indicated a statistically significant correlation ($p = 0.0010$). It can thus be assumed that these theoretical aspects were correctly grouped together.

The *environmental and cross-functional integration* element was investigated by means of items 26, 27 and 28.

The responses relating to the involvement of employees in social media initiatives mostly implied that organisations do not fully include their employees in social media initiatives (item 26). This item specifically addressed *cross-functional* integration through the utilisation of employees' knowledge and expertise. Only 9.52% of the respondents indicated that this is practised *to a great extent*, with 45.24% and 28.57% selecting the *somewhat* and *very little* options, respectively, to best describe how their organisations apply this item. Of the organisations, 16.67% were deemed to be *not at all* involved. As suggested in the literature, the "integration" of employees is vital for an organisation to achieve communication integration. The literature review also indicated that environmental integration has been emphasised in various historical and contemporary IC models and is deemed essential to the strategic planning of communication (section 4.6, chapter 4).

To further explore this element, item 27 asked the respondents about the monitoring of the external environment to identify possible threats and opportunities. They indicated that the option *somewhat* (47.62%) best described the practice of their organisations regarding environmental monitoring, followed by *to a great extent* (21.43%), *very little* (21.43%), and 9.52%, who selected the *not at all* option. Despite the fact that most respondents indicated that their organisations to some extent monitor the external environment, it is concerning that not all of them focus substantially on the broader environment of the organisation to identify changes and opportunities. The monitoring of the organisation's environment has been linked to strategic communication and the need to identify changes, challenges and the possible expectations of stakeholders that could influence the organisation and communication objectives (Duncan & Caywood 1996; Ehlers 2002; Niemann 2005; Duncan & Moriarty 1997; Gronstedt 2000; Ehlers 2000; Rakić & Rakić 2014; section 2.3.1, chapter 2; sections 4.5.3, 4.4, 4.4.1, 4.4.3, 4.4.4., 4.7.1, 4.7.1.1, 4.7.1.2, 4.7.1.3, 4.7.1.4, 4.7.2.1, 4.7.2.2, 4.7.3.3 and 4.8.3.4, chapter 4).

The final item for this element related to the coordination of communication activities to advance uniform brand messages (item 28). Of the respondents, 38.10% agreed that their organisations endeavour *somewhat* to coordinate their activities, while 35.71% agreed *to a great extent*. Of concern was the 21.43% of respondents who chose the *very little* option. As stated in the literature, consistent communication is crucial to achieve a uniform corporate brand, and it is would thus be reasonable to expect a higher percentage of positive responses.

The Cronbach calculations indicated that item 26 was not correlated with the other items, and the correlation was thus recalculated without this item. As stated earlier, this would require further qualitative research. Item 26 specifically addressed the inclusion of all employees in the planning of social media initiatives to ensure a cross-functional integration of knowledge and expertise. The researcher realised that the item referred specifically to the inclusion of the whole workforce, which was somewhat unrealistic and unachievable because of the small staff complement in some non-profit organisations. Nonetheless, a key element of communication integration emphasises the contributions and involvement of employees, and as specifically stated in the item, refers to the sharing of knowledge and expertise. The researcher thus concluded that this would be more typical of larger organisations in the private sector, or that it would not be deemed important or achievable in non-profit organisations.

Table 6.18: Responses to the aspect of environmental and cross-functional integration

	To a great extent	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all	Total
Involves all employees in planning social media initiatives (sharing knowledge and expertise)	9.52%	45.24%	28.57%	16.67%	42
Regularly monitors the external environment, including the online environment	21.43%	47.62%	21.43%	9.52%	42
Purposefully coordinates communication activities to promote uniform corporate brand messages	35.71%	38.10%	21.43%	4.76%	42

A Pearson coefficient of $r = 0.50890$ showed adequate statistical evidence ($p = 0.0006$) that items 27 and 28 were sufficiently correlated and correctly grouped.

Item 29 in section C comprised one item that addressed the management of the interaction with stakeholders by a multi-skilled communicator or a team, to ensure communication consistency and synergy (sections 4.7.1, 4.7.2, 4.7.2.1, 4.7.2.2, 4.7.3, 4.7.3.1 and 4.8.3.1, chapter 4). Owing to the fact that there was only one item, it was not necessary to analyse it because it was not intended to be related to any other items. Most of the respondents indicated that this occurs *to a great extent* (59.52%) and *somewhat* (23.81%). The use of an individual or team to manage interaction with stakeholders to ensure consistent communication in the non-profit sector is perceived to be important, even though 7.14% and 9.52%, respectively, opted for *very little* and *not at all*. Based on these results, it could be concluded that this matter is adequately attended to by organisations.

Items 30 to 32 explored the *evaluation* of the organisations' communication on social media (sections 4.6 and 4.8.3.5, chapter 4). Item 30 asked about the use of a formal social media audit. The findings suggested that audits are not used to determine the effectiveness of the social media efforts, and most respondents chose *very little* (34.15%) and *not at all* (31.71%). Only 12.20% indicated that an audit is used *to a great extent* and 21.95% *very little*. This matter requires serious consideration by non-profit organisations as all communication of an organisation is deemed to be of strategic importance. The responses to item 2 corroborated this assumption, with 48.89% of respondents who acknowledging that the planning of social media initiatives should be addressed at strategic level. Only 12.20% believed their organisations use audits *to a great extent*, and 21.95% indicated that this occurred *somewhat*.

Item 31 investigated whether the organisations deliberately wished to know if their stakeholders are satisfied that the organisation is listening to them. The respondents mainly felt that their organisations are *not at all* (47.62%) interested and hardly interested (*very little*) (28.57%) to know how satisfied their stakeholders are in this regard. Only 2.3% indicated that their organisation does so *to a great extent* and 21.43% *somewhat*. Earlier references to the importance of timely responses, the need to present the corporate brand as human and the integration of stakeholders by listening to their conversations, highlighted the need to know how the stakeholders perceive their efforts to listen and their commitment to consider their opinions (section 3.7, chapter 3; sections 4.7.1.4, 4.8.2 and 4.8.3.5, chapter 4).

Item 32 addressed the issue of benchmarking and pertinently asked whether the organisations compare their social media practices with those of similar non-profit organisations (sections 4.7, 4.8, 4.8.3.5 and 4.8.3.6, chapter 4). The underlying idea was raised in the literature and refers mainly to the identification of possibilities for social media brand communication that could allow these organisations to improve their initiatives. The respondents pointed out that their organisations do make such comparisons *somewhat* (35.71%) and *hardly at all* (*very little*) (26.19%). Only 11.90% indicated that their organisation substantially conducts benchmarking, while 2.38% indicated *not at all*.

Table 6.19: Responses to the aspect of evaluation

	To a great extent	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all	Total
Uses social media audits to evaluate the effectively of social media brand communication with external stakeholders	12.20%	21.95%	34.15%	31.71%	41
Uses research methods to determine whether stakeholders feel their voices are being heard	2.38%	21.43%	28.57%	47.62%	42
Compares social media brand communication with that of similar organisations	11.90%	35.71%	23.81%	2.38%	42

A Cronbach alpha of **0.737954** was achieved for items 29 to 32 in this aspect, which indicated *acceptable* statistical reliability, and this statistically supported the grouping together of these items.

The Cronbach alpha for **section C** as a whole (items 19 to 32) was **0.895959** (excluding items 25 and 26), which indicated *excellent* reliability between all the items, thus strong statistical justification for combining these items into one construct.

Table 6.20: Cronbach alpha for section C

Section C	
Variables	Alpha
Raw	0.893907
Standardised	0.895959

6.5.2 Typical mean scores for the responses in section C

For this section, the typical mean scores of the variables in this section are presented in table 6.21 below. The scores indicate the frequency, mean value, standard deviation, 25th percentile, 50th percentile (or the median) and 75th percentile.

Table 6.21: Typical scores for section C

Variable	N	Mean*	Std deviation	25 th percentile	Median (50 th percentile)	75 th percentile
A social listening orientation	42	1.90	0.88	1.00	2.00	3.00
Community	42	2.32	0.86	1.50	2.50	3.00
Environmental and cross-functional integration	42	2.07	0.77	1.50	2.00	2.50
Management of synergy and consistency of communication endeavours by a multi-skilled communicator or a team of coordinators	42	1.67	0.98	1.00	1.00	2.00
Evaluation	42	2.91	0.77	2.33	3.00	3.67
Section C	42	2.35	0.64	1.83	2.17	2.92

*To a great extent = 1; somewhat = 2; very little = 3; not at all = 4

A typical score of 1.90 for a *social listening orientation* (between 1 and 2) was achieved, which generally suggests that the majority of organisations do consider this orientation, although not to a great extent. The standard deviation from the mean was 0.88. A 25th percentile of 1.50 indicated that 25% of the respondents scored 1.50 or less (leaning more towards a great extent), while 75% scored 1.50 or more (leaning more towards a lesser extent). The median of 2.00 indicated that 50% scored 2.00 or less, while the other 50% had a score of more than 2.00. Moreover, the scores indicated that more respondents (75%) felt that their organisations are involved in following a listening orientation although not completely *to a great extent* or

somewhat. Of the respondents, 25% indicated that their organisations hardly attend to this (*very little*) or *not at all*.

The second aspect involved *community*. The typical score was 2.32 (between 2 and 3) with a standard deviation of 0.86. This score was closer to 2, but between 2 and 3, and thus indicated that this aspect is not adequately attended to. The 25th percentile of 1.50 suggested that 25% of the respondents scored 1.50 or less, whereas 75% had a score of 1.50 or more. The median of 2.50 implied that 50% scored 1.50 or less, and 50% scored of 1.50 or more. The 75th was 3.00, which suggests that 75% scored 3.00 or less and 25% 3.00 or more. The fact that the average score was between 2 and 3 indicates that the organisations do not adequately focus on the aspect of community.

Section C also dealt *environmental and cross-functional integration*. The average score was 2.07 (between 2 and 3), with an average deviation of 0.77 from the mean. According to the 25th percentile, 25% of the respondents scored 1.50 or less, while 75% scored 1.50 or more. The mean was 2.00, which suggests that 50% scored 2.00 or less and 50% 2.00 or more. Of the respondents, 75% scored 2.50 or less and 25% 2.50 or more. Although the average score was not closer to 1, it did suggest that the organisations to a certain extent do focus on this aspect.

A mean score of 1.67 (between 1 and 2) was achieved for the aspect of the use of *an individual or team to manage the overall interaction* with stakeholders. The supposed purpose of this aspect is to ensure and manage communication consistency. Since this score was between 1 and 2, it implied a more positive indication that the organisations do use a responsible individual or team to manage interaction with their stakeholders. The standard deviation was 0.98 – that is, a larger deviation compared to the other items. Hence this indicated that the values in the data set were, on average, further concentrated around the mean. The 25th percentile was 1.00, which indicated that 25% of the scores were equal to or less than 1.00, and 75% were 1.00 or more. Of interest was the 50th of 1.00, which implied that 50% scored 1.00 or less, and 50% 1.00 or more, while the 75th percentile of 2.00 indicated that 75% scored 2.00 and lower, and 25% 2.00 or more. This highlighted a more positive view on the availability of an individual or team to manage the interaction overall in an attempt to achieve communication consistency.

The *evaluation* of social media initiatives was investigated in items 30 and 31. A typical score of 2.91 (between 2 and 3) was the highest average score for the items in this section, and one could thus assume that the respondents' organisations do not completely evaluate their social media initiatives. The standard deviation was 0.77. A 25th percentile of 2.33 implied that 25% scored 2.33 or less and 75% 2.33 or more. The median (50th percentile) showed that 50%

scored 3.00 or less, whereas 50% scored 3.00 or more. Based on the 75th percentile of 3.67, 75% scored 3.67 or less, and 25% 3.67 or more. Breakenridge (2012) and Regan (2011) support the evaluation of social media initiatives in section 4.6, chapter 4).

The average score for section C as a whole was 2.35 (between 2 and 3), which broadly suggests that non-profit organisations are, on average, uninvolved in the issues pertaining to the attainment and maintenance of integrated social media brand communication. However, there were two of the aspects for which the respondents indicated more positive involvement by the organisations, such as the listening orientation and management of social media interaction by an individual or team.

6.6 CORRELATION BETWEEN THE SECTIONS OF THE ONLINE SURVEY

Finally, the correlation between sections A, B and C was calculated by means of the Pearson correlation coefficient test, and specified in table 6.22 below. The intention was solely to determine whether a possible association between these sections exist, in view of the lack of research and knowledge on the integration of social media brand communication. The aim was to obtain an indication of whether the groupings of the proposed elements, in the survey and for purposes of the study, could be appropriate for an integrated approach to social media brand communication, as stated in RQ4.

Table 6.22: Correlation between sections A, B and C

Correlations between sections			
Sections	N	Mean	Std dev
A	42	1.96071	0.54140
B	42	2.19892	0.65143
C	42	2.34560	0.64424

The above table clearly shows that the average scores between the three sections in the online survey as indicated did not differ to a large extent. The typical scores were between 1 and 3, but closer to 2, which was an indication that all the elements were adequately correlated. The idea that these sections were highly correlated was further supported by a Pearson correlation coefficient of $p = <.0001$ (table 6.23 below). This calculation indicates a strong positive linear association between *Fundamentals* (section A) and *Avenues or ways to achieve integration* (section B), and *Fundamentals* (section A) and *Attainment* (section C), and lastly, *Avenues or ways to achieve integration* (section B) and *Attainment* (section C). Hence it could be concluded that scores for all the sections were indeed highly correlated.

Table 6.23: Pearson's coefficient for sections A, B and C

Correlation of sections A, B and C			
	Section A	Section B	Section C
Section A	1.00000	0.66472 <i><.0001</i>	0.60205 <i><.0001</i>
Section B	0.66472 <i><.0001</i>	1.00000	0.79633 <i><.0001</i>
Section C	0.60205 <i><.0001</i>	0.79633 <i><.0001</i>	1.00000

Section D of the online survey explored the biographical and demographic information of the respondents, specifically to determine the different positions of the respondents, their years of experience and the approaches they followed when planning social media brand communication.

6.7 KEY FINDINGS OF THE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS, ONE-WAY FREQUENCY CALCULATIONS AND THE INTERNAL RELIABILITY TESTS

The primary aim of the online survey was to investigate different elements of how social media is included in the non-profit organisations of the respondents. The statements that addressed the theoretical aspects were formulated and the respondents had to select the option that best described this practice in the organisation they worked for. This was mostly a descriptive effort, on account of the dearth of research on the integration of social media in this sector, its purpose being to gaining insight into the specific details in respect of the proposed elements of the conceptual framework.

The most significant findings related to the strength of the linear associations *per element* and *per section*, as calculated by means of the Cronbach alpha coefficient and Pearson's correlation coefficient tests. These calculations mainly confirmed the existence of positive relationships between items in the questionnaire, which statistically suggested the groupings of the different elements. Furthermore, based on the statistical evidence of a positive relationship between all three elements, the researcher could assume that they were correctly grouped together.

The foregoing sections highlighted the following significant insights as revealed by the individual responses:

- *Fundamental aspects of social media brand communication integration.* Even though the strategic planning of social media efforts was acknowledged, these organisations do not appear to make any effort to align the different social media platforms with those of their stakeholders. This raises questions about a stakeholder focus that considers the stakeholders' needs. There was no clear indication of whether social media issues are attended to either in a social media strategy or in an overall communication strategy, with most of the respondents opting for the *somewhat* option for both aspects. Overall, the items in the *fundamental aspects of integrating social media brand communication* element were not entirely supported.
- *Avenues or ways to achieve social media brand communication integration.* There was a lack of evidence to support the idea that organisations adopt a listening approach or engage in conversations with their stakeholders. Evidence from this population did not support the use of analytic tools to track stakeholder conversations. Moreover, non-profit organisations seem to be less interested in requesting stakeholders to participate in conversations of the organisation. In addition, there was evidence that these organisations do request stakeholders to share their stories. There were indications that these organisations do repurpose content for use on different platforms and to a certain extent aggregate content from other sources. The importance of managing social media content either by a multi-skilled individual or a team was acknowledged. The use of a structured approach to the planning of social media content was not obvious, and the organisations generally do not use a content plan. The responses showed limited use of online scheduling tools that could influence the timing of messages and response times. The positive responses suggested that topics are monitored by the organisations to ensure appropriate *content*. The findings indicated that non-profit organisations do use links on social media platforms to their traditional media, but these media are not combined, for example, the use of paid-for media on social media. Despite theoretical support in the literature, non-profit organisations do not appear to use a single communication toolbox.
- *Attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication.* Non-profit organisations seem dedicated to provide timely responses, but are not involved in listening to conversations. This supports an earlier finding on the use of analytic tools. This is linked to the fact that organisations also do not use hashtags to identify important conversations. The findings moreover suggest that organisations do not adequately consider the interests of their stakeholders in creating brand communities.

The formation of brand communities could be hindered because this is closely linked to the fact that these non-profit organisations do not listen to the conversations of their stakeholders on social media, and are thus less informed about their communication needs and preferences. Non-profit organisations do appear to identify key stakeholders, and the findings also indicated that limited support is provided for brand ambassadors to help create a sense of community. The importance of donors and volunteers is acknowledged through posting appreciations, but not all organisations do this. Non-profit organisations do not involve their employees in social media initiatives to the fullest extent possible. The external environment is monitored to a lesser extent. Specific efforts are made to coordinate the communication activities to advance the corporate brand. The management of interactions with stakeholders was overall positive. Moreover, non-profit organisations seemingly fall short in the strategic evaluation of social media brand communication through, say, social media audits, and they also appear disinterested in determining whether stakeholders feel that they are being listened to and are not involved in benchmarking or "best practices".

- *The biographical and demographical section revealed the following:*
 - Indications are that communication professionals in many instances fulfil more than one role in a non-profit organisation (21.95% of those who responded). Many of these professionals are in positions not typically associated with the management of communication on social media platforms (19.51%). Based on the idea put forward in the literature, namely that a social media strategy should, *inter alia*, be informed by and hence should also consider the *operational* capacity of staff, this could impede the proper use of social media in this sector. The results of the items about such a social media strategy were inconclusive.
 - Most of the respondents responsible for managing and coordinating social media for the non-profit organisation had two and more years of experience.
 - It seems that the types of social media most often used, in sequence of popularity, are Facebook, followed by Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

6.8 NON-PARAMETRIC, ONE-WAY CORRELATION CALCULATIONS TO ESTABLISH DIFFERENCES IN HOW RESPONSE GROUPS RATED THE SECTIONS

As specified earlier, for the purpose of the present study, the researcher deemed it necessary to determine statistically whether there were significant differences in the responses for all the elements and theoretical aspects in the questionnaire. This contributes to quantitatively

answer RQ4, and investigate the ways in which the proposed elements could be suitable for an integrated approach to social media brand communication (section 1.5.1).

In terms of the pragmatic research approach adopted in this study, insight into this issue was perceived to be absolutely vital to gain an understanding of the different realities that non-profit organisations face when integrating their social media brand communication. The point of departure that non-profit organisations' realities differ and are constantly in flux, would suggest unique challenges and views regarding the implementation of the theoretical aspects under investigation. Insight into whether differences exist would make a valuable contribution to the final conceptual framework. The emphasis was specifically on the respondents' responses in terms of (1) their position/s, (2) their years of experience, and (c) the approach followed for the planning of social media initiatives.

To gain the required insights, and mainly because of the comparison of more than two groups, non-parametric, one-way comparisons were made by means of the Kruskal-Wallis test (section 5.3.5.1(d), chapter 5). The Kruskal-Wallis is a non-parametric test that is useful when the gathered data violates the assumptions for parametric testing, which was the case in this study (section 5.7.1.1(d), chapter 5). This test allows for more accurate calculations to ascertain whether mean differences exist between the different groupings illustrated in table 6.2. In terms of the Kruskal-Wallis test, hypotheses or predictions state that a certain effect will be present, in a *null hypothesis* (H_a), or absent, in an *alternative hypothesis* (H_0). The calculations are presented per section in tabular format.

In section 6.8.1, the Kruskal-Wallis tested the following hypotheses concerning *position*:

H_0 : There are no significant differences in the ratings of the respondents according to their position.

H_a : There are significant differences in the rating of the respondents according to their position.

6.8.1 The differences between the different groups in terms of the position/s of the respondents

This section outlines the findings on the respondents' ratings of the fundamental aspects of social media brand communication integration, according to their position/s in the non-profit organisations. It was necessary to ascertain whether there were differences per position in the non-profit sector that could contribute to the disparities in the ways organisations in the same sector approach the integration of social media.

6.8.1.1 The fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication (section A) classified according to the different positions

As previously established in section 6.3.1 above, the Cronbach coefficient alpha for section A provided adequate statistical support for the combination of the items in this element, namely *social media presence* and *communication strategy*. The issue under consideration was whether the respondents in the different positions, as indicated in table 6.24, had different views on the fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication.

Table 6.24: Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test to determine whether there were significant differences in the ratings for section A, according to the positions of the respondents

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for section A: The fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication classified according to the different positions					
Position	N	Sum of scores	Expected under H0	Std dev under H0	Mean score
Other	8	224.00	168.0	30.184797	28.000000
More than one position	9	232.00	189.0	31.526992	25.777778
PR / Communication	10	135.50	210.0	32.708990	13.550000
Marketing	7	121.00	147.0	28.659907	17.285714
Chief Executive Officer or Executive Chairman	7	148.50	147.0	28.659907	21.214286
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	8.8294
DF	4
Pr > chi-square	0.0655

Based on the p-value (in red) of 0.0655, which was higher than 5%, **the null hypothesis could not be rejected** at a 5% level of significance – hence the conclusion that there were no significant differences in the ratings according to the respondents' positions. The responses therefore indicated that, overall, the respondents did not express significantly different views on the way their organisations apply the items in this section. However, the comparison clearly indicated that the scores for PR and Communication (13.55), and Marketing (17.28) were notably lower than, say, the “other” positions (28.00). This indicates that the values in this

dataset were not evenly spread, and moreover suggests that these two groups provided a more positive response for the section as a whole.

6.8.1.2 The avenues of social media integration (section B) classified according to the different positions

This section outlines the findings on the respondents' ratings of ways or avenues which social media integration may take place, based on their position/s in the non-profit organisations.

Similar to the statistical evidence, the correlation between the theoretical items in section B was statistically significant, and could be combined in this section. Item 15 was excluded from the analysis because the correlation with the other items was inadequate, as elaborated upon above. Section B addressed the theoretical aspects, *stakeholder integration*, *social media content* and *social media brand communication mix*.

The respondents expressed different views on the section as a whole, as indicated in table 6.25 below.

Table 6.25: Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test to determine whether there were significant differences in the ratings for section B, according to the positions of the respondents

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for section B: The avenues of social media integration classified according to the different positions					
Position	N	Sum of scores	Expected under H0	Std dev under H0	Mean score
Other	8	211.50	168.0	30.343039	26.437500
More than one position	9	231.00	189.0	31.692270	25.666667
PR and Communication	10	137.00	210.0	32.880465	13.700000
Marketing	7	112.50	147.0	28.810154	16.071429
Chief Executive Officer or Executive Chairman	7	169.00	147.0	28.810154	24.142857
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	8.4246
DF	4

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Pr > chi-square	0.0772

Since the p-value of 0.0772 was higher than 5%, **the null hypothesis could not be rejected**. Hence it could be assumed that there were no significant differences in the ratings of the responses according to the respondents' positions. Similar to the calculations for section A, the average scores for *PR/Communication* at 13.7, and *Marketing* at 16.07, were obviously lower than those of the other three groups. This implies that these two groups in the non-profit sector who were responsible for managing and coordinating communication on social media indicated that their organisations are more attentive to the ways social media can be integrated.

It should be noted that the calculations revealed a significant statistical difference for the *social media content* aspect, which formed part of section B. Since all the other theoretical aspects did not reveal such differences, it was necessary to report on this finding. The following items were explored in this element: having a responsible individual/team for editorial content; using a social media content plan and online scheduling tools; requesting stakeholders to contribute to social media content; repurposing social media content; sourcing content from other sources; and monitoring of topics raised by stakeholders. This was the only item in the questionnaire for which a difference in ratings was found. The responses of the different groups regarding this element are presented in table 6.26 below.

Table 6.26: Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test to determine whether there were significant differences in the ratings for section B, the *social media content* area

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for the <i>social media content</i> aspect in section B					
Position	N	Sum of scores	Expected under H0	Std dev under H0	Mean score
Other	8	226.50	168.0	30.283297	28.312500
More than one position	9	234.50	189.0	31.629872	26.055556
PR and communication	10	135.50	210.0	32.815727	13.550000
Marketing	7	110.00	147.0	28.753430	15.714286
Chief Executive Officer or Executive Chairman	7	154.50	147.0	28.753430	22.071429
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	9.9452
DF	4
Pr > chi-square	0.0414

Since the p-value of 0.0414 was lower than the 5% level of significance, **the null hypothesis could be rejected**. The comparisons show that there were differences in the ratings of the respondents regarding this aspect. Hence it could be concluded that there was adequate statistical evidence to suggest that there were differences between the groups responsible for social media brand communication in non-profit organisations in how they rate social media content. This conclusion is in line with the frequencies reported in section 6.4. It should be noted that as an apparent trend in the mean values, PR/ Communication (13.55) and Marketing (15.71), which display the lowest average values, could indicate a more positive view of the extent to which this aspect is applied. This aspect addressed the following issues: an individual or team responsible for editorial content; use of a content plan; use of online scheduling tools; encouraging external stakeholders to provide content; repurposing content for use on a different platform; aggregating content from other sources; and monitoring of conversations to determine the appropriateness of content.

6.8.1.3 The attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration (section C) classified according to the different positions

This section outlines the findings on the respondents' ratings of the ways in which social media integration can be achieved and maintained, according to their position/s in the non-profit organisations.

Earlier, it was statistically determined through the calculation of the Cronbach coefficient alpha that the items in section C could be grouped together in this section (section C). Section C comprised the following aspects: a *social listening orientation*, *community*, *environmental* and *cross-functional integration*, and *evaluation*. The typical responses of the identified groups regarding how social media integration could be attained and maintained, are presented in table 6.27 below.

Table 6.27: Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test to determine whether there were significant differences in the ratings for section C, according to the respondents' positions

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for section C: The attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration classified according to the different positions					
Position	N	Sum of scores	Expected under H0	Std dev under H0	Mean score
Other	8	184.00	168.0	30.360276	23.000000
More than one position	9	209.50	189.0	31.710274	23.277778
PR and Communication	10	167.00	210.0	32.899144	16.700000
Marketing	7	118.00	147.0	28.826521	16.857143
Chief Executive Officer or Executive Chairman	7	182.50	147.0	28.826521	26.071429
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	3.9383
DF	4
Pr > chi-square	0.4144

Similar to the comparisons in the preceding sections, and based on the p-value of 0.4144 for section C, **the null hypothesis could not be rejected**, and one could assume there was insufficient evidence to suggest that there were differences between the different positions held in the organisations in how they rated this section. In other words, the responses were generally similar, although the values were unevenly spread. Also, the ratings for PR/Communication (16.70) and Marketing (16.85) as in the earlier analysis tended to be more positive regarding the application of the theoretical aspects.

6.8.2 Differences between the various groups in terms of their years of experience in the non-profit sector

Similar to section 6.8.1, the researcher set out to determine whether there was a difference in responses in how the respondents rated the different sections, based on their years of experience in the non-profit sector. These calculations were prompted by a lack of research on whether years of experience affect the way communication professionals practise the fundamental aspect of social media brand communication integration. Non-parametric, one-

way comparisons were made by means of the Kruskal-Wallis test to ascertain where there were mean differences between the different groupings.

In this section, the Kruskal-Wallis tested the following hypotheses relating to *years of experience*:

H_0 : There are no significant differences in the ratings of the respondents according to their years of experience.

H_a : There are significant differences in the rating of the respondents according to their years of experience,

6.8.2.1 The fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication classified according to years of experience

This section outlines the findings on the respondents' ratings of the fundamentals that need to be in place for social media brand communication integration, based on the years of experience in managing social media (see table 6.28 below).

Table 6.28: Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test to determine whether there were significant differences in the ratings for section A, according to the respondents' years of experience

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for section A: The fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication classified according to the years of experience in managing social media in the non-profit sector					
Item 34	N	Sum of scores	Expected under H_0	Std dev under H_0	Mean score
Two or less years	17	421.50	391.0	42.429538	24.794118
More than 5 years	18	381.50	414.0	42.872909	21.194444
Between 2 and 5 years	10	232.00	230.0	36.383028	23.200000
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	0.6687
DF	2
Pr > chi-square	0.7158

Since the p-value of 0.7158 was not lower than 5%, **the null hypothesis could not be rejected** at a 5% level of significance. This suggests that there was insufficient statistical evidence to indicate that there were differences between the respondents' years of experience in the non-profit sector regarding the fundamentals for integrated social media brand communication. It was evident that the respondents with more than five years of experience had a lower average score, which indicated that their organisations are more inclined to address the fundamental aspects. Respondents with more than five years' experience had a lower score, which suggested a more positive orientation towards the items in this section.

6.8.2.2 The avenues of social media integration classified according to years of experience

This section deals with the findings on the respondents' ratings of the ways in which social media integration can be achieved, according to their years of experience in managing social media (see table 6.29 below).

Table 6.29: Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test to determine whether there were significant differences in the ratings for section B, according to the respondents' years of experience

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for section B: The avenues of social media integration classified according to the years of experience in managing social media in the non-profit sector					
Item 34	N	Sum of scores	Expected under H0	Std dev under H0	Mean score
Two or less years	16	427.00	360.0	40.922760	26.687500
More than 5 years	18	360.50	405.0	41.826241	20.027778
Between 2 and 5 years	10	202.50	225.0	35.650479	20.250000
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	2.6825
DF	2
Pr > chi-square	0.2615

The p-value for this section was 0.2615, which indicated that **the null hypothesis could not be rejected**. Hence there was insufficient statistical evidence to suggest that there were any

differences in how respondents rated the ways in which social media can be integrated, according to different years of experience. Hence it would be reasonable to conclude that years of experience in managing social media brand communication do not significantly affect the ratings of the avenues or ways of integration. Nonetheless, the mean score of respondents with two or less years' experience was higher when compared to the mean scores of the other two groups, which indicates that the values in the dataset were not evenly spread. Besides, the higher score for two or less years could imply a more negative view of how their organisations practise the ways to achieve social media integration, as opposed to those with more than two years of experience in this sector.

6.8.2.3 The attainment and maintenance of social media integration according to years of experience

This section outlines the findings on the respondents' ratings of how social media integration can be achieved and maintained, based on years of experience managing social media. The findings are presented in table 6.30.

Table 6.30: Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test to determine whether there were significant differences in the ratings for section C, according to the respondents' years of experience

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for section C: the attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration classified according to years of experience managing social media in the non-profit sector					
v34c	N	Sum of scores	Expected under H0	Std dev under H0	Mean score
Two or less years	14	356.50	301.0	37.431781	25.464286
More than 5 years	18	333.50	387.0	39.295184	18.527778
Between 2 and 5 years	10	213.00	215.0	33.819910	21.300000

Average scores were used for ties.

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	2.5275
DF	2
Pr > chi-square	0.2826

Similar to section 6.8.2.2, the p-value of 0.2826 signifies that there was **inadequate statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis** at a 5% level of significance. This suggests that there was insufficient statistical evidence to suggest differences in how the respondents with different years of experience rated the aspects of the attainment and maintenance of social media integration. Nonetheless, it is clear that the respondents with more than five years achieved a lower rating, which might indicate that they had a more positive view on how their organisations apply the items in this section.

In conclusion, one could generally assume that the respondents with more than five years' experience would be more likely to practise the elements and theoretical aspects specified for this study.

6.8.3 Differences between the various groups in terms of their approaches to communication planning in the non-profit sector

A consideration of the different approaches to communication planning in this sector and the way the respondents rated the different sections was deemed important to ascertain whether there were possible correlations. Non-parametric, one-way comparisons were made by means of the Kruskal-Wallis test to ascertain whether there were mean differences between the different groupings. The rationale was to ascertain whether the different approaches affected the way the respondents rated the proposed elements for integrating social media brand communication. In this section, the Kruskal-Wallis tested the following hypotheses on *the approaches to communication planning*:

H_0 : There are no significant differences in the ratings of the respondents according to their approaches to communication planning.

H_a : There are significant differences in the rating of the respondents according to their approaches to communication planning.

6.8.3.1 The fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication classified according to the approach followed when planning communication activities

The respondents' ratings of the fundamental aspects of social media brand communication integration, according to the approach they adopted in planning communication activities are presented in table 6.31, and then explained.

Table 6.31: Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test to determine whether there were significant differences in the ratings for section A, according to the approaches followed

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for section A: The fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication classified according to the approach followed when planning communication activities					
v36c	N	Sum of scores	Expected under H0	Std dev under H0	Mean score
Both	27	537.0	540.0	32.579395	19.888889
Traditional	5	113.0	100.0	23.599075	22.600000
Social	7	130.0	140.0	27.089097	18.571429
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	0.3790
DF	2
Pr > chi-square	0.8274

Based on the fact that the p-value of 0.8274 was higher than 5%, **the null hypothesis could not be rejected** at a 5% level of significance. Hence there was insufficient statistical evidence to indicate that there were differences in the approaches of the respondents in how they rated the fundamentals for social media brand communication integration. It should be noted that the higher mean score achieved by the respondents who adopted a traditional approach to their communication planning could indicate a smaller tendency towards implementing an integrated approach to social media brand communication.

6.8.3.2 The avenues of social media integration classified according to the approach followed when planning social media activities

The respondents' ratings of the ways in which social media could take place, based on the approach they followed when planning communication activities is presented in this section.

The scores are provided in table 6.32.

Table 6.32: Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test to determine whether there were significant differences in the ratings for section B, according to the approaches followed

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for section B: The avenues of social media integration classified according to the approach followed when planning communication activities					
v36c	N	Sum of scores	Expected under H0	Std dev under H0	Mean score
Both	27	487.0	540.0	32.796761	18.037037
Traditional	5	115.0	100.0	23.756525	23.000000
Social	7	178.0	140.0	27.269832	25.428571
Average scores were used for ties.					

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	2.7444
DF	2
Pr > chi-square	0.2536

Since the p-value of 0.2536 was higher than 5%, **the null hypothesis could not be rejected**. This indicates that it could not be assumed that there were no differences in the responses in respect of the avenues of social media integration according to different approaches followed. Nevertheless, the lower mean score for the respondents who use both traditional and social media as equal points of departure, suggested that they might be more inclined towards applying the items in this section.

6.8.3.3 The attainment and maintenance of social media integration classified according to the approach followed when planning social media activities

This section presents the scores of the respondents for how social media integration can be achieved and maintained, according to the approach they follow when planning communication activities. The scores are provided in table 6.33.

Table 6.33: Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test to determine whether there were significant differences in the ratings for section C, according to the approaches followed

Wilcoxon scores (rank sums) for section C: The attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration classified according to the approach followed when planning communication activities					
v36c	N	Sum of scores	Expected under H0	Std dev under H0	Mean score
Both	27	473.50	540.0	32.821749	17.537037
Traditional	5	155.50	100.0	23.774625	31.100000
Social	7	151.00	140.0	27.290609	21.571429

Average scores were used for ties.

Kruskal-Wallis test	
Chi-square	6.1473
DF	2
Pr > chi-square	0.0463

Since the p-value of 0.0463 was lower than a 5% level of significance, the **null hypothesis could be rejected**. Hence there was sufficient statistical evidence to suggest that there are differences between the approaches to communication planning and how the respondents rated the attainment and maintenance of social media integration. Once again, it should be noted that the respondents who regarded both traditional and social media as equal points of departure had a lower mean scores, which means that one could assume they were then more focused on the items pertaining to the attainment and maintenance of social media integration.

6.8.4 Comparisons between years of experience in managing social media activities and the approaches followed for communication planning, by means of two-way frequency calculations

Following the insights gained from the correlation calculations in sections 6.8.1 to 6.8.3, the researcher deemed it necessary to calculate comparisons between the respondents who answered both items relating to the *years of experience* and the *approaches* followed when planning communication activities in the non-profit sector. Table 6.34 indicates the frequencies expressed as percentages, calculated by means of the SAS system.

Table 6.34 The approaches followed for communication planning in the non-profit sector compared with years of experience managing communication on social media

The approaches followed for planning communication compared with the years of experience in managing social media in the non-profit sector through two-way frequency calculations					
Approaches to communication planning	Experience in years				
	Two years or less	Two and a half years	More than five years	N	
Considering both traditional and social media	• Frequency	40.74% (n = 11)	18.52% (n = 5)	40.74% (n = 11)	69.23% (n = 27)
	• Row % (using both approaches)	40.74%	18.52%	40.74%	
	• Column % (experience in years)	78.57%	62.50%	64.71%	
Considering social media only	• Frequency	0.00	14.29% (n = 1)	85.38% (n=6)	17.95% (n=7)
	• Column % (experience in years)	0.00	12.50%	35.29%	
Considering traditional media only	• Frequency	60.00% (n = 3)	40.00% (n = 2)	0.00	12.82% (n = 5)
	• Column % (experience in years)	21.43%	25%	0.00	
Total	35.90% n = 14	20.51% n = 8	43.59% n = 17	100% n = 39	
Frequency missing = 11					

Based on the calculations table 6.34, the following main conclusions were drawn (the frequencies are expressed as percentages):

In total, 39 respondents answered both items 36 and 34, which, in turn, investigated the *approach followed* by the respondents when planning communication and the *number of years of experience* managing social media activities in the non-profit sector.

The total number of respondents who had been managing social media in a non-profit organisation for **more than five years** was 17 (43.59%), of which 64.71% considered *both traditional and social media* as points of departure, and 35.29% used *social media* as the point of departure. No respondents in the *more than five years* category indicated that they use traditional media as the point of departure.

Of the respondents, 14 (35.90%) had been managing social media in the non-profit sector for **two years or less**, of which 78.57% had used *both traditional and social media* as points of reference for communication planning, and 21.43% had followed a *traditional approach*. None of the total number of respondents apparently follow a *social media approach*.

A total of eight respondents (20.51%) had been managing social media in a non-profit organisation for **2.5 years**. Of these respondents, 62.50% had used *both traditional and social media* when doing communication planning, 25% had followed a *traditional approach* and 12.50% had adopted a *social media approach*.

Most of the respondents ($n = 27$) indicated that they had used *both traditional and social media* as equal points of departure in communication planning. Of the respondents who used both media equally in their planning, 40.74% had been managing social media activities for **two years or less** and for **more than five years** respectively, and 18.52% who had done so for **2.5 years**.

As reported above and based on the calculations, it could be inferred that most respondents seemed to follow an integrated approach by considering both traditional and social media in their communication planning. The frequencies for all three periods of experience for considering *both traditional and social media* were obviously higher when compared to the other two approaches. There was no clear evidence to support the differences in years of experience in the integrated approach that would have affected the approach adopted by those respondents.

Noteworthy was a missing frequency of 11 for both items, which would suggest that not all respondents answered items 34 and 36. Considering the responses to item 36 by the respondents who selected “other” (please specify), it became evident that this item might have been unclear or could not be answered because of a lack of knowledge of the topic. The two answers referred to “email (newsletter)” and “not sure what to comment”, which supports this

assumption. The purpose of item 36 was to identify the *starting point* of those responsible for communication planning in non-profit organisations and thereby determine whether the focus in this regard was on an integrated approach, a social media approach or a traditional approach. Although no suggestions or comments in this regard were received during the two pilot studies, the item should be rephrased in future studies.

6.8.5 Comparisons between the positions of the respondents and their years of experience managing social media activities, by means of two-way frequency calculations

The correlation calculations in sections 6.8.1 to 6.8.3 allowed the researcher to calculate comparisons between the respondents who had answered both items relating to the *positions* they held in the non-profit organisation and their *years of experience* managing social media in the non-profit sector. The frequencies and percentages calculated by means of the SAS system are indicated in table 6.35. The frequencies are expressed as percentages.

Table 6.35: The positions of communication professionals compared with their years of experience managing communication on social media

The positions of the respondents compared with their years of experience managing social media in the non-profit sector through two-way frequency calculations					
Position	Experience in years				
	Two years or less	Two and a half years	More than five years	Total	
Chief Executive Officer/ Executive Chairman					
	• Frequency	4.88% (n = 2)	4.88% (n = 2)	7.32% (n = 3)	17.07% (n = 7)
	• Row % (experience in years)	28.57%	28.57%	42.86%	
	• Column % (total per position)	14.29%	20.00%	17.65%	
Marketing					
	• Frequency	7.32% (n = 3)	0.00	9.76% (n = 4)	17.07 (n = 7)
	• Row % (experience in years)	42.86%	0.00	57.14%	
	• Column % (total per position)	21.43%	0.00	23.53%	

More than one position				
• Frequency	7.32% (n = 3)	7.32% (n = 3)	7.32% (n = 3)	
• Row % (experience in years)	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	
• Column % (total per position)	21.43%	30.00%	17.65%	21.95 (n = 9)
Other				
• Frequency	7.32% (n = 3)	7.32% (n = 3)	4.88% (n = 2)	
• Row % (experience in years)	37.50%	37.50%	25.00%	19.51% (n = 8)
• Column % (total per position)	21.43%	30.00%	11.76%	
PR/Communication				
• Frequency	7.32% (n = 3)	4.88% (n = 2)	12.20 (n = 5)	
• Row % (experience in years)	30.00%	20.00%	50.00%	24.39% (n = 10)
• Column % (total per position)	21.43%	20.00%	29.41%	
Total	34.15% n = 14	24.39% n = 10	41.46% n = 17	100% n = 41
Frequency missing = 9				

A total of 41 respondents answered both items 33 and 34, which individually investigated the *positions of the respondents* and their *years of experience* managing social media.

Of the total number of respondents, most indicated that they had been managing social media in this sector for **more than five years**, with a percentage of 41.46%, followed by 34.15%, who had been managing social media for **two years or less** and 24.39% for **two and a half years**.

According to the groupings formed to allow for statistical calculations, the highest percentages of respondents, namely 24.39%, 21.95% and 19.51% resorted under **PR/Communication**, **more than one position** and **other**, respectively. This was followed by **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/Executive Chairman** and **Marketing**, with 17.07% each of the total number of respondents. Of significance was that the number of respondents who held **more than one**

position and **other**, which exceeded that of **Marketing**, which is generally associated with the organisation's communication and branding functions. Furthermore, it was concerning that those respondents who had been managing social media and who had identified **other** positions did identify roles that are uncommon in the communication management function in an organisation, namely "lecturer, office administrator, therapy manager, data capturer, social worker, fundraiser, membership recruitment advisor". This merits further investigation in future studies to determine their knowledge and experience in this field, bearing in mind the number of respondents compared to those in the other positions.

Most of the respondents who had been managing social media for **more than five** years, fulfilled **PR/Communication** roles (29.41%) followed by **Marketing** (23.53%), and **CEO/Executive Chairman** (17.65%) and **more than one** (17.65%), and 11.76% who are in **other** roles.

An equal number of total responses, namely 21.43%, indicated that the respondents had been managing social media for **two years or less** in **Marketing**, **more than one position**, **other** and **PR/Communication**. Only 14.29% identified the **CEO/Executive Chairman** position.

Among the **Marketing** respondents, 57.14% had been managing social media for **more than five years** and 42.86% for **two years or less**, with no respondents for the period of **two and a half years**. The responses of the PR/Communication respondents, indicated that 50% had been managing social media for **more than five years**, 30% for **two years or less**, and 20% for **two and a half years**. The **CEO/Executive Chairman** respondents revealed that 42.86% had been in these positions for **more than five years**, with 28.57% each for the **two years or less** and **two and a half years**. It is evident that, based on the responses and calculations, the numbers of positions in the **more than five years** group were higher than the **two years or less** group, except for the **other** positions, which had a higher number of respondents in the two years or less range. This result could suggest that an increased number of **other**, mostly unrelated positions, are involved in managing social media. However, as mentioned previously, it would not be possible to generalise the findings of the empirical study to the total population of non-profit organisations in South Africa. The calculations for the respondents who indicated that they fulfil **more than one position** and the number of years, yielded the same percentages, namely 33.33% across all the years.

6.8.6 Comparisons between the positions of the respondents and the approaches followed in planning communication in the non-profit sector, by means of two-way frequency calculations

The correlation calculations in sections 6.8.1 to 6.8.3 allowed the researcher to calculate comparisons between the respondents who answered both the items pertaining to *the positions* they held in the non-profit organisation and *approaches* they adopted when planning communication in the non-profit organisation. The frequencies and percentages calculated by means of the SAS system, are indicated in table 6.36 below.

Table 6.36: The positions of communication professionals compared with different approaches followed in communication planning in the non-profit sector

The positions of the respondents compared with the approaches followed for planning communication in the non-profit sector, by means of two-way frequency calculations				
Position	The approaches followed for planning communication in the non-profit sector			
	Both	Social	Traditional	Total
Chief Executive Officer/Executive Chairman				
• Frequency	10.53% (n = 4)	5.26% (n = 2)	2.63% (n = 1)	18.42% (n=7)
Marketing				
• Frequency	18.42% (n = 7)	0.00	0.00	18.42% (n = 7)
• Row % (approach followed)	100.00	0.00	0.00	

The positions of the respondents compared with the approaches followed for planning communication in the non-profit sector, by means of two-way frequency calculations

Position	The approaches followed for planning communication in the non-profit sector			
	Both	Social	Traditional	Total
Other				
• Frequency	13.16% (n = 5)	2.63% (n = 1)	2.63% (n = 1)	18.42% (n = 7)
PR and communication				
• Frequency	21.05% (n = 8)	0.00	5.26% (n = 2)	26.32% (n = 10)
• Row % (approach followed)	80.00	0.00	20.00	
Total	71.05% n = 27	15.79% n = 6	13.16% n = 5	100.00 n = 38
Frequency missing = 12				

A total of 38 respondents answered both items 33 and 36. The primary aim was to determine which approach the respondents in different positions would be likely to follow when planning their communication endeavours. The questionnaire identified the following three approaches: (1) considering traditional media; (2) considering social media; and (3) considering both traditional and social media as equal points of departure; and the respondents were asked to identify the approach that *best describes* their approach.

Most of the respondents indicated that they are in a PR/Communication (26.32%) position, while the rest indicated that their positions are equally as **CEO/Executive Chairman**, **Marketing manager**, **more than one position**, or **other** (18.42%).

Of the respondents who answered both questions, 71.05% stated that they use **both** types of media to plan, 15.79% use **social media** and 13.16% use **traditional media** when planning their communication. It is thus clear that regardless of the position they hold, most of them appear to adopt an integrated approach in their planning.

It is interesting to note that the total number of respondents in the **Marketing** field consider **both** media (100%), followed by 80% of the total in **PR/Communication**. Of those in PR/Communication, 20% still consider only *traditional media* as the starting point in their communication planning. Since both these fields are traditionally considered to be involved with communication with stakeholders, the findings appeared to confirm their commitment to a more coordinated approach by considering both types of media.

One should note that those respondents in **CEO/Executive Chairman** positions, **more than one position**, and **other** positons did not specifically indicate that they preferred **both** traditional and social media as points of departure – hence the fact they applied an integrated approach to their communication planning.

6.8.7 Key insights into the comparisons of the two-way frequency calculations indicated in tables 6.34, 6.35 and 6.36

Based on table 6.37 below it is evident that a comparison of the responses to items 36 and 34, indicated that 69.23% consider **both** traditional and social media as points of departure in their communication planning. This represented most of the respondents. Of this percentage of respondents who use both types, 40.74% had been managing and coordinating social media for **two years or less**, and **more than five years**, respectively, and 18.52% for **two and a half years** (table 6.37). These findings could indicate that professionals with less experience in the non-profit sector might be inclined to consider a more integrated approach to their communication planning, or that these individuals might have been from the private sector. This would merit further exploration in future studies, especially to determine whether these individuals were from a younger generation or whether they were in the private sector, and thus have specific reasons for having a more contemporary view on the use of social media to communicate.

Table 6.37: Highest score for the approaches followed in communication planning in the non-profit sector, compared with years of experience in managing communication on social media

The approaches followed for planning communication compared with years of experience managing social media in the non-profit sector, by means of two-way frequency calculations				
Approaches to communication planning	Experience in years			
	Two or less years	Two and a half years	More than five years	N
Considering both traditional and social media				
• Frequency	40.74% (n = 11)	18.52% (n = 5)	40.74% (n = 11)	69.23% (n = 7)
• Row % (using both approaches)	40.74%	18.52%	40.74%	

A comparison of items 33 and 34 revealed that most of the respondents were in **PR/Communication** positions, with 50% who had been managing and coordinating social media for **more than five years** (see table 6.38 below).

Table 6.38: Highest score for the positions of communication professionals, compared with the years of experience managing communication on social media

The positions of the respondents compared with the years of experience managing social media in the non-profit sector, by means of two-way frequency calculations				
Position	Experience in years			
	Two years or less	Two and a half years	More than five years	Total
PR/Communication				
• Frequency	7.32% (n = 3)	4.88% (n = 2)	12.20 (n = 5)	
• Row % (experience in years)	30.00%	20.00%	50.00%	24.39% (n = 10)

A comparison of items 33 and 36 suggested that 71.05% of those who answered these items considered **both** traditional and social media as points of departure when planning their

communication activities (table 6.39 below). Most of these respondents indicated that they were in **PR/Communication** positions (26.32%). As explained, it is evident that most of those in PR/Communication positions (80%) considered both types of media for communication planning.

Table 6.39: Highest score for the positions of communication professionals, compared with approaches to communication planning in the non-profit sector

The positions of the respondents compared with the approaches followed in planning communication in the non-profit sector, by means of two-way frequency calculations				
Position	The approaches followed for planning communication in the non-profit sector			
	Both	Social	Traditional	Total
PR/Communication	21.05% (n = 8)	0.00	5.26% (n = 2)	26.32% (n = 10)
	80.00	0.00	20.00	
Total	71.05% n = 27	15.79% n = 6	13.16% n = 5	100.00 n = 38

In light of the findings discussed in this section, it could be concluded that the respondents who were the PR/Communication grouping had the most years' experience (more than five), and, compared with the other groupings, were more inclined to consider both traditional and social media as points of departure in their communication planning. This was to be expected because this position is typically associated with communication management and coordination.

6.9 SUMMARY

This chapter presented and interpreted the results of the quantitative part of the empirical research by means of descriptive and inferential statistics.

The results of the quantitative research were reported in terms of one-way calculations, calculations of the Cronbach coefficient alpha and Pearson's coefficient tests to determine the overall reliability for each section and between all the sections in the questionnaire. Statistically, there was adequate evidence to justify the combination of the theoretical aspects of the proposed elements, and this also indicated a high correlation between all three elements. It is thus fair to conclude that the arrangement of all the elements and theoretical aspects was statistically acceptable. Those items that did not correlate with the others were removed, and therefore not included in the conceptual framework presented in chapter 8.

The main insights emerged from one-way frequency calculations detailed in section 6.8. In general, non-profit organisations seem to address the elements and theoretical aspects pertaining to the fundamentals of social media brand communication integration. However, it seems to be unclear whether the strategic planning of social media brand communication is addressed in a social media strategy or in a comprehensive communication strategy. Regarding the avenues or ways to achieve social media integration, and based on the research findings, non-profit organisations generally do not appear to address this element. It is clear from the findings that organisations in this sector generally do not adopt a listening approach and do not actively seek the participation of stakeholders in content creation. Non-profit organisations do, however, recognise the importance of a multi-skilled individual or team being in charge of managing content. Unfortunately, it was found that these organisations fall short in integrating traditional and social media. The attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration were also addressed, and the responses clearly indicated that, overall, organisations fail to adhere to the key requirements, such as adopting a listening approach, appreciating the need to create community, involving employees in social media initiatives and the strategic evaluation of these initiatives.

The biographical and demographic information of the individuals who completed the questionnaire was also analysed in this chapter. Of significance was special consideration of their current positions in the non-profit sector, their years of experience, the most popular

types of social media used and the strategic approach adopted for communication planning in non-profit organisations. Most of the respondents considered both traditional and social media in their communication planning, but the real integration of these media was not supported by the other quantitative findings. The results indicated that most of the respondents who consider both types of media are mainly in PR/Communication positions.

Of importance was the realisation that many individuals who manage social media fulfil more than one role, some of whom are in positions unrelated to the communication field. Facebook appears to be the preferred platform to communicate with stakeholders.

Lastly, using two-way frequency calculations, the correlations were reported between the different positions, years of experience in this sector and the strategic approach used in the communication planning of non-profit organisations. Importantly, most respondents seem to consider both traditional and social media, of which the highest percentage had been managing social media in non-profit organisations for two years or less. The majority of respondents hold PR/Communication positions and also consider both types of media when planning their communication.

Chapter 7 continues the reporting of the empirical research, by first discussing and interpreting the findings of the qualitative part of the research, and then presenting the overall findings of the two data collection methods.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSING AND INTERPRETING THE FINDINGS OF THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS, AND REPORTING THE OVERALL RESEARCH FINDINGS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a continuation of chapter 6, and presents the findings of the qualitative part of the empirical research, namely for the semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 7, combined with chapter 6, addresses the following research objective:

*To explore the proposed elements of an integrated approach to
social media brand communication*

The aim is to analyse and report the **qualitative findings** and answer RQ4, namely to investigate *in what ways are the proposed elements appropriate for an integrated approach to social media brand communication?*

The second part of the empirical study comprised 10 interviews with communication professionals responsible for the management and coordination of communication on social media in the South African non-profit sector. This chapter addresses the following: Firstly, it discusses and interprets the findings of the interviews with communication professionals employed in South African non-profit organisations. Secondly, the key theoretical outlooks of the entire study as corroborated by the empirical findings are summarised and emergent topics are highlighted. Thirdly, the overall findings of the study's empirical research are reported according to key theoretical aspects of the study. The chapter concludes by combining the key points emerged in the theoretical chapters of this study and the findings of the empirical research, in order to provide insight into which aspects were supported or not supported by the findings.

7.2 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESPONSES IN THE INTERVIEWS, BY MEANS OF THEMATIC INVESTIGATION

The main reason for using interviews as a research method was twofold: (1) The aim was to gain insight into the topic under investigation, which generally concerned the use of social media for communication in non-profit organisations, and in particular into issues relating to the elements and theoretical aspects that emerged in the literature review in chapters 2 to 4. (2) The second aim was to identify emerging topics that could be considered for the integration

of social media brand communication. In this study, semi-structured interviews were employed for these purposes, because questionnaires do not allow for a discussion or exploration of pertinent issues. This is in line with the pragmatic approach that requires an investigation of real-life settings.

An interview guide, which was compiled on the basis of the findings of the literature review, directed the topics addressed in the semi-structured interview. The findings were discussed and interpreted according to these topics. The phases of the thematic analysis are described in Table 5.6, chapter 5. Attention was paid to the fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication, the avenues of social media integration, and the attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration.

Table 7.1 below indicates the elements and topics proposed for an integrated approach to social media brand communication, and the interview topic/s that each element examined. (See addendum C for the full and final interview guide that was administered.)

Table 7.1: Proposed elements, aspects and topics addressed in the semi-structured interviews

Section A (element 1): Fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication by non-profit organisations	TOPICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media presence • Communication strategy 	Challenges, basic requirements, values
Section B (element 2): Avenues of social media integration – use of social media to integrate at various levels	TOPICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder integration (conversation/dialogue) • Social media content (sourcing of content, planning and scheduling documents: timing) • Social media brand communication mix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversation/dialogue, database • Sourcing of content, planning and scheduling: timing • Social media in conjunction with traditional media, interaction through media convergence
Section C (element 3): The attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of social media endeavours
Biographical data	

The semi-structured interviews commenced with an introductory question with a twofold objective: firstly, to develop rapport with the participants, and secondly, to collect information on their current positions and experience in the non-profit sector. All of the participants had senior communication positions, except for one participant who was a communication consultant, and who acted as a *volunteer* in one of the smaller non-profit organisations. All of the individuals were responsible for the management and coordination of the social media activities in their organisations. The profiles of the participants are illustrated in Table 7.2, below.

Table 7.2: Participants' profiles

	Non-profit sector	Position in the organisation	Year/s at organisation	Gender
Participant 1	Social Services	Media Relations: external communication	6 months	Female
Participant 2	Health	CEO and Founder	25 years	Female
Participant 3	Social Services	General manager	17 years	Female
Participant 4	Social Services	Relationship manager	10 years	Female
Participant 5	Health	Marketing and fundraising officer	3 months	Female
Participant 6	Social Services	Communication consultant	consultant	Female
Participant 7	Health	National Campaign manager	11 years	Female
Participant 8	Education	Marketing and Communication manager	10 years	Female
Participant 9	Business	Marketing and campaign coordinator	1 year	Female
Participant 10	Social services	Digital marketer/fundraiser	1 year	Female

The contributions of the participants were deemed extremely valuable because the key decisions around and the operationalisation of all social media activities were in the hands of these individuals. Notwithstanding, challenges pertaining to identifying participants who met the requirements, and were willing to participate must be mentioned. The lengths of the interviews varied from 20 minutes to 40 minutes and depended on their availability to engage in discussions about the topics that were raised. To illustrate, though valuable input was provided by participant 8, she informed the researcher that her time was limited, and the length of the interview was 20 minutes. It should also be noted that the participants in the interviews were not part of the sampled population for the questionnaires. This therefore allowed for new insights into the topic at hand.

7.2.1 FUNDAMENTALS FOR INTEGRATING SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNICATION BY NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

The aims of section A were as follows: (1) to explore the challenges experienced by non-profit organisations when using social media to communicate; (2) to identify the basic elements or requirements required for social media brand communication; (3) to determine the approach of the non-profit organisations towards the values of their stakeholder; and (4) to investigate the extent to which databases were used in the context of applying social media to communicate. All these elements are linked to the fundamentals for the integration of social media brand communication that emerged in the literature review chapters.

Table 7.3: Theoretical aspects and topics in section A addressed in the semi-structured interviews

Section A (element 1): Fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication	
THEORETICAL ASPECTS	TOPICS DISCUSSED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social media presence• Communication strategy	Challenges, basic requirements and values

This proposed element with its theoretical aspects was explored in the online survey, and the topics selected for the interviews specifically aimed at providing more detailed information on the theoretical aspects of this element. Social media presence was further explored by identifying challenges, basic requirements and values.

7.2.1.1 Challenges

The participants mentioned specific challenges they faced when using social media to communicate. The four themes that emerged were closely related and revolved around aspects that are fundamental for this communication, including *social media content*, the *coordination of content*, *social media messages* and *social media engagement*.

(a) Theme 1: Social media content

Theme 1 dealt with the challenges participants identified relating to social media content and the clarification thereof in context and in terms of the focus of the study. The points raised mainly related to difficulties in finding appropriate information and dealing with sensitive issues (e.g. HIV/AIDS),

The issues raised by participants pertaining to social media content were not unexpected because content is the very core of social media. However, it was not anticipated that the challenges that emerged during the interviews were being experienced on this scale, especially in the larger non-profit organisations. Conversely, statements by these professionals

did support the notion extant in the literature that all interaction on social media depends on and is driven by content. The participants also mentioned that there is a broad cognisance of and an urgency to attend to specific aspects of this. Content on social media platforms is crucial if non-profit organisations wish to interact with their stakeholders, and besides actively involving stakeholders by stimulating conversations on certain topics, it is essential to create a general brand awareness.

Social media content emerged as a major challenge for non-profit organisations when using social media to communicate with their stakeholders. Specific issues that were identified included the finding of appropriate information to keep conversations going. Some participants commented as follows: “*you obviously need to have relevant up-to-date content*”; “*the first thing is coming up with the right content*”; and “*it’s about finding the most suitable content but to make sure it is relevant*”. The importance of considering stakeholders’ needs and preferences was addressed in the literature review, and the above statements suggest that organisations seem to be largely uninformed about the type of content their stakeholders prefer (section 2.3.2, chapter 2). An integrated approach to communication calls for the adoption of a stakeholder focus that encapsulates the needs and preferences of stakeholders, including the type of information they expect from the organisation (Steyn & De Beer 2012; Cornelissen 2011:40–41; Christensen et al 2008b; De Bussy 2008; Steyn et al 2005:33; Buchholz & Rosenthal 2005:138). The disconnect between organisations and their stakeholders was moreover described as when the organisation “*post[s] something that I think is totally irrelevant, [and] people love it*”. The need to be attentive to sensitive topics when creating social media content was highlighted by most participants. According to one of the participants, some of the non-profit organisations whose beneficiaries are children, people with HIV/AIDS or other terminal illnesses, it is difficult to create content for social media “*because you know we deal with AIDS, HIV and AIDS, right so, it is not an easy subject to talk about or to post content about*” and “*you have to also take into consideration the sensitivity*”. Finding suitable content has thus proven to be a challenge for these organisations. Participants highlighted the expectations stakeholders have that non-profit organisations should possess extensive knowledge of the issues with a bearing on their cause. One participant explained this as follows: “*people expect you to know about things they don’t know about in order to inform them, so I find that … not a lot is being done to sort of get that information or be about to communicate the relevant information*”.

Another pertinent issue raised as a challenge was the sourcing of content, which is explained in more detail in the section on *basic requirements*.

(b) Theme 2: Coordination of content

This theme addressed a second challenge that communication practitioners face when using social media to communicate. It is relevant to difficulties in coordinating content to ultimately ensure that consistent corporate brand messages are communicated to stakeholders.

During the interviews, the participants employed in larger non-profit organisations also raised the issue of the *coordination of content*. The difficulty of managing and coordinating content that is created and shared by their regions or branches was mentioned, despite references to existing directives and efforts to achieve consistency in this regard. The idea was aptly proffered that the alignment of communication could be attained through the coordination of content, including the timely sharing of social media content (see sections 4.5, 4.8.2.2, chapter 4). This emphasises the importance of achieving uniform brand messages that portray the non-profit organisation as a uniform whole (see section 2.5, chapter 2). One participant commented as follows: “*you have the challenges of someone posting something that wasn't approved or perhaps spelling errors or that kind of thing*”. Another participant from a larger non-profit stated that “*for content purposes there were probably about six other people that contributed because we have six other branches*”. The consequence of communication on social media that is largely uncoordinated, was highlighted by one participant who referred to their hundreds of volunteers and their mentions of the corporate brand on social media platforms: “*if they tweet something or say something on social media, people will link them to us*”. This can be directly linked to corporate reputation and the need to adopt an integrated approach to the use of social media to ensure consistent messages that strive to create brand awareness, differentiation and a favourable brand (see section 2.5.1.4). These challenges are cause for concern, because of the focus of the corporate brand to make a favourable impression, and to achieve communication consistency, purposeful dialogue and profitable relations, as advocated by the IC philosophy. This consideration is obviously not a concern in the smaller non-profit organisations because their communication by means of social media is entirely managed by one individual.

(c) Theme 3: Social media messages

Theme 3 dealt with the challenges mentioned by some participants pertaining to social media messages. Particular issues included the perceived inability to determine whether their messages had been received, to formulate distinctive selling points and the regularity of social media posts or mentions.

Issues relating to branding and the *messages* on social media were specifically mentioned. One participant raised the following issue: “*to get your messages across is the main challenge*”. The professionals responsible for social media obviously experienced difficulties

distributing their messages, which might suggest they did not know whether or not the messages were being received. This problem could be addressed by listening to and participating in social media conversations, and through social media audits (De Vera & Murray 2013:5; Mindruta 2013; section 4.8.3.5, chapter 4). It did emerge from the findings of the online survey that these points were evidently not a priority for the non-profit organisations who responded to the questionnaire by indicating that organisations do not use social media analytics. Furthermore, one participant raised the point that it is a challenge finding “*unique selling points and differentiating one-self*”.

Consistency when posting social media content was highlighted by one of the participants, who stated that “*we are quite inconsistent when we say something*”, and clarified this point as the “*regularity with which we post*”. The philosophy on communication integration is driven by synergy and consistency in communication activities, which was crucial in context of this study (section 4.3.1, chapter 4). This evidently refers to the challenge of being well organised and disciplined in the postings on social media. Moreover, this point relates to the *timing* of social media content, as touched on in the literature review, and also the point that timely communication is supposed to promote two-way communication or conversation (Smith 2010:197). *Responsiveness* to the posts or tweets of stakeholders is closely linked to social media content, as posited in the literature chapters (sections 3.5.3, 3.6.1.3, 3.6.1.7 and 3.6.1.8, chapter 3; sections 4.7.2.2 and 4.8.2.2, chapter 4). The lack thereof can thus easily be interpreted as not being interested in connecting with the stakeholders, and this could denigrate the perception of the corporate brand as being human, caring or “*present*” online.

(d) *Theme 4: Social media engagement*

Theme 4 addressed the challenges that communication professionals face in engaging with stakeholders.

Difficulties pertaining to *engaging* with stakeholders on social media were mentioned during the interviews, and this emphasises the significance of this element for these organisations. The brand value proposition and *engagement* value, in particular, were discussed in the literature review (section 2.6.1.1, chapter 2; sections 3.6.1.1, 3.6.1.6 and 3.6.1.7, chapter 3; section 4.7.1.3, chapter 4). Concerning *social media engagement*, one participant asserted that “*it is difficult to engage*” and to “*have engaging content*” on social media. According to the views of various scholars as cited in the literature review, this refers to *real* interaction on social media, which occurs, *inter alia*, through conversation. It is closely intertwined with the *social media messages* theme as well as the importance of proper participation in conversations about the corporate brand (cf. Ashley & Tuten 2015; see section 2.6.1.2, chapter 2). The point made essentially centred around the fact that these organisations focus

on tactical issues such as “fundraising and gaining support” as opposed to using these opportunities to “credibility tell your message”.

The point was raised that it would be ideal to “*deal with some of our beneficiaries via social media*”, and the main challenges in this regard were identified as the inability to use these platforms because of limitations experienced by beneficiaries regarding “*access to hardware, access to gateway, you know literacy*”. Based on this comment, it can be assumed that non-profit organisations regard the limited access that some beneficiaries have to social media platforms as detrimental to engagement on these platforms.

7.2.1.2 Basic requirements

This proposed element, secondly, aimed to explore the *basic requirements* for social media brand communication. Basic requirements in the context of this study related to the fundamentals that should be in place for organisations to have a social media presence and to communicate with stakeholders. These were identified as the availability of technology and the importance of having knowledge, experience and skills, which were similarly identified as a challenge currently experienced by non-profit organisations. The following views of four participants substantiated this point: “*technology is important ... because that is the medium*”; “*you should have all those platforms in a personal capacity ... because if you don't have those things and if you don't know how to use them, then how are you going to represent your organisation?*”; “*knowledge of technical stuff about social media, how to open a page, how to delete a comment*”; and “*you would need someone who is trained, someone who has some experience*”. The statement by one participant that the individuals responsible for social media should “*have a basic communication background*” was interesting, because in terms of the findings of the quantitative research, some individuals responsible for managing and coordinating of social media had “other” positions largely unrelated to this field. This point accentuates the quantitative findings that revealed the “other” roles communication professionals fulfil that are not typically associated with communication, and that many have more than one role in the organisations. Based on this, it would be fair to assume that those responsible for communication were therefore not necessarily trained communicators and therefore lacked the necessary knowledge to facilitate communication integration.

Other points that were viewed as basic requirements included familiarity with the cause of the organisations, being accessible, and showing who benefits from the non-profit organisations’ efforts. Some of the participants explained this as follows: having “*a clear idea of who you are helping and what your purpose is*” and providing “*more information about your cause, your organisation as possible, and people should know how to reach you*”. In line with the need to portray a consistent corporate brand, one participant argued that a basic requirement is that

“the branding needs to be uniform”. The importance of a professional appearance of the “page or account” as a basic requirement was also mentioned, which is loosely linked to the corporate brand identity of the non-profit. This said, and with reference to the social media messages in the previous section, the issue of branding on social media proved challenging.

One participant pointed out that the organisation *“must have a clear strategy for social media”*. This point was supported by a comment on the need for *“a strategy in terms of clear messages”*, which would then be considered in a social media strategy. The question of relevant and current content was also identified as a basic requirement and was referred to as *“relevant content on a daily or weekly, if not, daily basis”* and *“that you are out there every day with a post that will interest people”*.

An interesting point was raised about the type of content, with one participant commenting that *“it needs emotional content – definitely – it need[s] some motivational content”*. Another participant agreed, but explained that there is *“a fine line between shock tactics versus emotional appeal”*, adding that they prefer not to use violent or extreme content to convey their messages. Emotional branding as a corporate branding technique was explained in chapter 2 of this study, and the notion that emotional content should be suitable to connect with stakeholders, was thus to a some extent supported by this point.

The participants furthermore believed that social media platforms should have a *“clear call to action”* or a *“call for action button”* to move stakeholders to act by either making donations or volunteering.

The participants also provided insights into the importance of *visuals* such as photos and identified this as a basic requirement by stating the following: *“I would use a lot more pictures”* and *“the biggest thing that we post on Facebook is photos”*. This point could be probably be linked to the portrayal of the non-profit organisations’ functional corporate brand values by visually illustrating the activities of non-profit organisations. The need to demonstrate how donations are used to benefit a cause and the use of visuals for this purpose, were repeatedly emphasised in the interviews. Hence one could conclude that these organisations display their *functional values* in this way.

Finally, two participants’ views on the requirements that should be in place for communication on social media suggested a stakeholder focus, and included the following: *“understanding who we’re talking to, who we should be talking to, who’s out there in the space … who’s got a particular influence that we should be reaching out to”* and *“you have to know your target groups”*. This indicates that there was a realisation of the need to adopt an outside-in view when communicating.

Another noteworthy viewpoint on the requirements for social media brand communication emerged in a comment by one participant, who emphasised the need to acknowledge their employees as internal ambassadors who, in their personal capacity, could promote the organisation on social media. The organisation was (at the time of this study) developing an “*internal social media policy*” to allow their employees to serve as ambassadors because they were “so very passionate about what they do”. The participant explained that such a policy would mainly focus on the conduct of employees of who were active on social media because of “*the nature of their work*”. A concern was that only a few participants involved their brand ambassadors in their events or activities. In some instances, the organisations did not even have a brand ambassador.

7.2.1.3 Corporate brand values

The third topic addressed for this proposed element focused on *corporate brand values*. Chapter 2 dealt with the importance of corporate brand values as the foundation for the existence of organisations, particularly *core values*. A pertinent point that emerged in the literature review suggests that these values need to be aligned with those of the stakeholders. However, the literature does not clearly state whether the alignment should be done by the organisation or the stakeholder. Regarding the stakeholder focus as purported by the IC view, it could be interpreted as the organisation needing to determine and consider the values expected or held by its stakeholders and accordingly align itself to these values. One participant offered the following comprehensive view on these issues: “*it's the responsibility of the organisation to do that, to communicate the values ... as well as the mission clearly to the public and all the messages that go out on any platform, needs to be in alignment with those values*”. This confirmed the views in the literature that corporate brand values are a quality of a corporate brand. As posited, the successful creation and exhibition of their core values could establish emotional benefits and a commitment to the organisation. Overall, the participants viewed their values as essential to their respective causes and expressed clear opinions about the fact that their values in fact defined the non-profit organisation. The following views were expressed: “*we stand by our own values*”; “*values are such an important part of this organisation in terms of who we hire, our internal stakeholders and of course our external stakeholders. So if there are any partners or not partners, potential funders that want to donate to us and there are clear clashes with our values, we will say no and we have said no in the past*”; and “*if people don't believe in your values or don't even know your values, then how do they support you?*”. This undoubtedly shows that, in practice, these organisations do not align their values according to those of their stakeholders, but that the opposite is true, and the stakeholders identify with the organisation based on its corporate brand values.

7.2.2 AVENUES OF SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION – USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO INTEGRATE AT VARIOUS LEVELS

The purpose of section B was to establish the views of the participants on the following: (1) the main benefit of social media and the ways in which content is sourced; (2) the use of social media in conjunction with traditional media; and (3) the use of social media content on multiple social media platforms.

Table 7.4: Theoretical aspects and topics in section B addressed in the semi-structured interviews

Section B (element 2): Avenues of social media integration – use of social media to integrate at various levels	
THEORETICAL ASPECTS	TOPICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder integration (conversation/dialogue)• Social media content (sourcing of content, planning and scheduling documents: timing)• Social media brand communication mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conversation/dialogue and database• Sourcing of content, planning and scheduling, and timing• Social media in conjunction with traditional media, and interaction through different types of media

Similar to element 1, the avenues through which social media integration could take place were explored during the interviews. Topics that were relevant to the theoretical aspects were as follows: conversations; database; the ways content is sourced, planned and scheduled; and the integration of traditional and social media and the use of media convergence to create several brand communication contact points.

7.2.2.1 Stakeholder integration

A stakeholder focus is central to efforts to achieve communication integration and thus, as previously stated, it is essential element in the integration of social media brand communication because of stakeholders' ability to access and integrate content (section 4.4.1, chapter 4). It therefore stands to reason that the non-profit organisation should strive to integrate its stakeholders through consideration of their needs, preferences, conversations and the like.

With respect to *stakeholder integration* as an aspect of integrating social media brand communication, the participants were asked to express their views on whether the main benefit of social media for their organisations was either to distribute information or to engage in dialogue. In relation to this study, it was argued, *inter alia*, that stakeholders could be integrated by attending to different aspects of *conversation* which comprise a listening orientation, monitoring and participating in these conversations. Two participants, one of whom was

employed in a smaller non-profit organisation, indicated that the benefit of social media for the organisation was (at the time of study) a combination of distributing information and engaging in dialogue. Two of the participants, both in larger non-profit organisations, suggested a sequential relationship between the aspects of information distribution and engaging in dialogue, and commented as follows: “*engaging in dialogue which in turn will result in the awareness that we are looking for*”; and “*I would say information distribution creates you know a dialogue, in order to create awareness*”. Despite a general impression that most of the participants recognised the importance of dialogue with their stakeholders, the majority of them, including four in the larger organisations and two in the smaller organisations, agreed that the benefit of social media was presently (at the time of study) information distribution only. This finding did not correspond with views that social media enables the unrestricted involvement of senders and receivers in two-way communication and engagement in conversation, which was fundamental to this study.

A last aspect of this element referred to *databases*, and the question whether, with reference to social media, they were used, given the unrestricted access to social media platforms. According to the literature on the integration of communication, databases are perceptively necessary to identify prominent stakeholders and to understand the stakeholders of the organisation. The participants indicated that they all had comprehensive donor and media databases, but not all of them utilised the information on social media platforms, specifically to understand their stakeholders. Only one participant indicated an intention in this regard: “*so we have, currently we're actually working on a strategy with a stakeholder management plan that identifies all of our stakeholders from government to donors to schools to service providers ... it also deals with the engagement platforms, so on what levels are you talking to who and who's responsible for what relationships*”. The point raised here provided insight into possible aspects of such a database for online communication. It was also evident that the smaller organisations appeared to be mainly concerned with having a donor database, understandably because of their dependence on such funds.

As established in the literature review, dedicated *planning* of social media activities is a vital part of an organisation’s strategic communication planning. This topic led to the question of the types of documents or tools non-profit organisations use to plan and schedule social media activities. A variety of different strategies appear to be employed by these organisations in the planning of social media, ranging from “*a content calendar ... will be used for a specific project*”, “*a timeline of when we're posting what*”, “*a monthly planner*”, “*a media time plan*”, to the use of Facebook scheduling and Hootsuite. It emerged that the smaller organisations followed an informal and unstructured approach to their planning. As one participant put it, “*it's only in my*

head'. All the participants agreed that their organisations addressed social media planning in an overall communication strategy or plan and did not have a specific social media strategy, with the exception of the smaller organisations which did not have any plan or strategy in place. This is particularly significant because the responses in the questionnaire did not indicate whether there was any proper planning. In light of the challenges and fundamentals identified by the participants that were underscored in the literature review regarding the importance of a strategic plan, the need for a specific social media strategy should not be underestimated.

7.2.2.2 Creating and sourcing social media content

As emphasised in the literature overview, *content* is the core of social media and is generally created and shared on a number of social media platforms. Hence the ways in which content is created and sourced was investigated. It was established that content takes different forms and can broadly be classified as *owned*, *co-created* and *curated*, generally based on the origin thereof, which also indicates the ways in which it is sourced. According to the literature, content can thus be created in the following ways: (1) by the organisation; (2) by both the organisation and stakeholders; and (3) through aggregating content from different sources on selected topics. One participant stated that the organisation had a designated person "*looking for new content, following trends, discovering new things, being on the edge the whole time*". This particular participant further identified the different types (*owned*, *co-created* and *curated*) as identified above, and also expressed an opinion about the value of collaboration with beneficiaries and other non-profit organisations when it comes to content creation. This was explained as follows: "*there is a lot more strength in our effort that we combine than our individual effort*". Unfortunately, the other organisations did not have the benefit of a dedicated person to source content. Applied to the focus of social media, collaboration is essentially regarded as a key element of this media, which, if based on the view of this participant, might be useful to assist with the creation of content for organisations operating in this sector. This idea was reiterated by another participant, who acknowledged that "*our partners are a good source of information as well as the stakeholders who are in a way working towards the same goals as us*".

Not all organisations deliberately source content for their social media platforms, and as one participant commented, "*we don't source content from our audiences, we do that rarely*", adding that "*the content we give is to show people this is what we do with our money, with the money we have, this is the projects we do and this is how we do it*". Many of the participants felt the pressing need to acknowledge their donors' contributions by posting photos of "*hand-overs*" or "*donation drop-offs*", which mainly served as their content. The use and value of photos was reiterated, and one participant's comment that "*we are always taking pictures*"

echoed the sentiments of the participants in both the larger and smaller non-profit organisations regarding the importance of images to deliver a message and illustrate their functional values (the activities they engage in to promote a cause).

In addition, it became apparent that the individuals responsible for using social media to communicate in their non-profit organisations primarily used their projects and events as sources for content. This was explained as follows: “Yes, *it is centred around our projects*”.

It became evident that the smaller organisations in particular did not actively source content. The following comments were made: “*we don't source anything ... a big lack from our side*”, and “*not for charity, no ...*”. One participant actually admitted that content was sourced as follows: “*literally when I stand up in the morning and I think of something*”. These informal approaches to many aspects of social media were apparent in the organisations where the communication responsibility resided with one individual only. The respondents identified staffing and time as constraints in this regard.

The issue of storytelling and whether these organisations intentionally ask for contributions was explored. When probed about the use of stories and whether they were purposely requested, many of the participants raised the issue of sensitivity. As one participant said: “*It will depend on the story, so we, we deal with such, such issues on a case by case basis. Ja we don't just generally go and you know broadcast, you have to also take into consideration the sensitivity*”. All participants generally agreed on the significance of stories from stakeholders to convey their causes and successes. Regarding contributions from the general public, one participant commented that “*the public has a lot to say and there are stories out there that will necessarily not reach media first*”. This organisation specifically used its “information email address” to uncover stories that were worth sharing. It became evident that the non-profit organisations mainly focused on *stakeholder stories* and therefore did not tell the story of the *corporate brand*. Compared to Hestad’s (2013:55) assertion in the literature, the organisations only seem to be exploiting one of the possibilities linked to corporate brand stories, namely to emphasise stakeholders’ experiences about fulfilling the brand promise. The broader application possibilities of storytelling appear to have been disregarded (section 2.5.1.4, chapter 2). Views expressed in the literature supported the notion that the values of the non-profit can be reflected through the corporate brand story per se (Hestad 2013:55; Beverland 2009:38–39; section 2.6.1.3, chapter 2). Stories are deemed to add credibility and value to the brand, which similarly reflects the values that are distinct to the non-profit brand and create those emotional connections desired in this sector.

7.2.2.3 Social media brand communication mix

The argument in this study was that the integration of social media brand communication should also consider issues regarding the *social media brand communication mix*. This element comprises two theoretical aspects, namely the use of several social media platforms (media convergence), and the use of social media in conjunction with traditional media. Most of the respondents indicated that they did merge different types of voice, image and video and the like. One participant from a larger organisation commented as follows: “*We try to incorporate different forms of uhm, media and visuals*”; and cited this example: “*say we have a project launch, we would be posting a video of the launch, or we would make a corporate video about this new project*”. Another participant agreed, citing the following example: “*when we have events that we do, we do live tweets*” and “*so if we have a blog post I could just link that blog post to our twitter page*”. The combination of these types was explained as follows by another participant: “*We have a news release section, and then I would link from Facebook or Twitter, to that, to that news release*”. For some participants, the combination of different types of media happened accidentally, as reflected in the following words: “*we mainly rely on pictorial but obviously if someone could manage to film a dream we then upload it or we have people speaking for example, social workers or doctors or our chairman giving a keynote*”.

By contrast, the smaller non-profit organisations did not seem to attempt to incorporate different types of media, and the participants cited the following constraints as reasons for not using different social media platforms: “*time*”; and “*we don't have money to make a video*”. One participant emphasised issues about “*quality*”; and “*we don't have good enough videos*”. A participant from one of the larger organisations also mentioned budgetary constraints as a reason for not combining media, but added that they did occasionally receive video clips from their beneficiaries and would then “*upload them onto our website and share*”. In addition, a participant from another larger non-profit justified the fact that they did not use live streaming as follows: “*... it's sensitive. You don't have permission to use*”, adding “*... it's difficult to do a live stream for us. Unless we are at an event and everything is going well*”. For this participant it was all about the inability to control the content that might be detrimental to the image of organisation and the beneficiary.

The interrelationship between traditional and social media was explained by a participant as follows: “*traditional media can enhance the new media and new media can actually enhance the traditional media*”. Most of the respondents admitted that they did not intentionally use traditional and social media together.

7.2.3 THE ATTAINMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNICATION INTEGRATION

Following the exploration in sections A and B of elements deemed essential to the integration of social media brand communication in the non-profit section, it was necessary to investigate the evaluation of the success or failure of social media activities.

Table 7.5: Theoretical aspects and topics in section C addressed in the semi-structured interviews

Section C (element 3): The attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration	
THEORETICAL ASPECTS	TOPIC DISCUSSED
• Evaluation	Evaluation of social media endeavours

The measurement of social media initiatives was deemed non-negotiable for the reasons previously stated. To achieve a holistic picture of the state of affairs in non-profit organisations, a discussion of this element was required. The aim was to gain actual insights from the individuals responsible for the communication in non-profit organisations on how and whether they in fact measured the success or failure of their social media efforts.

The literature review indicated that a social media strategy, among other key issues, including the formal evaluation of social media endeavours, is essential in social media planning. Despite a myriad of views on possible components of such a strategy, there was general consensus on the significant value of such a social media strategy to direct these initiatives at a strategic level. Considering the views presented in previous chapters, it was concluded that a social media strategy addresses a myriad of issues, such as, but not limited to, the tracking and monitoring of the actions performed by stakeholders on these platforms (e.g. shares, posts, tweets and retweets), the overall evaluation of social media initiatives, ensuring alignment with the organisation objectives, and so forth. A social media audit was proposed to measure and evaluate social media activities. From a corporate branding perspective, an evaluation, inter alia, is deemed prudent to determine the effect of these initiatives on the overall corporate brand. Moreover, views expressed in the literature underscored an integrated approach to social media, suggesting an organisation-wide orientation in respect of communication, and that a guiding document or strategy could be used to include the strategic planning of social media.

The responses to the question about the measurement of the success/failure of their social media activities primarily focused on the use of online tracking and monitoring tools and not, for example, on determining the effect on the corporate brand, or the aspects raised above.

When probed on the evaluation of social media endeavours, one respondent from a smaller non-profit responded as follows: “*No, it’s way too academic*”, and another from a larger organisation answered: “*Not that good at it*”. The responses indicated that these organisations do not view the evaluation of the social media communication as a strategic issue and do not link it to the overall communication objectives. Participants commented that: “*Mm. We just use the facebook platform where, on your page, you can go to Insight*”, and “*you have specific tools like Hootsuite ...*”, and “*So Facebook will send me an email notification ...*”. According to the literature, these are methods of evaluation that do not necessarily allow for gaining a broad view on the challenges and opportunities linked to social media brand communication. To merely track and monitor stakeholder actions on social media would seemingly exclude pertinent elements that should be of strategic concern to those responsible for communication. These elements include gathering information on stakeholders, evaluating brand guidelines (for example corporate brand identity), identifying and evaluating types of engagement (one-way or dialogic), identifying the purpose of the social profile on different platforms, and gaining insight into the different types of content shared on different platforms.

It is obvious from the discussions with stakeholders that organisations only focus on the volume of mentions, visits and so on, and are thus not aware whether negative statements are being made about the specific activities of the organisation or of the corporate brand as a whole.

On this topic, the differences between the smaller and larger organisations became apparent in that the responses of the participants from the larger organisations mentioned communication strategies that encapsulate aspects of communication, including some of their social media elements. The need for a social media strategy was explained by a larger organisation as follows: “*... you need to have a strategy uhm in terms of clear messages, uhm and social media*”. This non-profit organisation addresses social media aspects as “*... part of our communication strategy ... maybe not as uhm in-depth as other organisations*”. The smaller organisations did not appear to address communication issues in a communication strategy or in a social media strategy.

The responses of participants and the current status quo concerning *evaluation* corroborated the following findings from the questionnaire: (1) a social media strategy is apparently not used or regarded as a necessity, as debated above; and (2) non-profit organisations do not use social media audits. This could therefore explain the lack of proper evaluation.

7.3 KEY FINDINGS OF THE QUALITATIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The aim of the semi-structured interviews was to explore theoretical aspects of the elements that warranted more in-depth discussion and that could not be addressed in the closed-ended

questions. A number of key findings emerged, yielding crucial insights for this study. These are briefly reiterated below.

- *Fundamental aspects of social media brand communication integration.* It was evident that non-profit organisations experience real challenges in creating and finding content for use on social media platforms. Issues such as ensuring that the content is appropriate, the need to be sensitive when creating content, financial constraints and ways to find suitable content, were underlined as difficulties when using social media to communicate. The participants indicated that their organisations do not *curate* content and focus mainly on projects and events for content. Furthermore, the coordination of content in regions or branches in larger organisations to achieve uniformity was deemed challenging. The participants appeared to recognise the importance of portraying a uniform and credible brand image, but found it demanding to identify and differentiate themselves through unique messages. Consistent communication was identified as another challenge, together with the need for technology, experience and skills that are associated with social media brand communication.

The *basic requirements* for social media brand communication were deemed to include familiarity with or knowledge of the non-profit organisation's cause, to be accessible, to demonstrate the achievement of their goals and to achieve uniform corporate branding. The value of emotional content was raised, with a word of caution against using shock tactics.

Noteworthy is the fact that employees could be acknowledged as internal ambassadors and should likewise be supported to fulfil such a role. Nowadays, this issue does not receive the attention it deserves.

Finally, according to the participants, their organisations' values define them and their stakeholders associate with the organisation because of these values. Organisations seem to realise the need to align their messages with their corporate brand values to illustrate what stakeholders could expect from them. The conviction of the participants concerning the importance of their corporate brand values merited mentioning.

- *Avenues or ways to achieve social media brand communication integration.* The conclusion drawn was that social media is currently used for one-way distribution of communication, which hampers conversations on these platforms, thus impeding broadcast information. This corroborates the findings in the quantitative research,

because it is obvious that conversations do not take place. Non-profit organisations do have databases for their donors, volunteers and the media, but they do not seem to use them to their full advantage because not all stakeholders are identified, and these databases do not provide detailed information on their engagement platforms or preferences, for example.

In contrast to larger organisations, which do use calendars, timelines, monthly planners or online scheduling tools, smaller organisations do not appear to formally plan their social media content, and tend to follow unstructured and informal planning. Non-profit organisations seldom intentionally source social media content from their stakeholders and focus mainly the projects or events for postings on the platforms. There are indications that these organisations do use success stories from their beneficiaries. None of the participants indicated that they do have a dedicated *social media content plan*, which was corroborated in the findings emerging from the online survey.

The responses by participants to the question whether organisations deliberately request stories from their stakeholders, indicated that organisations focus on stories from their beneficiaries, but do not tell the corporate brand story. The overview of corporate brand stories in section 2.6.1.3, chapter 2, revealed many other types of stories that non-profit organisations can share to promote the corporate brand and its cause. It could thus be concluded that valuable opportunities to express their brand values and create positive impressions were not being fully exploited.

It is evident that non-profit organisations currently largely follow a divergent approach to the use of traditional and social media, which supported the findings for the questionnaire, namely that paid-for-media is not used on social media platforms, and non-profit organisations do not combine their communication methods into a single toolbox.

- *The attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration.* Non-profit organisations do not properly evaluate their overall social media activities, and rely mainly on tracking and monitoring, which is not in line with suggestions in the literature to assess broad strategic challenges and opportunities.

7.4 EMERGENT TOPICS

The semi-formal structure of the interviews allowed for discussions of the issues addressed in the interview guide that subsequently enables the participants to raise other topics. Against expectation, no topics emerged that required additional consideration for the integration of

social media brand communication, but the following valuable insights into the participants' practice of social media emerged:

- All of the participants expressed a positive attitude towards the contribution of social media to connect with their stakeholders, despite the challenges identified in section 7.2.2 above.
- Knowledge of stakeholders, their needs and demographics was deemed crucial for communication on social media, but was not considered when planning their communication efforts.
- Blogs appeared to be used to a lesser extent, albeit for one non-profit organisation. This was raised during the last interview and therefore could not be investigated in the other organisations.
- As confirmed by the quantitative findings, the use of Facebook for communication was the preferred communication platform. Possible reasons as to whether this was indeed the case came to the fore when the participants indicated that communication on Twitter specifically was restrictive, owing to the limited number of characters, and the fact that it is time consuming because it requires continuous monitoring and an immediate response from the organisation. Hence organisations tend to mainly post links on Twitter to other platforms.
- The participants mentioned that Twitter is often only used for specific events or projects mainly because of time constraints.
- Two participants posited that non-profit organisations increasingly compete with corporate social investment projects in the corporate sector, which emphasises the importance of building long-term relationships and continuous communication with stakeholders to ultimately achieve a favourable corporate brand.

7.5 OVERALL FINDINGS EMANATING FROM THE ONLINE SURVEY AND SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

A number of insights emerged from the data gathered by means of the online survey and semi-structured interviews that should contribute to a better understanding of how South African non-profit organisations approach the proposed elements of social media brand communication integration. The findings were reported in detail, and per item, theoretical aspect and topic in specific sections in chapter 6, and they are also mentioned in this chapter. The overall findings were viewed as complementary, and as such are concurrently summarised as proposed in an integrated manner. The intention here is not to repeat the

results of the quantitative and qualitative research that were specified in sections 6.4 to 6.9, chapter 6, and section 7.2 above, but rather to reflect key insights into the overall findings.

7.5.1 Element 1: Fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication

The purpose of this element was to investigate aspects that could serve as a foundation for integrating social media. Of significance was the argument that a social media presence is a prerequisite for organisations to be active and to communicate on social media platforms, and that what is unique to this type of media, is having an online presence that represents the organisation being joined to its stakeholders (cf. Park & Lee 2013:265, 266). Moreover, as asserted by Park and Lee (2013:265), social presence can be linked to the conversation concept owing to the ability to being perceived as human by participating in discussions online. A social media presence is furthermore recognised as a way of portraying the brand persona which, in turn, could generate support for the non-profit organisation's cause. Conclusions drawn in Park and Lee's (2013) study revealed two topics worth noting, namely that a human presence may, in turn, promote positive statements or eWOM, and that favourable relationships and a sense of human contact promote positive behaviour. In terms of this, the assumption is that a human presence facilitated by a social media presence allows non-profit organisations to attract attention on social media platforms, and this increases awareness of the organisation (cf. section 2.3.1, chapter 2). By the same token, desired relationships with important stakeholders may encourage supportive behaviour such as donations or volunteer involvement. A study by Thorsteinsson and Casalini (2015:66) on brand communities suggested that in the non-profit sector, an online presence could in fact strengthen stakeholders' sense of community because it allows them to connect with one another. In context, it would be fair to posit that a social media presence is actually a key foundational element for all interaction in that it allows stakeholders to interact on different platforms in numerous ways (cf. Bread for the ...[sa]).

Based on the factual findings of this study, it would seem that the majority of non-profit organisations, although not all of them, do acknowledge the strategic importance of social media planning and then use at least one platform daily. These findings reveal two aspects of concern for non-profit organisations. Firstly, it is apparent that non-profit organisations selectively use a separate social media strategy for planning purposes. The importance of such a strategy is deliberated and justified under element 3 below. Besides, it became evident that social media planning mainly centres around specific projects, events or awareness campaigns. This indicates that these organisations generally adopt a *tactical or mechanistic approach* in the planning of their communication activities on social media and neglect the *philosophy of integration*, as purported in the literature, and which is key to portraying the human nature of

the organisation (Smith 2012a). Secondly, it could be beneficial to be active on more of the popular platforms to expand the reach of the corporate brand message in an effort to attract more attention on social media (cf. Ashley & Tuten 2015:15, 18; Park & Lee 2013:270). A study on the correlation between social media strategies and engagement by Ashley and Tuten (2015:23) corroborates this supposition. A positive relationship between the *number* of social media channels top corporate brands use and the achievement of a high engagement was revealed. This merits mentioning here, because the difficulties surrounding engagement on social media were raised during the interviews for the study.

Nonetheless, it was considered that when social media is used to communicate, this might pose unique *challenges* for the communication professionals responsible for the management thereof. Hence this topic was further explored and discussed during the interviews. The participants mentioned distinct challenges concerning social media content and the coordination thereof, the communication of social media messages and uniformity, and the difficulty ensuring that content promotes engagement. Deliberations revealed different facets of social media content, such as the ability to find suitable, engaging content, and to ensure the coordination and consistency thereof, mostly in the larger non-profit organisations. According to Handley (2010:58, 59), *engaging content* is largely dictated by the needs of stakeholders, hence by what content they require. This emphasise a stakeholder perspective, as continuously mentioned in the literature review. As suggested in the literature, content can be created, co-created or curated, and it was found that the focus of non-profit organisations is primarily on created content without using alternative ways to generate content or consider their stakeholders' needs (Rakić & Rakić 2014:197; Leroux Miller 201:204, 275; section 3.5.2, chapter 3). A lack of knowledge of these needs and preferences might limit the location of suitable and engaging social media content. Aspects concerning the coordination and uniformity of social media content were emphasised, and these generally point to shortfalls in the management thereof. Organisations should consider the use of an *editorial calendar* with comprehensive information on the content and messages by the organisation on traditional and social media platforms. This would ensure consistency in brand messages and communication across organisational boundaries.

Of interest were the findings that non-profit organisations only track conversations on social media to a small extent, and thus do not know which *types* of platforms their stakeholders prefer. Being uninvolved in tracking and monitoring conversations indicates a restricted focus on the stakeholders' needs, as highlighted in the literature (cf. Driessen et al 2013:1465; Kliatchko 2008:143; section 4.4.1, chapter 4). This would undoubtedly impact on the effective communication of content because organisations might be active on platforms and use irrelevant content that does not correspond to the content used or required by stakeholders.

Corresponding to the aim of this element, the basic *requirements* that should be in place for organisations for social media brand communication were debated. A number of points were raised by participants the broadly included the following: operational capacity (knowledge, experience and skills, and technology); aspects relating to being familiar with the cause; the purpose and beneficiaries of the non-profit corporate brand; the need for a social media strategy to have emotional and motivational content; and the importance of visually illustrating the organisation's activities. These issues could be attended to in a social media strategy, which again underpins the value of a specific social media strategy.

In fact, the majority of the points raised as challenges and basic requirements under this element addressed in prior sections, such as issues of content, messages, online presence, operational capacity and strategic planning, could be incorporated into a social media strategy, as identified by Regan (2011), Weinreich (2012) and Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) in the literature (section 4.6, chapter 4).

Another critical aspect of corporate branding and IC perspectives, and germane to this element, is the importance of a stakeholder focus and the idea that employees should be valued as internal ambassadors. As alluded to earlier, the broad findings of the qualitative and quantitative research proved that the participating organisations do not really focus on their stakeholders and their needs. Only a few participants raised the point of valuing employees as ambassadors, despite the view of Macnamara and Zerfass (2012:300) that an organisation should be proactive because the opinions of staff could broadly lend authenticity and trustworthiness to its communication. It is worthwhile to consider internal ambassadors as a fundamental element in achieving social media brand communication integration because they are the initial *communication touch point* with the corporate brand, as per the definition of Smith (2012a:607) (section 3.6, chapter 3; section 4.3.1, chapter 4).

The final part of this element touched on values as a core quality of the non-profit corporate brand. The findings underscored the importance of corporate brand values, which, apart from defining the organisation and portraying its promise, also enable stakeholders to connect with the brand (Balmer 2008:894; cf. Schmeltz 2014:236; De Chernatony 2010:17; cf. section 2.6.1.1, chapter 2). The findings indicated that the alignment of corporate brand values occurs at stakeholder level as opposed to organisation level, as alleged in the literature (De Chernatony 2010:10; cf. section 2.5.1.3, chapter 2). All the views expressed in the interviews validated the fact that stakeholders associate with the non-profit corporate brand based on the values it portrays. The term "corporate brand values" is intertwined with the non-profit corporate brand, and the articulation thereof is vital in promoting an understanding of what the organisation stands for, focusing on a specific cause and ensuring consistent communication

and a sense of community (Daw et al 2011:20, 21; section 2.6.1.1, chapter 2). It would thus be worthwhile for the non-profit organisation to be committed to communicating the values that define the organisation in a robust way in order to create positive associations with stakeholders (section 2.4.1.2, chapter 2).

7.5.2 Element 2: Avenues of social media integration

The aim of this element was to discover insights into the ways in which social media integration could take place. The three main opportunities for promoting social media integration, which were evident in the literature and empirically investigated in this study, include the following: stakeholder integration; social media content, for example, sourcing, planning, scheduling and so on; and the application of social media in combination with traditional media and the use of media convergence. The findings on this element, generally indicate that the non-profit organisations that participated have mainly failed to attend to the theoretical aspects investigated. Neglecting these avenues could impede the successful integration of social media brand communication.

Stakeholder integration in a social media milieu and fundamental to this study, as previously suggested, can be achieved by listening to stakeholders' statements, which are contained in the conversations on the corporate brand on these platforms (section 2.6.1.6, chapter 2; section 3.3, chapter 3; sections 4.8.2.1, 4.8.3.1 and figure 4.5, chapter 4). The purpose of this element was to determine whether conversations are tracked and whether efforts are made by organisations to ensure stakeholders' participation in such conversations. Apart from failing to track conversations to discover the appropriate types of platforms to share content, the findings for this element revealed that, to a small extent, the respondents listen to conversations on social media and are not particularly interested in their participation. This is disconcerting in light of the importance of keeping abreast of the topics raised on social media platforms, which, in turn, allow the non-profit organisation to participate in such conversations (sections 3.6.1.2 and 3.6.1.7, chapter 3; Breakenridge 2012:45). Moreover, if the non-profit organisation wishes to adopt a stakeholder focus, it should allow stakeholders to participate by contributing to or raising certain points on social media. In context, conversations are conceptualised as *dialogue* on social media platforms, which drives eWOM (Homburg, Ehm & Artz 2015:629; section 2.3.1, chapter 2). It is thus advisable for non-profit organisations to consider creating a eWOM plan to determine, *inter alia*, ways in which favourable eWOM for the corporate brand could be encouraged to increase conversations about the organisation. This could be done by, say, rewarding stakeholders with incentives such as invitations to fundraising events or suchlike when specific posts are shared (cf. Kumar, Petersen & Leone 2010; Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan 2008). By listening to and soliciting such contributions, the non-profit organisation would

be able to attend to any negative issues that are raised and to initiate discussions on specific topics relating to the corporate brand.

The first mention of monitoring and tracking of stakeholders in IC models was seemingly voiced by Duncan and Caywood (1996:31), and supported by Duncan and Moriarty (1997:19), who emphasised the importance of databases for the documentation of different brand contacts or ways in which the organisation and stakeholders connect (cf. Ehlers 2002:340). During the semi-structured interviews, it became clear that most non-profit organisations do have databases for media contacts, and donors and volunteers, but do not use them to understand their stakeholders' use of social or to personalise communication efforts, as propounded by Castronovo and Huang (2012:127).

Reflecting on social media conversations as a key element of social media alongside the possibility of engaging in two-way communication, initiated a discussion of the main benefit of social media either for information distribution or engagement in dialogue. The literature review contained numerous references to the value of social media in facilitating two-way and dialogic communication (Arora & Predmore 2013:116, 117; Theunissen & Wan Noordin 2012:5; Kochbar et al 2012:292; Parent, Planger & Bal 2011:223; Solis 2010:37; cf. Kent & Taylor 1998). Despite recognition by some non-profit organisations of the need to engage in dialogue, the findings confirmed general consensus that, nowadays, the main advantage for South African non-profit organisations' use of social media is information distribution. Based on the overall limitations relating to conversation and a listening approach, one could infer that this focus on one-way information distribution is indeed associated with the actual findings on a lack of a stakeholder focus and challenges in achieving communication consistency and synergy.

The social media content element was explored on the basis of the management, planning, scheduling, sourcing and monitoring thereof on social media platforms (Niemann 2005; section 3.6.1.8, chapter 3; sections 4.5, 4.7.2.2, 4.7.3.3, 4.8 and 4.8.2.2, chapter 4). The findings revealed that non-profit organisations mainly depend on owned media and pay less attention to sourcing content that is co-created and curated. This situation does not allow the organisation to actively involve its stakeholders in participating in content creation, or aggregating content from other sources, which does not prove that content is in fact approached in an integrated manner. This assumption of active participation was specifically supported by Leroux Miller (2013:6), who stated that the participative nature of social media causes stakeholders to co-own the brand, which affirms the value of their contribution to social media content. There seems to be a contradiction between the findings of the online survey and semi-structured interviews about curated content. The interview participants indicated that

they very seldom seek content from other sources, whereas the questionnaire respondentse indicated the opposite. Apart from managing all editorial content by an individual or team and the repurposing of content for the use on different platforms, the overall findings failed to confirm that non-profit organisations adhere to the other related elements mentioned in the questionnaire, which included using a single communication toolbox in which traditional and social media are combined, and to purposely monitor topics raised on social media, as suggested by Agresta and Bough (2011:157).

Moreover, having an individual or team on hand to manage content appears to be ineffective, in light of the numerous difficulties pertaining to social media content that were mentioned in the interviews. Issues pertaining to the use of organising matters were found to be dealt with on an ad hoc basis only. These matters and actions include the use of a content plan, editorial calendar and online scheduling tools. The failure to properly plan and time the content for social media, as revealed in the online survey, would be problematic because the planning and use of documents might ensure the timeous sharing of content (cf. Angelopulo 2013a:52; Evans 2010:306). According to the findings, these considerations appear to lack the necessary attention. This considered, the interpretation of the interview data revealed a contradiction relating to this question on the use of online scheduling tools, which is worth mentioning here. The findings of the quantitative part of the study indicated a limited use of online scheduling tools, which was contradicted by the participants in the interview, most of whom use these tools. Since scheduling can be connected to timely communication on social media platforms, which, in turn, might influence the way in which stakeholders perceive the organisation as approachable and “human”, this should be explored in future studies. Integration of content regarding the combination of traditional and social media by using links to traditional on social media was found to be satisfactory, although proper integration by converging traditional and social media was found to be lacking. Of particular interest was the view of a small number of organisations that traditional media actually increases awareness of the social media platforms on which they are active.

The findings for this element corroborated the challenges relating to content, because they also emerged during the interviews and were reported in element 1 specifically. Interaction on social media essentially revolves around *content*, which emphasises the significance of this issue and, in turn, requires organisations’ explicit attention. The findings indicated that non-profit organisations do recognise the need to manage editorial content on social media by either an individual or a team of communicators (Ehlers 2002; Niemann 2005). This ties in with the results indicating that the strategic planning of social media is accepted, but still not fully adhered to, as reported under the preceding heading.

7.5.3 Element 3: The attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration

It was deemed prudent to investigate ways in which social media brand communication integration can be continued after it has been accomplished. Hence the specific purpose of the theoretical aspects of this element was to explore the aspects through which integration can be sustained. Aspects that feature prominently in literature that were included in the empirical research included the following: a social listening orientation; community; environmental and cross-functional integration; management of synergy and consistency by a multi-skilled individual or teams of coordinators; and evaluation.

The broad findings for the aspect of listening indicated that non-profit organisations do respond to mentions, posts, and suchlike, on a daily basis, which, in context, points to a recognition of the value of timely communication. Regardless of these results, it was evident that non-profit organisations fail to fully embrace a listening perspective. As stated previously, organisations need to heed this aspect if they wish to be perceived as human and a corporate brand that listens. The findings on this topic, for instance, providing support for influencers to listen to conversations, and to use hashtags to identify vital conversations, were not convincing. It is therefore obvious that these organisations do not pay attention to this. Only two of the interview participants indicated that they involve their brand ambassadors in creating awareness of the non-profit organisation's cause. Hence such prominent stakeholders are not being used to assist with listening to mentions about the brand or even to share their experiences online. Since communication on social media platforms is largely uncontrollable because of the wide reach, non-profit organisations should employ all possible assistance to keep track of discussions about the brand (Juel 2012:767; Hoffman & Novak 2009:32; Scott & Jacka 2011:3). The findings largely indicated that organisations either do not appreciate or are unaware of the advantages of a listening approach, as attested to in the literature (Vernuccio 2014:215; Breakenridge 2012:45). This topic was also associated with a stakeholder focus because it revealed the topics and sentiments about the non-profit brand raised on social media.

In the overall findings on the aspect of community, it was found that non-profit organisations do to a certain extent consider stakeholders' interests and identify prominent stakeholders (section 3.5.3, chapter 3; Ledingham 2003:119; Daw et al 2011:177). Conversely, the findings did not reveal dedication to gathering like-minded stakeholders around common interests. Of concern was the ignorance of non-profit organisations regarding the use of prominent stakeholders, such as ambassadors to create and extend awareness of the brand and build community in particular (Boster et al 2011:180; Daw et al 2011:269). These organisations

should capitalise on the standing, connectivity and experience of these individuals to unite stakeholders and create brand communities that could create a wide awareness of the corporate brand. It was evident that non-profit organisations acknowledge donors and volunteers through mentions on their social media platforms and by distinct actions such as posting images of their participation in events and projects. Despite a lack of research in this sector, brand communities could assist non-profits to solve challenges pertaining to differentiation and brand awareness, and to be recognisable (Thorsteinsson & Casalini 2015:61, 66).

The findings on the environmental and cross-functional aspect revealed that organisations, to some degree only, involve their employees in social media initiatives (e.g. utilising knowledge and expertise), monitoring the external environment and purposefully coordinating communication to promote the corporate brand (Meintjes et al 2009:65; Niemann 2005:249, 260; Ehlers 2002:338; Gronstedt 2000:117). These are all integral aspects of the communication integration approach, and it is concerning that a high percentage of respondents indicated that these matters are attended to only to a small extent. This aspect not only emphasises the monitoring of the external environment, but also concerns a focus on cross-departmental involvement and the inclusion of employees. The view that employees should be valued as brand ambassadors was raised as a requirement for social media brand communication, but it is clear that non-profit organisations are hesitant to involve them in social media initiatives. Daw et al (2011:107) emphasises that organisations in the non-profit sector too often overlook the fact that stakeholders and potential supporters are frequently introduced to the corporate brand through their contact with employees. Drawing on their experience and skills could allow augmentation of the corporate brand from the inside out (cf. 108).

Non-profit organisations strongly support the management of social media interaction by a multi-skilled communicator or a team, which demonstrates an awareness of the significance of achieving consistency in their overall interaction with stakeholders (Ehlers 2002:339). As confirmed in the literature, the concepts of synergy and consistency are fundamental to the philosophy of communication integration and therefore key to the attainment of a uniform corporate brand (Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008:15; Johansen & Andersen 2012:272).

The organisations involved in the study indicated that they are not engaged in a comprehensive evaluation of communication and integration thereof on social media. The professionals who were interviewed, without exception, associated the evaluation of social media with the use of tracking and monitoring tools only. When referring back to the discussion of a social media strategy (sections 4.6 and 4.8.3.5, chapter 4) and elsewhere, the application of these tools does not necessarily attempt to attain a “universal” and strategic perspective of aspects of

social media integration. Such a comprehensive view should, apart from other issues, consider the following strategic matters: the alignment of the current efforts towards social media integration with organisational objectives; measurement methods; concerns; strengths; and the achievement of social media integration. The value of a social media audit, as a method of gaining an overall perspective, would afford these organisations the opportunity to address strategic matters, was emphasised in the literature (Breakenridge 2012:10; section 4.6, chapter 4). The findings thus supported the notion that the organisations that participated in the empirical research did not employ social media audits. Another corresponding matter focused on whether stakeholders feel that their voices are being heard. This point underscores the idea of following a listening approach, which was mentioned as the first point of this element, and thus investigated the use of research methods to determine stakeholder opinions on whether the organisation is in fact listening to their statements (Webster & Hume 2016). It also ties in with the listening orientation of the organisation and how it is perceived by stakeholders. According to Webster and Hume (2016), obtaining input from stakeholders on the responsiveness of the organisation could be indicative of the organisation's success in listening and whether it is viewed as being attentive to stakeholders' discussions and the matters they raise. Furthermore, this could strengthen the perception of the corporate brand as being human and caring when stakeholders are afforded the opportunity to express their opinions. Based on the findings, it would appear that non-profit organisations regrettably do not attempt to listen to their stakeholders' voices. The last item pertaining to evaluation was the comparison with other similar non-profit organisations, of current efforts towards the integration of social media. Keehley and Abercrombie (2008) assert that benchmarking could be beneficial to measure the quality of the organisation's integrative efforts. In an environment in which accelerated communication is driven by technological advances, such measurement by means of benchmarking would be ideal (Keehley & Abercrombie 2008). It is would thus be prudent for South African non-profit organisations to consider the usefulness of benchmarking to strengthen their social media brand communication endeavours.

7.5.4 Biographical and demographic details

In addition, regardless of the quantitative results that indicated that both traditional and social media are deemed to be points of departure when planning social media, the integration thereof was not completely corroborated. Most of the respondents who consider both types in their planning were in appropriate PR/Communication positions in their organisations. Of concern was the fact that many respondents either fulfilled more than one role or were in *other* roles not typically associated with the communication function. This raises questions about whether these professionals would have adequate time and the experience to dedicate to strategic issues of social media brand communication. The findings indicated that Facebook is

commonly used for social communication. Many participants pointed out that the social media platforms that are generally time consuming to maintain are thus not used, Twitter being a case in point.

7.6 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ACCORDING TO THE KEY THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF THE STUDY

At this juncture, it was deemed necessary to summarise the findings of the empirical research by relating them to the theoretical aspects that emerged in the study as a whole. The identified elements for social media integration were explored and the key findings reported in section 6.8, chapter 6 ,and section 7.3 above. In addition, key points in the theoretical chapters of this thesis, and the findings of the questionnaires and interviews were included to provide insights into which perspectives were and were not supported by the findings. Table 7.5 provides a summary of the perspectives and findings.

Table 7.6: Key theoretical perspectives corroborated by the empirical findings

KEY THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES CORROBORATED BY THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS		THEORETICAL CHAPTER/S
Corporate branding		
Purposely reflects the corporate brand	Most non-profit organisations acknowledge the importance of and need for a corporate brand on social media	Chapter 2
Every endeavour and interaction between and with the brand and various stakeholders is classified as communication	Through the use of visuals to communicate the tone of content	Chapters 2 and 4
Differentiate and identify the corporate brand	The importance of a uniform and a favourable visual representation of the corporate brand to create credibility was pertinently mentioned	Chapter 2
Increased focus on an emotional level	There was agreement that the non-profit organisation strives to create positive connections to the non-profit brand at an emotional level	Chapter 2
Humanise the brand	This is recognised but not a specific focus	Chapter 2
Articulation of corporate brand values	Strong focus on their values and the expression thereof to all stakeholders – use content to illustrate its <i>activities</i> towards achieving a cause (functional values), and use content (stakeholders' or beneficiaries' stories) to display emotional values	Chapters 2 and 4
Reveal the story of the corporate brand	Beneficiaries do share their stories – voluntarily or on request - yet the story of the corporate brand does not feature	Chapter 2
Social media		
Social media connectedness	Organisations have a social media presence on at least one platform and use it to connect with stakeholders	Chapter 3

Social interaction	Organisations do display communication behaviour with regard to creating and sharing visuals, video (although limited) to distribute information	Chapter 3
Social presence	Organisations are active and use social media platforms at least on a daily basis	Chapters 3 and 4
Social media content	The main focus is on <i>created</i> content, but organisations do repurpose content for use on different platforms	Chapters 3 and 4

An integrated approach to social media brand communication

Integration and coordination of communication, synergy and consistency	Findings suggest an effort to achieve the coordination, synergy and consistency of all communication, and consider both traditional and social media for communication planning	Chapters 2 and 4
<i>Mechanistic</i> view of integrated communication	Do link social media and traditional media, and use social media in conjunction with traditional media to a limited extent Integration regarding the <i>value</i> system facilitated through illustrations	Chapter 4 Chapters 2 and 4
Strategic intentions of IC	Non-profit organisations address their social media endeavours mostly in a communication plan rather than a social media strategy Recognise the need for strategic management of social media brand communication by a multi-skilled communicator or a team of communicators Senior communication professionals responsible for managing and coordination	Chapter 4

KEY THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES NOT CORROBORATED BY THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

Corporate branding		
Every endeavour and interaction between and with the brand and various stakeholders can be classified as communication	Limited in respect of using social media for two-way communication	Chapters 2 and 4

Humanise the corporate brand	The <i>timing</i> of social media content that relates directly to responsiveness that could hinder the representation of the brand as human, was identified as a shortcoming,	Chapters 2, 3 and 4
Allow stakeholders to co-create and share communication about a corporate brand	Since stakeholders are not asked to co-create communication, there is insufficient evidence to prove communication about the brand is co-created	Chapter 3
Articulation of corporate brand values	Organisations find it challenging to portray their <i>engagement</i> values (consistent communication and community), mainly expressed by organisation but a contribution of stakeholders is lacking	Chapters 2 and 4
Reveal the story of the corporate brand	<i>Storytelling</i> per se is limited to stories from beneficiaries and does not consider corporate brand stories	Chapters 2 and 4

Corporate branding

Participation	Do not actively involve stakeholders and mainly employ a “push” strategy to distribute information Cannot be confirmed with certainty as social media is mainly used for one-way distribution of information; it is a challenge to engage	Chapters 3 and 4
Social interaction	True interaction through conversations is limited; neither is it tracked or monitored to determine the effect or impact	Chapter 3
Interactivity	The organisation and stakeholders do not play interchangeable roles and dialogue is restricted	Chapters 3 and 4
Social media conversation	Conversational engagement not promoted; no evidence to support a listening approach (tracking and monitoring conversations); organisations do not attempt to determine whether stakeholders feel their voices are being heard	Chapters 3 and 4
Social media presence	Organisations do not have a presence on multiple platforms that restricts their connections with stakeholders	Chapter 3
Social media content	Contribution of stakeholders is not solicited; lacking in terms of <i>co-created</i> and <i>curated</i> content	Chapters 3 and 4

Integrated approach to social media brand communication		
<i>Mechanistic view of IC</i>	No alignment of social media platforms with stakeholders; do not use a single communication toolbox, limited evidence of actual integration Do not use multiple social media platforms (media convergence)	Chapter 4
<i>Philosophy of integration</i>	A particular mind-set towards <i>integration</i> per se is not evident	Chapters 2 and 4
Focus on communication rather than messages	Limited focus on two-way communication – mainly one-way information distribution	Chapters 2 and 4
Focus on the employee	No integration of employees by drawing on their experience and skills	Chapter 4
Stakeholder focus	Overall, non-profit organisations do not adopt a holistic perspective of their stakeholders regarding their needs, interests and communication preferences; whether stakeholders think the communication is integrated; or whether the communication reaches them	Chapters 2 and 4
Community	Do not focus on the interests of stakeholders to create community, brand ambassadors are not fully involved and no support are provided to the brand influencers	Chapters 3 and 4
Strategic evaluation	Organisations do not measure and evaluate the overall social media integrations initiative at a strategic level, for example through a social media audit, online surveys to determine stakeholder opinions, or benchmarking	Chapter 4

7.7 SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter was to report the data and interpret the findings of the semi-structured interviews with communication experts in the non-profit sector. These discussions specifically focused on gaining insight into pertinent issues that were also addressed in the questionnaire and that were linked to the proposed elements for a conceptual framework for integrating social media brand communication. Another aim of the discussion was to reveal emergent topics relevant to the study.

The findings of the semi-structured interviews were analysed and interpreted according to each of the three elements for a conceptual framework to integrate non-profit organisations' social media brand communication. These included the fundamentals, the avenues, and the attainment and maintenance of social media brand communication integration.

The in-depth discussion of the findings underscored the key points that emerged from the empirical research.

The chapter concluded by listing the key findings from the qualitative analysis, and emergent topics that were raised by the participants. A summary was provided of which theoretical aspects of the study were corroborated or not supported the empirical research.

In chapter 8, a review of the study is provided by linking the secondary research objectives and research questions to the chapters, the key foci and outputs of the study. The proposed elements for a conceptual framework are revised, based on the elements emanating from the review of relevant literature, which were investigated in the empirical research. This is followed by the presentation of a final framework for integrating social media brand communication.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the conclusions of to the study that includes formulating guidelines for integrating social media brand communication for the non-profit sector. Firstly, the links between the secondary research objectives and related research questions, the phases, chapters and main foci of the study as a whole are reiterated to indicate how the main research problem was addressed.

Secondly, the refinement of the proposed framework is presented and motivated. Subsequent to the empirical research and the interpretation of the results of the online surveys and interviews, the initial conceptual framework was tailored to represent the status quo as described by the communication professionals who participated in the study. Thirdly, the proposed elements of the final conceptual framework are discussed in detail. Each element in the framework is comprehensively discussed and explained in accordance with the pragmatic approach of the study by making suggestions for the practical application of the framework in the non-profit sector. Fourthly, the conceptual framework is graphically illustrated by means of the arrangement of the different elements in the framework, and followed by a concise overview. Fifthly, the key requirements deemed essential to the integration of social media brand communication when communication occurs on social media, are highlighted. The adoption of a corporate brand perspective on social media, compels non-profit organisations to consider certain theoretical aspects when connecting with stakeholders on social media platforms. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and suggestions for possible future research on the topic. The exploratory and descriptive nature of the study disclosed meaningful possibilities for further research. In this way, all the touchpoints of the study are brought together and finalised.

In accordance with the main objective of this research, namely to explore a conceptual framework for social media brand communication for non-profit organisations in South Africa from an integrated perspective, all research efforts were intentionally directed at achieving this outcome. Hence, the findings of the research, and the secondary research objectives and research questions are linked to every phase, chapter, main foci and outcomes, as contained in this thesis. Section 8.3 below provides a synopsis of the study and explains how the research questions (identified in chapter 1) were addressed. For a comprehensive overview, section 8.3 should be considered in conjunction with the information contained in addendum D.

8.2 RELATING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

In accordance with the main objective of this research, namely to propose elements for a conceptual framework for the integration of non-profit organisations' social media brand communication in South Africa, all research efforts were purposively aimed at achieving this outcome. Addendum D provides a comprehensive overview of the study and depicts the outcomes, and how the secondary research objectives and research questions (identified in chapter 1), foci and outcomes of the investigation were addressed. The next sections provides a summary of these findings.

8.2.1 Research question 1

This research question – *What aspects does the corporate brand founded on corporate communication comprise?* – was addressed in chapter 2. To explicate the corporate brand perspective of this study, it was essential to investigate *corporate communication* as the foundation of the perspective. Contemporary views on corporate communication were conceptualised. An extensive literature review revealed that the philosophy underlying corporate communication indicates intentions to achieve communication consistency and unity through a stakeholder focus, the integration of communication, strategic communication and a management role. These key thrusts related favourably to the proposed perspective as a more contemporary view in order to achieve a favourable corporate brand, and in so doing, support it. Clear definitions of WOM, eWOM, *social media brand communication*, *corporate brand*, and *corporate brand communication* were formulated to demarcate these concepts in context.

8.2.2 Research question 2

Research question 2 – *What are the key elements of a social media focus in non-profit organisations?* – addressed the focal point of this study, namely a social media focus. The main objective were to identify possible elements for non-profit organisations to communicate in an integrated fashion. Chapter 3 systematically explored social media as the focus of the study. Firstly, an appropriate definition was formulated on the basis of a qualitative analysis of existing definitions. The definition was framed in the context of a social media focus. Secondly, to gain a clearer understanding of the social media focus, chapter 3 examined the progression of social media in order to explain its evolution. Thirdly, the broad classification of social media was considered. To gain a deeper understanding of social media in the context of this study, different types of media were considered to comprehend the concept as a form of *online media*. Owing to the lack of a definite typology for social media it was also deemed necessary to consider different classifications. In conclusion, for the purposes of the study, the concepts were categorised as owned, earned and paid-for media. The foundational elements of social

media were then identified. The literature generally proposes Web 2.0 and UGC as the basic elements for this media. The proposal of *community* as an additional foundational element was regarded as significant. Community is important because it focuses on the human element as the core of social media. The fact that the stakeholders of non-profit organisations, who are also users of social media, are first and foremost *human*, combined with the idea that human interaction is a social characteristic of social media, and the importance for non-profit organisations to humanise their corporate brands, validates this contribution.

The use of social media for non-profit organisations was further extended by identifying key elements of this media, namely that it allows social media connectedness, permits participation, is *social*, is interactive, allows conversations and comprises social media content. In addition, social media was framed according to classical theoretical views, a theory of and perspectives on human action, symbolic interaction and social media presences.

8.2.3 Research question 3

To further achieve the main research problem, research question 3 was formulated as follows: *What elements could an integrated approach to social media brand communication comprise?* Bearing in mind that a comprehension of IC was necessary to ultimately identify possible elements for a conceptual framework, it was recognised as being hugely significant in achieving the broad research problem. Chapter 4 endeavoured, firstly, to conceptualise an approach to social media brand communication; secondly, to consider several perspectives and applications of IC that share the ideal to achieve communication integration, by specifically analysing historical IC models, integrated models in a South African setting, and digital IC models. Following this investigation, the conceptualisation of an integrated approach to social media brand communication was achieved, and the principles and present emphasis of such an approach identified.

Thirdly, the investigation in the chapter up to this point, including the knowledge gained through research questions 1 and 3, provided a comprehensive idea of possible elements that could be included in a conceptual framework to integrate non-profit organisations' social media brand communication. Possible elements were thus deductively identified, together with the theoretical perspectives explored in chapters 2 and 3.

8.2.4 Research question 4

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 were devoted to answer research question 4 – *In what ways are the proposed elements appropriate for an integrated approach to social media brand communication?* Chapter 5 dealt with the research methodology by clarifying the research paradigm, research design and data collection methods used to measure the proposed

elements. The data collection methods were then applied. Communication professionals responsible for employing social to communicate in their respective non-profit organisations were invited to participate either as respondents or participants. Valuable contributions were made that allowed for the measurement of the proposed elements. The statistical analysis confirmed that most of the elements correlated with one another, except for four theoretical aspects. These were excluded from further statistical analysis and the refined conceptual framework presented in the next section. Moreover, the statistical analysis revealed that all the sections were in fact correlated, which justified the grouping thereof.

8.2.5 Research question 5

The final research question dealt with the main contribution of this study, namely to propose elements for a conceptual framework that could allow non-profit organisations to apply when integrating their social media brand communication. Research question 5 was formulated as follows: *What are the elements for integrating social media brand communication in the non-profit section?* This question was based on all the insights collectively gained in the literature reviews in chapters 2, 3 and 4 and the findings and interpretations from the empirical research discussed in chapters 6 and 7. The proposed elements for the integration of social media brand communication in the non-profit sector were incorporated into a conceptual framework, with the specific aim of filling the existing void in South Africa in this regard.

The conceptual framework with proposed elements is presented in this chapter. It is supplemented with the identification of specific considerations for communication on social media, and arranged according to the following perspectives: *human action and interaction, symbolic interaction and social presence*.

8.3 THE REFINED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTEGRATION OF NON-PROFITS' SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNICATION

Based on the purpose of the empirical research to corroborate the proposed elements and theoretical aspects contained in table 4.5, chapter 4, at this stage it would prudent to reappraise the elements based on the comprehensive insights gained through the research. Table 8.3 indicates the revised conceptual framework for the integration of social media brand communication. Particulars of the final conceptual framework are included in the synopsis in section 8.3 below.

The proposed conceptual framework was refined after careful reflection on and attention to the pragmatic philosophy that appreciates the diverse realities and unique nature and differences in the availability of resources in the non-profit-sector. It is hoped that non-profit organisations will implement the framework individually according to their distinct objectives

and challenges. Consequently, and in line with a pragmatic view, it was necessary to draw a distinction between strategic and tactical elements in order to accommodate organisations facing unique challenges, such as smaller non-profit organisations. This is justified and explained in the first bullet later in this section. The suggested framework was moreover intended to guide non-profit organisations in their use of social media integration to achieve a desired corporate brand perception.

The adjustments to the initial framework included drawing a distinction between strategic and mechanistic or tactical elements, including suggesting a generic framework for a social media strategy in the context of an IC approach, rather than a communication strategy, and to consider the naming of the elements to align it to the corporate brand perspective.

- A noteworthy refinement to the framework relates to the distinction between strategic and mechanistic or tactical elements. This distinction was deemed significant because the strategic intent of the non-profit organisation needs to be clear and should receive the required consideration. As mentioned by Cornelissen (2011:83) and corroborated by other scholars, it encompasses a balanced view of the current and future standing, and the objectives the organisation wishes to achieve (see section 4.4.5, chapter 4).

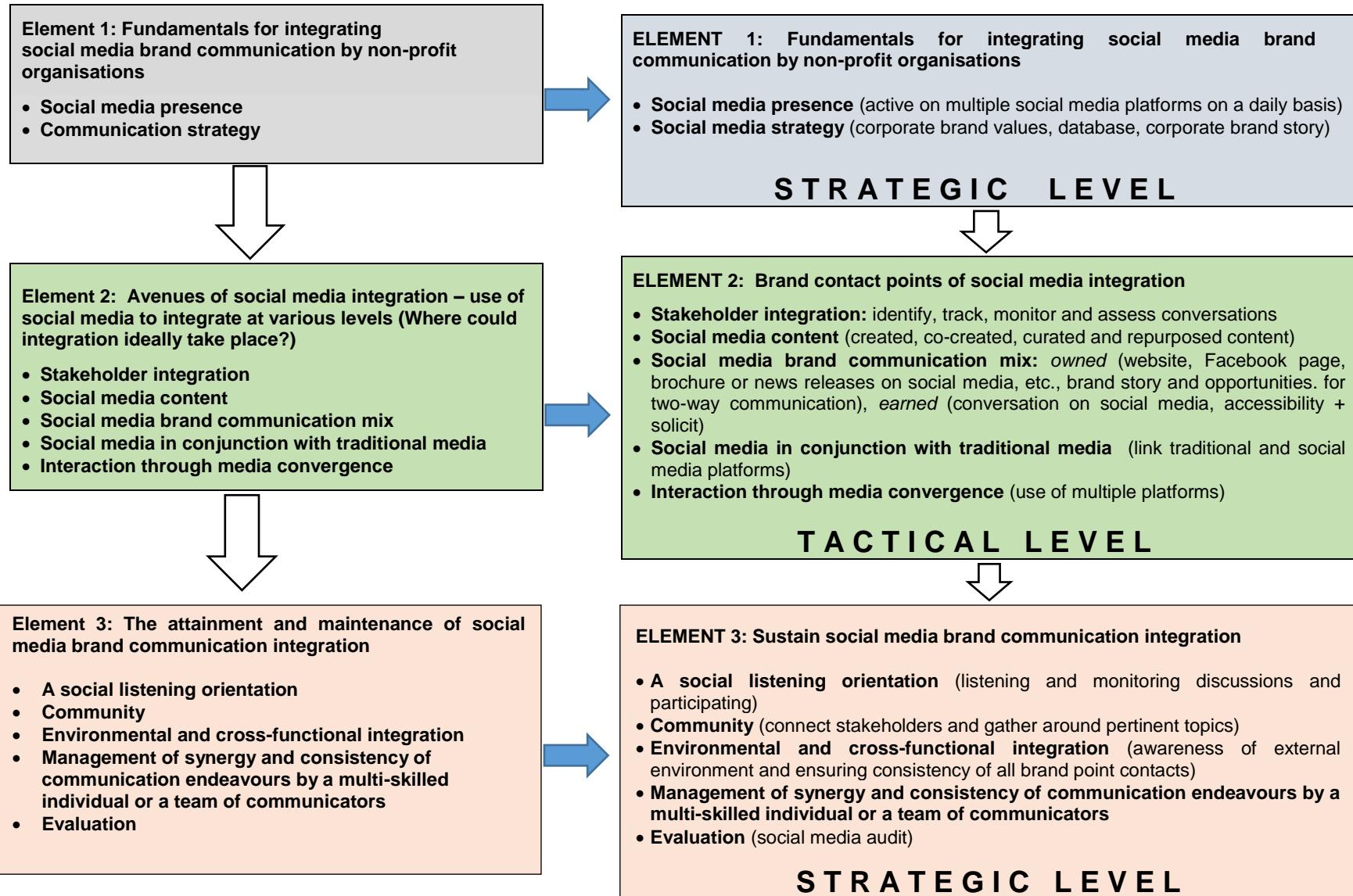
The need for such consideration emerged from the prominence given by communication professions to the fact that most of the non-profit organisations' planning of social media revolves around specific instances such as projects, events and awareness campaigns. Significant insights were gained into where social media planning actually take/s place. It became evident that the professionals who participated in the study, focused mainly on the tactical or mechanistic level, which could explain why the strategic level is neglected, irrespective of the availability of resources. Hence the proposed framework was adapted to illustrate the strategic (elements 1 and 3) and tactical (element 2) levels at which the coordination of social media brand communication can occur. From the findings it is clear that the larger non-profit organisations do have the required resources to implement the framework as a whole, but are simply either uninformed or uninterested in doing so. Also, based on their reach and prominence, it would be justifiable to commit to the framework as a whole. The adapted framework hence serves to also accommodate smaller non-profit organisations that are restricted in respect of resources, to basically focus on the tactical level when planning their events, projects or awareness campaigns. In so doing, the study acknowledged that organisations experience individual and unique realities.

- *Element 1.* The need to be active on more than one social media platform was emphasised in the overall findings in section 7.5, chapter 7. It was thus recommended that non-profit organisations should seriously consider broadening their social media presence by using more platforms to improve their engagement level with stakeholders.

The second aspect "communication strategy", which featured strongly in the literature and was proposed as the area in which strategic social media planning could resort. The results clearly revealed that this approach was adopted by all the participating organisations, even though the strategic planning of social media activities did not appear to receive the necessary attention. As a consequence, non-profit organisations are experiencing definite challenges in locating compelling content and the coordination thereof, distribution of messages, engagement on social media and knowledge of stakeholder needs. Although the literature suggested that social media planning could be attended to in a comprehensive communication strategy, the findings of this study justify use of a separate social media strategy to address these challenges, among other strategic matters. Hence the framework rather specifies a *social media strategy*, the particulars of which are discussed in section 8.3.

- *Elements 2 and 3.* Despite the fact that most of the theoretical aspects of these elements were not fully adhered to by the non-profit organisations, statistical evidence supported the proposed grouping thereof into these elements. However, the statistical calculations revealed that items 15, 22, 25 and 26 did not cohesively group together in terms of the respective aspects they explored – hence their exclusion in the refined model.
- Finally, the names of elements 2 and 3 were aligned to the perspective of the study and renamed as *brand contact points of integration* and *sustain social media integration*, which correspondingly denotes the points of contact at which integration can be achieved and the continuation of integration.

The initial and improved conceptual frameworks for the integration of non-profit organisations' social media brand communication are presented in Figures 8.1 and 8.2.



8.4 SYNOPIST OF A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTEGRATION OF NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS' SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNICATION

This section provides a more detailed account of the attributes of the elements contained in the conceptual framework to guide organisations in the non-profit sector in South Africa. It also presents practical perspectives on the main elements, which include the *fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication; brand contact points of social media integration; and ways to sustain social media brand communication integration.*

8.4.1 Fundamentals for integrating social media brand communication by non-profit organisations

This particular point is pitched at strategic level and serves as the underlying basis for social media integration. It is deemed critical for integrating social media. The reasoning, firstly, is the necessity for non-profit organisations to have a social media presence that allows them to be active and to communicate on these platforms. Secondly, the idea is that a social media presence should be directed at strategic level and it needs to be governed by a comprehensive social media strategy.

This said, organisations should be active on at least more than one social media platform, but preferably on more platforms to achieve a high level of engagement and also to expose stakeholders to multiple points of communication from the corporate brand. Consideration should be given to platforms on which the stakeholders have a high presence. Non-profit organisations should create online spaces to ideally provide a zone in which they demonstrate their presence by responding to conversations and sharing stories, and engaging in discussions about the corporate brand. Furthermore, they should consider the use of traditional media to create awareness of the organisation's presence on social media platforms.

A social media strategy should include, *inter alia*, elements that focus exclusively on the all-inclusive planning of social media activities from an integrated point of view. Specific attention should be paid to the following: (1) reflecting on the overall organisational objectives and social media's contribution to them; (2) aligning these endeavours to the organisation's objectives; (3) knowledge of stakeholders and their preferences; (4) the operational capacity concerning available and skilled staff and other resources; (5) methods to be employed for measurement, such as a social media audit to establish what has been achieved; and (6) guidelines on how the integration of social media and traditional media could be attained. It is furthermore recommended that such a strategy should make provision for the following: a *content plan* that considers critical issues of the types of content and formats stakeholders of

the organisation prefer, the mix of created, co-created and curated content; an eWOM *plan* that considers earned media that is created by stakeholders on social media and actions to encourage the sharing of eWOM; and a social media message plan that outlines the main types of message strategies that the corporate brand would like to apply, for example, emotional or informational strategies. Every organisation needs to design its own strategy in terms of its unique focus and challenges. Non-profit organisations should use the *corporate brand story* as a branding technique and a vehicle to portray the particular organisation's values in order to promote an understanding of the corporate causes and instil trust. This appears to be neglected by non-profit organisations in South Africa. Organisations should consider a mix of brand stories, as identified in chapter 2, and use social media to optimise these stories to portray the corporate brand persona.

In light of the above considerations, combined with the overall empirical findings, the initial framework for a social media strategy for non-profit organisations in section 4.6, chapter 4, was revised, as depicted in figure 8.3 below. Noteworthy is the expansion of the initial strategy to include specific aspects in respect of IC, such as *operational aspects*, a *social media content plan* and an *eWOM plan*.

A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Define core mission objectives for social media brand communication

Formulate specific social media objectives by reflecting on the overall organisational and communication objectives and determining the type of social media engagement desired. Attention should be paid to the corporate brand story and how it can be used to portray corporate brand values and the non-profit cause. There should be dedication to creating internal ambassadors.

Stakeholder knowledge

Gain knowledge of who they are, their communication needs, the experiences driving them to communicate, their preferred platforms and desired ways of communication on social media platforms and their social media habits.

Operational aspects

Determine and consider the availability of technical support.

Develop social media content plan

Identify the brand messages the non-profit needs to share, pinpoint message strategies, decide on the ratio of social media content (owned, co-created and curated) and uncover key topics important to stakeholders through automated tracking and monitoring.

Develop eWOM plan

Identify creative ways in which favourable eWOM can be encouraged, measured, and be critically integrated. **Social media communication mix (social media in conjunction with traditional media and interaction through media convergence)**

Decide on the most popular and appropriate social media platforms with due consideration of the existing owned and paid media and the integration thereof. Consider guidelines on how to achieve the integration of traditional and social media.

Measurement

Determine the effectiveness of the strategy by using *social media analytics* software to analyse data from social media platforms and *social media monitoring* to listen to and analyse social media conversations such as eWOM. A social media audit should also be considered to provide an overview of the overall achievements

Figure 8.3: A generic framework for a social media strategy for non-profit organisations in the context of an IC approach (adapted from figure 4.2, chapter 4)

8.4.2 Brand contact points of social media integration

This element focuses on the different ways or contact points through which social media integration can be realised. It is proposed that all these points should be dealt with and strategically managed.

8.4.2.1 Stakeholder integration

It was argued that the integration of stakeholders is achieved through a listening orientation that enables the organisation to be informed on relevant matters, identifies prominent stakeholders who could contribute to creating brand awareness and allows the organisation to understand its stakeholders. Conversational integration is associated with social listening because conversations are the actual actions the organisation monitors. In a social media environment, stakeholders are able to find their voices, which is likely to manifest as eWOM in their conversations on social media platforms that can be monitored and assessed by means of social media monitoring tools, similar to the monitoring of stakeholder actions. All actions pertaining to the monitoring of mentions in conversations on social media should be guided by the eWOM plan contained in the social media strategy. A myriad of social media monitoring and analytic tools (paid for or free) are available to allow the non-profit organisation to keep abreast of current conversations and which content stakeholders are interested in. Examples include Trackur, Social mention, BlogPulse and Twazzup. Based on the advantages mentioned, it would thus be fair to conclude that for the non-profit organisation to integrate the voices of stakeholders, it should carefully analyse and monitor conversations on social media.

Based on the points highlighted in chapter 4, one would expect listening to occur over an extended period, and it does not simply end when the required feedback from stakeholders is received. In this regard, social media listening tools can help the non-profit organisation to analyse and measure influence in terms of sentiment, passion, strength and reach. Advice that non-profit organisations should mainly consider when establishing and integrating conversations is the need to *stay involved in the conversation*, which implies continuous contributing to (or involvement in) and monitoring these dialogues.

Organisations should bear in mind that integration occurs at two separate levels, namely *interactivity integration* and *brand point integration*, as explained in chapter 4. This twofold consideration pertains to the *nature* of the communication (which should be two-way, purposeful and personalised) and the *probability* that the stakeholder will be exposed to communication from the organisation (through brand messages). Hence in an attempt to achieve the integration of stakeholders, the organisation should be aware of the need for two-way personal and focused communication combined with the following three requirements: (1) the appropriateness of all corporate brand messages (also known as *points of contact* or *brand contact*); (2) the optimal sharing of information through continuous dialogue; and (3) aligning the timing of all brand messages with stakeholder preferences. Also important is recognition of the fact that such dialogues or conversations, from an IC perspective, are not restricted to social media, but that both traditional and social media platforms should be taken into account, as stated previously.

8.4.2.2 Social media content

Content should serve as a starting point for social interaction and to elicit conversations about the non-profit brand. It is suggested that the non-profit organisation should ensure the usefulness of social media content, how it is organised and structured to ensure accessibility, and how stakeholders can effortlessly access the content simply on the basis of the ability of social media to sanction unrestricted dialogue. Aspects of the social media strategy and the content plan, in particular, should steer decisions on the type of content, the timing thereof and how it is sourced. It is advisable for the organisation to constantly consider different types of content and not share only news articles, for example. In addition to the content owned and created by the organisation, stakeholders should be involved in creating social media content by soliciting contributions from prominent stakeholders such as brand ambassadors, influencers or advocates. The organisation also needs to find appropriate content from other sources. Examples of finding curated content include conducting keyword searches, following prominent people such as bloggers or tagging people, say, by using the *Evernote* application, which allows users to collect information by taking and archiving important “notes” for subsequent use. It is essential for an organisation to keep a *content calendar* that specifies the mix of different types of content – created, co-created and curated – that will be shared with stakeholders. Communication professionals should focus on repurposing such content for use on different traditional and social media platforms. This could assist the organisation to ensure uniformity of the different corporate brand messages and also to communicate consistently.

Bearing in mind that stakeholders are not equally active on all the social media platforms, one could assume that the content published on these platforms should be customised to appeal to certain stakeholders, who would be likely to share the content through their own networks. In line with the IC approach, non-profit organisations should personalise their social media content to align with the different stakeholders' profiles on each platform, with proper attention to the consistency of the corporate brand message. One could therefore expect this type of social media content to be precisely tailored to serve as a pull mechanism to compel stakeholders to retrieve and share it, and ultimately create broader awareness of the corporate brand, and even encourage others to form communities. Overall, integration of content should be a combination of content generated by stakeholders and organisations, that will be realised through a balanced incorporation and use of created or owned, co-created and curated content on social media platforms.

8.4.2.3 Social media communication mix

As with social media content, the combination/s of different types of media should be informed by the social media strategy. As mentioned previously, social media can effectively be used as integrated platforms whereby an array of digital and online media can be combined and linked to achieve set goals.

In the context of this study, decisions on the communication mix should be informed by the alignment of content and the organisation's objectives, the correlation between content and the preferred ways of communication, the extent to which two-way communication is allowed, the degree to which the organisation wishes to acquire loyal stakeholders, and, importantly, the types of social media platforms stakeholders favour. It is thus recommended that the selection of a communication mix should be mainly approached from the organisation's point of view, such as aligning content with organisational objectives, deciding on the preferred way to communicate and aligning this with the content, deciding about acquiring loyal stakeholders and making decisions about the most relevant and effective methods.

Moreover, non-profit organisations should reflect on the *types and levels of interaction* they require on different social media platforms to allow for continuous interaction through return visits and the conversation of stakeholders.

The organisation should consider the following when deciding on which platforms to use (1) the communication and social media brand communication objectives; (2) ensuring a "presence" on both traditional and social media; (3) obtaining intelligence on the most suitable and desired social media platforms by applying social media analytics software; and (4) considering the unique advantages of each platform to determine the best method/s to share

content. In addition, the non-profit organisation should establish which social media platforms would be best suited for its specific purpose.

For this conceptual framework, attention was paid to the combination of social and traditional media, and the use of media convergence.

- *Using social media in conjunction with traditional media.* The philosophy to achieve communication integration implies that decisions on the combination of the different types of media to use merit careful consideration if the organisation wishes to align its communication actions and ultimately achieve communication consistency. This should include, *inter alia*, a combination of a variety of communication tools from a wide range of communication functions, and importantly, the coordination of traditional and types of social media. It is advisable to consider both types of media for communication, by creating a *single communication toolbox* to guide decisions on which pairing of these media would most effectively and consistently communicate a corporate brand message. Such a toolbox should include all possible types of traditional and social media that allow the organisation to distribute information (traditional such as press releases and newsletters), as well as those that focus on facilitating conversation by considering the needs and preferences of stakeholders (certain social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter). Taking into account the unique cause of each non-profit organisation, this combination should be suited to the individual organisation. Traditional media can also successfully increase the awareness of the social media platforms on which organisations are active, by picturing the symbols of the platforms in all traditional media.
- *Interaction through media convergence.* The second element of the communication mix concerns the combination of video, voice, image and data, which enables communication to take place on multiple platforms. This type of interaction allows the organisation to repurpose and customise content for use on different platforms and hence to create *content convergence*. In reality, organisations could share a story link or YouTube link in other social media (e.g. a Facebook post) or live stream an event on Twitter. Another example would be a sponsored advertisement on Twitter or a link to a press release on Facebook. Diversifying the different *types* of content, such as a picture, video, comment, statistics or an article could increase interaction on social media simply because stakeholders will remain interested.

8.4.3 Sustaining social media brand communication integration

Having achieved social media integration at tactical level by attending to the considerations outlined above, necessitates actions to continue such integration. At this point, it is expected that the non-profit organisations have adhered to the requirements of the previous elements and they should now take specific action to maintain the integration.

8.4.3.1 Social listening orientation

Such an orientation would require the organisation to keep abreast of discussions and initiate dialogue by also participating in them. The decision to adopt a listening orientation should be made at strategic level and should permeate the organisation.

The statements and mentions by stakeholders about the organisation that are rapidly spread on traditional media and particularly on social media platforms, require the adoption of a listening approach to enable the organisation to understand its audience, be aware of relevant matters and opinions, and identify social media influences that could spread the message. Stakeholders could thus be integrated into the activities of the organisation by obtaining social media intelligence.

A myriad of social media monitoring and analytics tools (paid for or free) are available to enable the non-profit organisation to keep up with current conversations and in which content stakeholders are interested. Based on the advantages mentioned, it would thus be fair to conclude that for the non-profit organisation to integrate the voices of stakeholders, it should carefully analyse and monitor conversations on social media. Ideally, non-profit organisations should use available analytics software tools to reveal apposite information, such as topics or popular themes, the opinions or sentiments of stakeholders that may be positive, negative or neutral, and identifying current conversations and future earned media (eWOM) trends. Hence the conclusion drawn is that a listening orientation is paramount to ensure that the integration of stakeholders continues.

8.4.3.2 Community

Organising people into communities, primarily on social networks and around common topics, reputedly generates considerable benefits for the participants (the broader community, organisations and individuals) with respect to a sense of belonging, support, collaboration, information exchange and suchlike. Community is postulated as an element through which a positive corporate brand can be achieved because the organisation relies on these groups to influence stakeholders' opinions of the brand, by sharing their brand experiences and increasing positive discussions on social media. In this study *community* was acknowledged as a distinct foundational aspect of social media.

In the context of this study, non-profit organisations should be concerned with the concept of non-profit brand community, which is a non-geographical group of people who admire a certain brand. For the non-profit sector, the ultimate aim should be to build strong relationships with like-minded stakeholders who could promote loyalty to the non-profit brand.

At the basis of the cultivation of brand communities is knowledge of the common bonds that could unite people and a dedicated focus on this, which would hint at consideration of the organisation's mission and vision, combined with stakeholder identification (see also the discussion below). Fundamental to the elements recommended in this section would be an understanding of the stakeholders' needs about the communication and interaction they seek that would enable the organisation to connect them accordingly.

The points that non-profit organisations need to reflect on to promote community include the following:

- (1) *Using social networking sites to introduce and connect the non-profit organisation to existing stakeholders and their friends.* The *sociality* of social media as a key element of social media was explicated in the theoretical review. It was argued that humans are social by nature and thus constantly seek interaction with others, a need that by all accounts is met through connecting people on social networks. Social media platforms thus promote the formation and maintenance of online communities to achieve strategic aims. Noteworthy examples include supporting social relationships with stakeholders and communicating directly with stakeholders.
- (2) *Active involvement in conversations with like-minded people who feel a sense of connection, such as brand ambassadors or brand advocates.* In context and in the social media environment, one would expect the interactions on social media platforms between communities and with the organisation to provide opportunities for conversations about the brand. Like-minded stakeholders would be united through conversations and expected to increase conversations about the brand.
- (3) *Building community around particular campaigns or events to allow people to recognise and unite around common interests by prefixing hashtags to these occasions.* The aim should be to gather stakeholders around specific causes or topics and allow them to form communities that could offer opportunities to reach new audiences and grow a brand community. Interactions and conversations around these hashtags can therefore be recognised by stakeholders and monitored by organisations, and also allow the organisation to engage with particular communities around issues and interests stakeholders feel passionate about.

- (4) *Building community around customised content.* If content that is published on social media platforms is personalised to increase its appeal, it might increase the possibility of forming communities of like-minded stakeholders. Moreover, community leaders could be located and invited to contribute social media content or the organisation could follow them on social media to keep abreast of pertinent community issues.
- (5) *Accepting the importance of brand ambassadors, influencers and advocates to create communities.* The existence and impact of influential and well-known people with the aptitude to connect widely dispersed audiences around certain topics and interests would be invaluable to the non-profit sector. Organisations should be committed to identify, acknowledge and exploit the connectivity of these individuals to unite stakeholders into communities.
- (6) *Empowering brand ambassadors.* Non-profit organisations should have as a strategic goal the commitment to persistently grow the community by reaching new stakeholders and inspiring existing ambassadors by supporting their personal projects. The possibility of establishing an *ambassador community* by connecting them with other brand ambassadors should be considered.
- (7) *Identifying causes, interests and passions that could contribute to creating a sense of community*

The conclusion drawn is that organisations in the non-profit sector should be committed to the above-mentioned considerations.

8.4.3.3 Environmental and cross-functional integration

In addition to the elements that should be considered in a social media strategy, as discussed in section 4.6, chapter 4, organisations should consider environmental and cross-functional factors as the basis of a strategy that guides social media brand communication. Environmental integration specifically refers to the monitoring of the external environment and community of the organisation that is not generally emphasised in the literature on integrated communication. This point is nevertheless deemed essential for integrating social media and authorises the organisation to adapt its strategies and tactics. Taking into account the rapidly evolving online environment in which this communication occurs, organisations are expected to identify and keep up with technological developments and challenges.

As alluded to earlier, the notion does not necessarily refer to duplicating all messages, but ensuring communication synergy and consistency to prevent conflicting communication from the organisation. This point, however, has not been emphasised by all scholars who have conceptualised IC, but it is proposed that non-profit organisations should continuously

consider their immediate environment and community when formulating their social media strategies to ensure that these conditions are integrated into the planning. Given the focus on social media brand communication that seemingly occurs in an online milieu, it would make sense for these organisations to also recognise and keep up with impending challenges posed by the online environment.

One would expect the coordination of communication in the non-profit sector to not pose the same challenge as in commercial organisations, because they generally do not have similar hierarchical structures and employ fewer staff members. However a concerted effort should be made to ensure that all brand contact points throughout the organisation are integrated.

In reality, synergy and consistency of communication activities can be achieved quite effortlessly because communication professionals often fulfil more than one role in these organisations and are thus responsible for other communication functions such as management, marketing, fundraising and so on. In larger and more diverse non-profit organisations, creating community and a sense of belonging would help to achieve cross-sectional integration in the organisation. In this way, staff would be dedicated and willing to share their knowledge and skills of social media, and would ultimately become ambassadors in their own right. Dosemagen (2011:165) envisages an even broader role for staff members and claims that they could in fact become active promoters of the non-profit brand by acting as *community organisers* or even *community advocates*. Staff could be encouraged to apply for awards in this sector that could create recognition of the organisation's commitment to engaging with its stakeholders (cf. Agard 2011).

8.4.3.4 Management of synergy and consistency of communication endeavours by a multi-skilled individual or a team of communicators

In extant literature, it is proposed that the strategic management and coordination of the overall integration effort should be the responsibility of a multi-skilled communicator or a team of communicators. This consideration is closely linked to cross-functional integration in that the individual should ensure that all communication functions, including social media brand communication, is achieved at a centralised point. Organisations should ensure that suitable qualified and skilled communicators are in control of the overall communication integration.

8.4.3.5 Evaluation

Measurement of the effectiveness of social media initiatives as such should not only be integral to an existing social media strategy, but should also concentrate on achieving a complete overview of the overall communication integration initiatives. The organisation

should endeavour to achieve a holistic view of its progress towards the integration of social media and therefore, in a sense, gain intelligence of its success. Such an evaluation is dependent on the initial social media objectives encompassed in a social media strategy that should be informed by gaining knowledge of how stakeholders perceive the corporate brand, based on knowledge acquired through social media listening. The corporate brand perspective largely dictates such measurement because the ultimate aim is to promote the corporate brand of non-profit organisations through the incorporation of social media brand communication. It is therefore necessary to determine the contribution, or otherwise, of the proposed efforts towards integrating of social media brand communication.

Another factor non-profit organisations should consider is conducting a social media audit to uncover areas of concern, strengths, opportunities and threats that could serve as benchmark for subsequent measurement. A comparison with competitors could likewise identify options for improvement.

Lastly, stakeholders could offer valuable insights into how they perceive the success of the organisation in achieving communication integration through, say, online surveys. Input from stakeholders on whether they feel their voices are being heard and considered, their perception of how successful the organisation has been in combining traditional and social media, and whether or not the content mix (created, co-created and curated) and different types of media (videos on Facebook and suchlike) are appropriate, are some of the factors that could be explored. Of huge significance is the contribution of such an initiative towards accomplishing a real stakeholder focus and reassuring stakeholders of the organisation's intention to build mutually beneficial relationships.

8.5 REPRESENTATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTEGRATION OF NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS' SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNICATION

Figure 8.4 below is a simplistic representation of the elements of the conceptual framework that were summarised in section 8.3 above. It is followed by a concise overview of the framework.

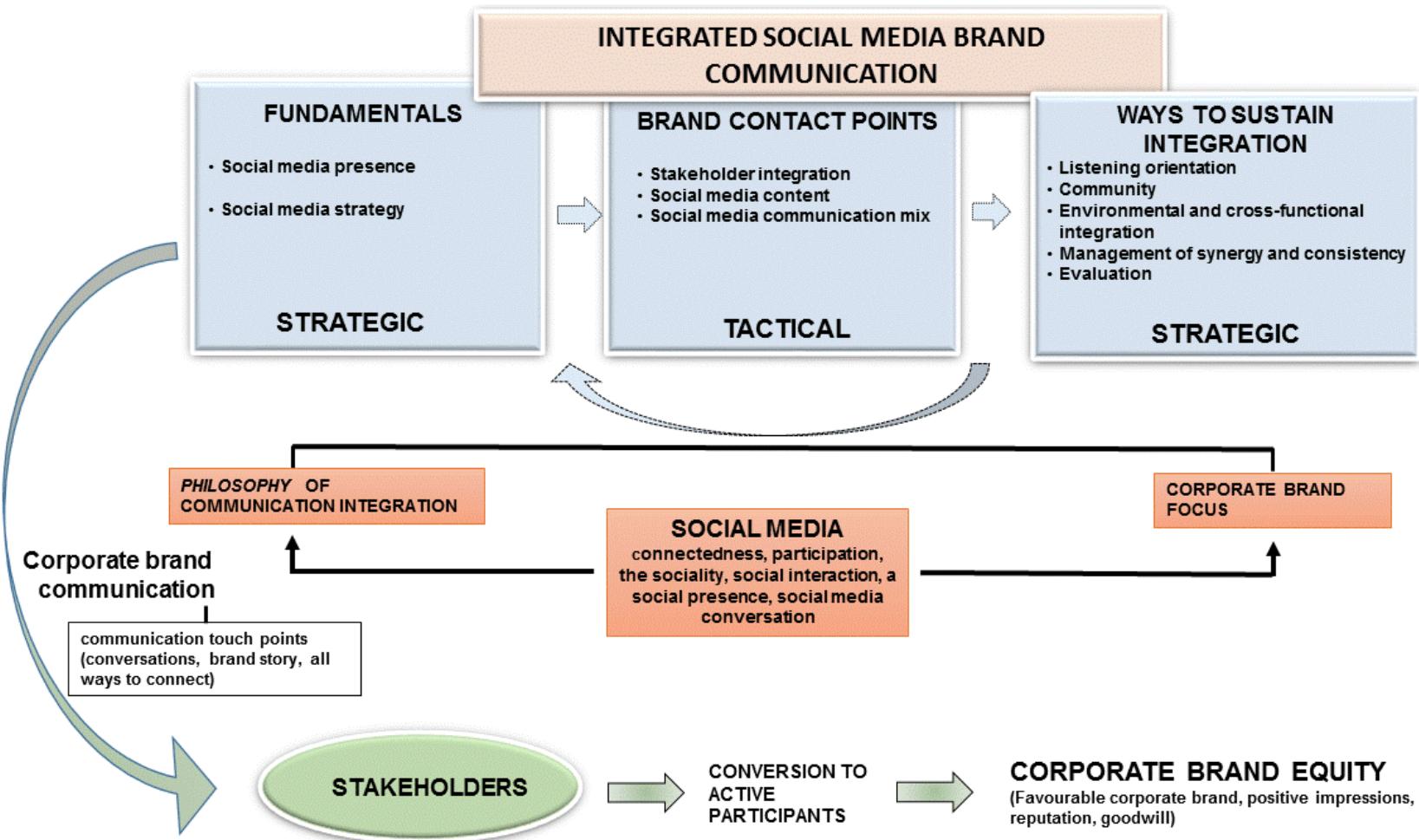


Figure 8.4: A conceptual framework for the integration of non-profit organisations' social media brand communication

8.5.1 A concise overview of the representation in Figure 8.4

The elements of the framework are briefly touched on below.

- *The foundation of the conceptual framework.* As stated earlier and in line with the literature review, the proposed framework was based on *three* overarching principles that are represented in the centre of the figure, namely a *philosophy* of communication integration and a *corporate brand* focus, which are underpinned by a *social media* focus and its elements. The key elements of social media in this context include connectedness, participation, the sociality of this media, social interaction, a social presence, interactivity and social media conversation. These principles were dealt with separately in the preceding literature chapters, and form the foundation of this framework, which focuses entirely on the use of social media in an integrated manner. They are deemed essential to achieve the desired aim of the integration of social media brand communication and are therefore non-negotiable. Non-profit organisations therefore need to adhere to the principles and do not have any recourse if they aspire to achieve a broad integration of their social media brand communication.

Firstly, in terms of the views on the integration of communication as previously discussed, it is proposed that the organisation adopt a particular mind-set or have a conscious intention to achieve integration. It is argued that the *philosophy* or *spirit* of integration enables communication integration that would allow the organisation to reach the hearts and minds of its stakeholders. This integration is furthermore achieved through a communication system that allows unrestricted connection and social interaction. An orientation towards communication integration encapsulates deliberate efforts to create consistency and synergy between all communication activities, which would promote/contribute to the portrayal of a uniform image of the organisation. A stakeholder focus is central to such a mind-set and effort, which in the present study specifically emphasises the need to have knowledge of the stakeholders and the places where they meet. A *philosophy* of integration would thus drive the use of social media to ultimately achieve the desired corporate brand.

The second principle refers to the ultimate goal to achieve a favourable corporate brand for the non-profit organisation, which is in line with the perspective of corporate branding. The empirical findings did confirm the organisations' dedication to improving and portraying a positive brand through consistent communication because their very existence relies on how they are perceived by their stakeholders. For the non-profit organisation it is essential to humanise the brand by portraying it as being interested, caring and "present" on social media, which is primarily achieved by the methods used to apply social media platforms and the responsiveness of the organisation. Closely

linked to this is the need to direct the non-profit organisations' brand communication towards creating emotional connections with stakeholders and thereby nurturing strong feelings towards the organisation.

Thirdly, the above principles are underpinned by *social media* and its ability to facilitate numerous actions through its distinctive attributes. It thus stands to reason that, in the context of this study, neither communication nor the integration thereof can be accomplished without social media or the presence of organisations on social media platforms. Moreover, it is argued that social media's capacity to connect and interact with stakeholders requires the use of various social media platforms.

- *The main elements of the conceptual framework.* The main elements, with their unique focus points, are illustrated in the blocks, *fundamentals*, *brand contact points* and *ways to sustain integration*. These elements are deemed to be interrelated and part of a cyclical process that compels the organisation to constantly reconsider the foundational elements and brand contact points after evaluation (illustrated by the dotted arrows).
- *The perceived outcome/s of integrated social media brand communication.* *Corporate brand communication*, which comprises the communication touchpoints, is indicated with a blue arrow. This refers to the numerous ways in which the organisation communicates with its stakeholders in an effort to expose stakeholders to the corporate brand. It is posited that meeting the requirements the framework would allow the organisation to disseminate its corporate brand communication.
- *Reaching the organisation's stakeholders.* The corporate brand communication intends to reach the stakeholders of the organisation, and to change them from passive to active participants. This would ultimately result in a favourable perception of the brand, otherwise referred to as *brand equity* or the *reputation of the brand*. Consequently, one would expect active participants to share positive information about the corporate brand on social media platforms.

In addition to the proposed elements of a conceptual framework for the integration of non-profit organisations' social media brand communication, as depicted in figure 8.4 and described in the above section, non-profit organisations should be mindful of certain theoretical considerations that could affect communication on social media. These are briefly discussed in the next section.

8.6 KEY THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The theoretical underpinnings presented in chapter 3 led to certain assumptions that merited consideration in the context of this study. Non-profit organisations should be conscious of perspectives derived from the overview of the classical theoretical views, and theory of and perspectives on human action and social presence that impact on the communication actions of both the organisation and stakeholders when using social media to communicate (chapter 3). These broadly include the following:

- *Perspectives on human action and interaction.* These include the following: the importance of trust; interpretation in a social setting; the fact that actions affect others (e.g. eWOM); action and interaction occur in a unique setting, such as with non-profit organisations on social media; communication connects stakeholders; and the meaning created through social interaction allows stakeholders to act on social media.
- *Perspectives on symbolic interaction.* These include the following: how the world is interpreted; the fact that action is based on the meaning that situations have; social interaction with others creates meaning that could influence the impression stakeholders have of a corporate brand; all communication possesses meaning and determines future action such as when stakeholders positively discuss the corporate brand on social media; the importance of self-representation; and how *the self* is constructed and portrayed in a social media milieu.
- *Perspectives on social presence.* These include the following: the need to define an own social reality; knowing that social interaction allows for the creation of social reality; being in the presence of others and the organisation in an online setting; organisations can project their desired *selves* and determine how they are being perceived; and experiencing interaction as personal, sociable and so forth. This consideration could broadly enable non-profit organisations to emotionally connect with stakeholders and be regarded as human and compassionate.

8.7 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

It was envisaged that the primary contribution would be in the field of communication science, in general, and the integration of social media by organisations in the non-profit sector, in particular.

The main contribution of this study was the formulation of a conceptual framework for the integration of non-profit organisations' social media brand communication. The study could therefore be extended to the field of communication and successfully combines elements from

multiple disciplines that are generally not combined in a comprehensive framework, namely corporate communication, corporate branding, social media and integrated communication. The following two subsections emphasise the contributions of the study, starting with theoretical contributions across multiple fields, followed by contributions to practice.

The following points highlight the most pertinent theoretical contributions:

- Insight was gained into the integration possibilities from an IC perspective. In addition, the study should make significant contributions in a practical sense because it explores the real-life settings of non-profit organisations and suggests ways in which these organisations could apply the framework in practice. It thus provides operational points for the practice of IC by means of social media.
- The primary motivation for the study was the paucity of research and literature dealing with the non-profit sector in South Africa and how social media is used. Hence, the study provides insight into who is responsible for social media planning, the approaches adopted in the planning thereof and the extent to which elements in the framework could be applied.
- The lack of knowledge on the current communication practices of non-profit organisation could probably be regarded as a limitation to the study. However, the contribution on the holistic use of traditional and social media to achieve organisational and corporate brand objectives far outweighs this limitation.
- The broad knowledge gained is useful because it gives prominence to the value of an integrated approach to communication to maximise non-profit organisations' communication efforts on social media.
- The lack of research on the use of social media in South African non-profit organisations, and information on the integration of traditional and social media in these organisations, required comprehensive consideration of a wide range of existing theoretical viewpoints to ultimately uncover those that could collectively serve as the theoretical basis of the study. This study identified and presented specific classical theoretical views, and theories of and perspectives on human action and interaction, symbolic interaction and social presence, which are relevant to the topic and thus provide a possible theoretical basis for similar studies.
- Another contribution was the formulation of key requirements that demand consideration when communicating on social media. These requirements were based on the overview of the classical theoretical views, and theories of and perspectives on human action and social presence. It is vital to reflect on these theories when using social media to communicate.

- Elements of corporate communication were discovered that proved to be significant to the integration of communication, namely communication integration, a stakeholder focus and communication convergence. These were later confirmed to be key to an integrated approach to social media brand communication, including the notion that social media brand communication integration should occur at strategic and tactical levels.
- Similarities between a corporate brand and the historical elements of corporate communication emerged that further validated the appropriateness of a corporate communication foundation and corporate brand perspective for the study.
- A definition of *social media*, from a corporate brand perspective, was formulated to address the gap in literature. A conscious effort to identify the key dimensions of social media allowed for a qualitative, deductive identification of prominent elements, which resulted in the formulation of a unique definition of social media for the study.
- Specific benefits of social media branding for the non-profit organisation were identified. This information should make a fundamental contribution to the field of corporate branding because of the insight into the value of social media for corporate branding.
- This study identified and emphasised *social media conversations* as a vital element of a corporate branding technique to achieve stakeholder integration.
- A unique contribution was the proposition of and motivation for *community* as a foundational element of social media, following a study of social media literature in other disciplines. Popular views on social media mainly focus on Web 2.0 and its ideological and technological elements, and UGC, without consideration of the fact that community could be a key feature of communication on social media platforms. This argument was included in the scope of the study and based on the need for humans to interact and form part of a group with common interests, combined with the idea that social media is community-driven simply because it has been linked to the formation of communities since its inception.
- The four eras of IC postulated by Niemann (2005) were expanded to include a *fifth evolutionary era of integrated communication*, following an appraisal of current definitions and the present foci of integrated communication. This contribution was deemed noteworthy because it provides an idea of the centre of interest in the present era when non-profit organisations seek to achieve integrated social media brand communication.
- Of significance was the proposition that *stakeholder integration* can be achieved through the integration of stakeholders' conversations by means of deliberate

monitoring and thus listening to these conversations. The existing communication integration models are restricted in this sense because the use of databases or a specific focus on documenting key stakeholders, is only considered. These traditional views do not recognise stakeholders as senders of messages, focus on talking *to* as opposed to talking *with*, and to a large extent do not allow for feedback from stakeholders. In isolated cases, reference is made to the integration of stakeholders, but no suggestions are made on how this could be achieved. The importance of adopting an organisation-wide *listening orientation* to stakeholder conversations on social media was formalised in the detailed review on integrated communication.

- Unique definitions of elements that related specifically to the study, namely social media brand communication, integrated communication, corporate brand, eWOM and so forth, were provided throughout the study and indicated in figure 8.4.

The following points highlight the most pertinent practical contributions:

- The framework contributes to the communication practices in the non-profit sector by providing guidelines on how to integrate social media and to ultimately realise the principles of an IC philosophy.
- The study also provided insight into the ways communication planning by these organisation as a whole is approached, and specifically how traditional and social media planning is executed. This was achieved by conducting empirical quantitative and qualitative research.
- It was revealed and confirmed that the integration of social media brand communication occurs at strategic and tactical levels, and this was appropriately set out in the framework.
- This study revealed distinct points at which the execution of social media currently occurs, namely at tactical level, without consideration of the strategic levels, as suggested in the conceptual framework.
- The conceptual framework should further empower those communication professionals responsible for social media, but who are employed in positions other than the ones typically associated with communication management.
- The study highlighted the *uniqueness* of organisations in this sector, namely that much emphasis is placed on the external communication with their stakeholders and that the integration thereof is vital to achieve a desirable corporate brand. This justifies the distinct focus on external communication that was adopted in this study, and conceptualised and defined in chapter 1, as opposed to adopting a holistic view on both internal and external communication, which is often associated with integrated communication.

8.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the study should help to counter the dearth of research on the overall topic of social media brand communication integration, certain limitations and opportunities for future research need to be considered. The following limitations were identified:

Relevant social media theory with an IC focus is lacking. This compelled the researcher to consider theories relating to individual communication and social media concepts. Hence no individual theory could serve as the basis of the study.

Despite abundant information on social media, corporate branding and communication integration, limited sources could be identified that specifically provide information of the non-profit sector in this country.

It will not be possible to generalise the findings to the total population of non-profit organisations in South Africa because the Prodder database is not all-inclusive. Limitations pertaining to the database should be noted. In some instances, the database was found to contain inaccurate information in that the contact details of organisations that are not non-profits were included, and in some instances, there was duplication of information.

The formulation of selection criteria could in a sense be considered a limitation because non-profit organisations that are not registered in the database were excluded.

The fact that no single, updated database or directory for registered non-profit organisations in South Africa exists, delayed the empirical research process.

This study adopted a narrow focus that mainly concentrated on the integration of the organisation's external communication. This provides an opportunity for further research in which both an internal and external focus on communication in the non-profit sector could be adopted.

Although the quantitative responses were adequate for meaningful statistical analysis and interpretation and provided adequate statistical support for the combination of the items into the three main elements of the conceptual framework, the response rate did not enable the researcher to conduct factor analyses to investigate the relationships between the variables.

A possible limitation of a pragmatic view related mainly to the *methodological* level and which data collection methods to employ to gain a thorough understanding of the research problem. Hence in comparison with other prominent research paradigms that prescribe particular research methods, a researcher following a pragmatic approach lacks direction in this regard.

The selection of the methods in this study could therefore be viewed by some as inadequate, despite the profound contributions.

8.9 FURTHER RESEARCH

The study revealed that the organisations that participated had to some extent adopted social media for their communication. Full utilisation of the dialogic and interactive features and the use of social media in an integrated way were lacking. Since the study attempted to explore elements for integrated social media brand communication, there are definite possibilities for further research. Opportunities exist to test and further refine the proposed elements for the integrations of integrate social media brand communication.

Owing to the ambiguous nature of both social media and corporate branding, there is potential for further in-depth research on the relationships between these concepts and the possibility of applying them to the non-profit sector.

In this study, there appeared to be a gap in causality, because the literature posits that some elements of social media conversation could be deemed both causes and effects when the organisation uses social media to communicate. Hence there is a need for empirical research on the causal relationships between, for example, the identified elements by means of factor analysis.

There is limited empirical research explicating the conversational needs, preferences and motivational factors that could increase stakeholders' participation in conversations on social media.

The literature hints at an association between social media and opportunities to create emotional connections with the corporate brand. This merits further investigation because it could prove to be significant in the context of this study.

The revelation of the unique situation that professionals in positions other than communication, public relations or marketing are often responsible for the social media planning in their organisations, merits further investigation. An understanding of their individual experiences and knowledge and how these influence the effective management of social media is required.

More in-depth research on the ways in which the framework could be adapted to specifically accommodate smaller non-profit organisations is recommended.

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ADDENDA

ADDENDUM A: SOCIAL MEDIA DEFINITIONS

Author/s	Definition
Ahlqvist et al (2008:13)	"[...] social media refers to the interaction of people and also to creating, sharing, exchanging and commenting contents in virtual communities and networks".
Safko & Brake (2009:6)	"social media refers to activities practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinions using conversational media".
boyd (2009)	"It is often used to describe the collection of software that enables individuals and communities to gather, communicate, share, and in some cases collaborate or play".
Madia & Borgese (2010:3, 12)	"[...] online platforms, applications or distribution channels designed to engage target groups and to facilitate interaction, sharing and collaboration – all of which are centered on content".
Correa et al (2009:247, 248)	"[...] a mechanism for the audience to connect, communicate, and interact with each other and their mutual friends through instant messaging or social networking sites".
Jue et al (2010:44)	"various electronic tools available to help accelerate and improve our ability to connect, communicate, and collaborate".
Solis (2010:37)	"Social media is any tool or service that uses the Internet to facilitate conversations".
Kaplan & Haenlein (2010:61)	"Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideologies and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content".
Kietzmann et al (2011:241)	"Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content."
Onete et al (2011:737)	"The term <i>social media</i> refers to communication platforms generated and sustained by interpersonal interaction of people, using specific methods or procedures".
Montoya (2011:124)	"[...] online interaction social – using Internet-based applications to communicate with others".
Cohen (2011)	"[...] social media relates to the technology and platforms that enable the interactive web's content creation, collaboration and exchange by participants and the public".
Marketo [sa]	"Any strategy, software system or media outlet that relies on social interaction and the participation of individuals or communities to create and publish content".
Nair (2011:45)	"[...] online tools where content, opinions, perspectives, insights, and media can be shared".
Andzulis et al (2012:308)	"Social media, then, can be defined as "the technological component of the communication, transaction and relationship building functions of a business which leverages the network of customers and prospects to promote value co-creation".
Finkbeiner (2013:7)	"Social Media are internet-based applications, which enable users to converse (interact with each other), to create and to participate in publishing user generated content (UGC) that have been developed under own creative efforts and are processed online by the collective of individuals by contributing own contents in a professional or nonprofessional environment".
Social media in the commercial property sector: Lease Africa (2013:3)	"Social media refers to a set of internet-based applications and websites that facilitate wholesale sharing, viewing of content and interaction between users".
Majchrzak et al (2013:38)	"Social media to refer to a group of Internet-based technologies that allows users to easily create, edit, evaluate, and/or link to content or to other creators of content".
Peters et al (2013:282)	"[...] communication systems that allow their social actors to communicate along dyadic ties".
Daume et al (2014:10)	"Social online media are a class of web-based applications and information sources, that are typically characterised by collaborative content creation driven by explicit or implicit social networks that represent virtual communities of shared interest".

ADDENDUM B: ONLINE SURVEY
Email invitation

Dear prospective participant

You are invited to participate in a web-based online survey conducted by Mrs C Swart under supervision of Prof C du Plessis and Dr E Greeff at the University of South Africa (Unisa). This is a research project is part of my doctoral research into the incorporation of social media by the non-profit sector in South Africa. I am also a lecturer in the Communication Science Department at Unisa.

You and other similar organisations have purposively been selected to participate due to your involvement in a prominent and registered non-profit organisation in South Africa. Your contribution is therefore vital to the study.

The objective of this research project is to understand how non-profit organisations in this country use social media when communicating with their stakeholders. Through your participation, I hope to understand how social media is incorporated and to provide guiding points for social media brand communication by this sector.

Participation in the survey is voluntary and there are no foreseeable risks involved in participating therein. Please also note that there is no penalty if you do not participate. If you do choose to participate you are consenting to the fact that I can use your answers (along with all the other answers from the collected questionnaires) in my research. If there is a question that you feel uncomfortable with, you do not have to answer it and you can leave it blank and move on to the next question. You may exit the survey at any time. Please note that this is not a test – there are no right or wrong answers. I am only interested in your opinion.

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from Unisa. All responses will remain anonymous and the collected data will be treated as confidential. You will not be required to disclose your name or other personal information.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact Mrs Swart at 012 429 2633 or via email at cswart@unisa.ac.za.

Your participation is highly appreciated.

Mrs Christelle Swart
Department of Communication Science
Unisa

Please click on the button to access the electronic survey. It will take approximately 25 minutes to complete.

An online survey to investigate the integration of social media by non-profit organisations in their communication with stakeholders

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this online survey into the integration of social media brand communication by non-profit organisations in South Africa. For purposes here *social media brand communication* refers to the communication activities of non-profit organisations and stakeholders by means of social media.

Your responses are highly valued and will contribute to understanding how this sector in South Africa integrates social media.

1. Please select your choice below. Clicking on the “Agree” button indicates that:
 - You have read the information in the email invitation
 - You have read the above information
 - You voluntarily agree to participate
 - You understand that anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured
 - You understand that you can exit the survey at any time.
 - You understand that the data gathered in this survey will inform the research of Mrs Swart (including all subsequent publications)

Agree

Disagree

INSTRUCTIONS:

This questionnaire consists of four sections that are specifically focused on investigating different aspects on how social media is incorporated by your organisation:

Section A: Fundamental aspects for integrating social media brand communication

Section B: Ways in which social media integration can take place

Section C: Requirements needed to achieve and maintain social media brand communication integration

Section D: Biographical and Demographic data

-
1. The questionnaire comprises various statements on how your organisation applies social media. You should assess these statements considering how it is currently executed in your organisation.
 2. “My organisation” refers to the non-profit organisation in which you are presently employed.
 3. Your honest viewpoints on all the statements will be appreciated. There are no right or wrong answers.
 4. The responses of every page will be saved when clicking the “Next” button.
 5. You may contact Mrs Christelle Swart at 012 429 2633 should you have any questions.

Section A: Fundamental aspects for integrating social media brand communication

This section focuses on aspects that should be in place to allow the incorporation of social media in non-profit organisations.

Guide: Kindly respond to all the statements. Consider every statement related to social media below and make your selection by clicking on the option that best describes how it is practised by your organisation.

2. My organisation regards the planning of social media initiatives as strategically important
To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all
3. My organisation uses one or more social media platforms on a daily basis to communicate with stakeholders
To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all
4. My organisation keeps track of stakeholder conversations to determine the most appropriate *types* of social media to use for communication (e.g. using Hootsuite, Social Mention, Spredfast, Topsy or similar)
To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all
5. My organisation has a social media strategy
To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all

6. My organisation only addresses its social media planning in an all-inclusive communication strategy

To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all

Section B: Ways in which social media integration can take place

This section focuses on possible ways that the incorporation of social media can be achieved.

Guide: Kindly respond to all the statements. Consider every statement related to social media below and make your selection by clicking on the option that best describes how it is practised by your organisation.

7. My organisation has an individual or a team who is responsible for all editorial content
- To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all
8. My organisation uses a *social media content plan* to guide the planning of social media content
- To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all
9. My organisation uses *online scheduling tools* when planning social media postings (e.g. by using Seesmic, Sprout Social, Timely, CoSchedule or similar)
- To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all
10. My organisation encourages external stakeholders to contribute to social media content (e.g. sharing their stories)
- To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all
11. My organisation *repurposes* social media content on a particular platform (e.g. Facebook) for use on other social media platforms (e.g. Twitter)
- To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all
12. My organisation finds content from other sources to share on its own media (e.g. on traditional media and social media platforms)
- To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all
13. My organisation purposely monitors the topics raised by its stakeholders on social media platforms to ensure that the content is appropriate
- To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all
14. My organisation inserts links to its traditional media on social media platforms (e.g. links to brochures or news releases on Facebook or similar)
- To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all
15. My organisation uses paid-for media on social media platforms (e.g. sponsored tweets on Twitter, advertisements on Facebook or similar)
- To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all

16. My organisation combines all its available traditional media and social media platforms into a single communication toolbox from which several methods can be combined to communicate with stakeholders (e.g. to share a YouTube link or video on a social media platform or similar)

To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all

17. My organisation uses analytic tools to follow stakeholder conversations (e.g. Twitter analytics, Facebook Insights, Simply Measured or similar)

To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all

18. My organisation deliberately requests stakeholders to participate in conversations on social media

To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all

Section C: Requirements needed to achieve and maintain social media brand communication integration

This section focuses on the requirements that are needed to accomplish and maintain the integration of social media.

Guide: Kindly respond to all the statements. Consider every statement related to social media below and make your selection by clicking on the option that best describes how it is practised by your organisation

19. My organisation responds to social media mentions, tweets and posts of stakeholders at least once a day

To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all

20. My organisation supports social media influencers to listen to stakeholder conversations on social media (e.g. by providing resources and support)

To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all

21. My organisation uses hashtags to identify important conversations

To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all

22. My organisation deliberately gathers stakeholders around common causes by focusing on their *interests*

To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all

23. My organisation identifies prominent stakeholders

To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all

24. My organisation empowers brand ambassadors to assist with community building (e.g. providing resources and support)

To a great extent Somewhat Very little Not at all

25. My organisation acknowledges important stakeholders such as donors, volunteers (e.g. by posting appreciations on social media)

- | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
| | To a great extent | Somewhat | Very little | Not at all |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
26. My organisation involves all employees in the planning of social media initiatives (e.g. sharing of knowledge and expertise)
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
| To a great extent | Somewhat | Very little | Not at all |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
27. My organisation regularly monitors its external environment, including the online environment, to identify factors that could affect its communication via social media
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
| To a great extent | Somewhat | Very little | Not at all |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
28. My organisation purposefully coordinates its communication activities to promote uniform corporate brand messages
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
| To a great extent | Somewhat | Very little | Not at all |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
29. An individual or a team manages the overall interaction with stakeholders to ensure consistency
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
| To a great extent | Somewhat | Very little | Not at all |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
30. My organisation uses a social media audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its social media brand communication with external stakeholders
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
| To a great extent | Somewhat | Very little | Not at all |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
31. My organisation uses research methods such as online surveys to determine if stakeholders feel their voices are being heard
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
| To a great extent | Somewhat | Very little | Not at all |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
32. My organisation compares its social media brand communication with that of other similar organisations
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
| To a great extent | Somewhat | Very little | Not at all |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|

Section D: Biographical and Demographic data

This section focuses on your current position/s in the organisation, years of experience in this sector, the different *types* of social media used by your organisation, and the general approach of the organisation when planning social media activities.

33. Indicate your current position in the non-profit organisation (you may select as many roles as appropriate):

Chief Executive Officer or Executive Chairman

Operations Executive

Marketing Manager

Public Relations Practitioner

Project Manager

Other: (please specify)

34. Indicate your experience (in number of years) in managing social media activities in the non-profit sector

35. Identify the types of social media that your organisation uses to communicate with your stakeholders?

- Facebook
- Google Plus
- Blogs
- Twitter
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Pinterest
- Instagram
- Flickr
- Vlogs



Other: (please specify)

36. Which of the following *best* describes the approach followed by your organisation when planning communication activities?

- Consider traditional media as point of departure
- Consider social media as point of departure
- Consider both traditional and social media as equal points of departure

Other: (please specify)

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey

ADDENDUM C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Integrated social media brand communication: participation information sheet

I [insert name and surname]

I agree to participate in the research on the integration of social media brand communication, as conducted by Mrs Christelle Swart. I confirm that Mrs Swart has informed me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and that I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions about the study.

Herein, I...

- declare that my participation is voluntary.
 - give permission for my interview with Mrs Swart to be recorded and that my answers will be confidential.
 - understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before the start of the interview, or while I am participating.
 - understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data of this interview (in writing) within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
 - understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up, by disguising my identity.
 - understand that the data gathered in this interview process will inform the research of Mrs Swart (including all subsequent publications).
 - understand that disguised extracts from the interview may be quoted in publications of the research, if I give my permission below:

(Please tick one box:)

- I agree to quotation / publication of **extracts** from my interview.

I do not agree to quotation / publication of **extracts** from my interview

Signed:

Date:

Researcher's name and surname: Researcher's signature:

Date:

INTERVIEW GUIDE

10. **Introductory question:** Please tell me about your position in the organisation.
11. What are the main challenges when using social media?
12. In your opinion, which basic aspects should be in place when using social media to communicate with your stakeholders?
13. Who is ultimately responsible to coordinate decisions around the *types* of social media to use and the *content* on these platforms?
14. Which document/s is/are used when planning social media initiatives?
15. How does your organisation ensure that its values are aligned with those of the community? Is it at all a priority?
16. How does your organisation *source content* for social media platforms. Do you deliberately ask stakeholders for contributions?
17. Do you combine video, voice, visuals and data on social media platforms? For example using a *Youtube* video in a tweet, or using *periscope* for live video streaming of an event. If so, please provide an example. If not is there a specific reason?
18. In your opinion what is the main benefit of social media for your organisation – to distribute information or to engage in dialogue?
19. Does your organisation have a database of stakeholders? Is it at all possible in a social media environment? If so, which stakeholders does it focus on? If not what are the reasons?
20. How does your organisation evaluate the success or failure of its social media activities?

Closing question:

Is there any question that you wish to elaborate on or remarks you want to make about the integration of social media?

Debriefing

Thank you for your participation.

ADDENDUM D: LINKING SECONDARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, KEY FOCI AND OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY

Secondary research objectives and research questions	Phase/s in framework of study	Chapter/s	Synopsis of prominent foci	Outcome/s
Introduction to and rationale for the study	1	1	In chapter 1 the foci of the study was stated, which included highlighting the paucity of research on the topic of the study, and the limited knowledge of how non-profit organisations in South Africa use social media to communicate, and precisely how it is integrated with traditional media, if at all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pragmatic philosophy that guided the study was contextualised. The integrated perspective on social media brand communication as the main thrust of the study was contextualised and justified. The concept of <i>IC</i> was defined from the perspective of the study.
Secondary research objective 1: To explore the corporate brand founded on corporate communication RQ 1: What constitutes the corporate brand founded on a corporate communication?	1	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In this chapter, the focus of the study on corporate branding was explained by identifying the theoretical foundation and perspective of the study. The multidisciplinary nature of social media was considered, and the corporate communication philosophy relating to communication consistency and unity was proposed as the foundation on which non-profit organisations in South Africa could organise their communication activities. Elements fundamental to corporate communication, including integrated communication, a stakeholder focus, strategic communication, and the management role were explored, in order to form the basis of the study. A corporate brand perspective was proposed as a more contemporary way to achieve a desired perception of the corporate brand because it is favourably linked to the corporate communication elements mentioned above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extensive literature review revealed important elements for a conceptual framework with theoretical aspects for integrating social media brand communication. Within the boundaries of the study, distinctive definitions were formulated for the concepts of <i>corporate communication, WOM and eWOM, a corporate brand perspective, corporate brand and corporate brand communication</i>.
Secondary research objective 2: To explore social media (in terms of its definitions, historical development, foundational elements and key features) in the context of non-profit organisations RQ 2: What constitutes a social media focus in non-profit organisations?	1	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 3 explored social media as the focus of the study. Social media and related elements were conceptualised from a corporate brand perspective. In this chapter, a concise overview of the historical development of social media and a broad classification of social media were provided. Furthermore, the foundational elements of social media, namely Web 2.0, UGC and community were identified and justified. Key elements of social media were explored and theoretical views on elements associated with social media were presented. Social media was framed on the basis of classical theoretical views, and the theory of and perspectives on human action, symbolic interaction and social presence. Finally, perspectives on human action and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important elements for a conceptual framework with theoretical aspects for integrating social media brand communication were identified. A unique definition for <i>social media</i> was developed, following the acknowledgement of existing social media definitions. <i>Community</i> as a third foundational element of social media was advanced and justified.

			<p>interaction, symbolic interaction and social presence were identified as theoretical propositions for social media brand communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Distinct</i> benefits of social media branding for non-profit organisations were formulated. • The concept of <i>social media conversations</i> was clarified and defined
Secondary research objective 3: To describe the elements that could constitute an integrated approach to social media brand communication in South Africa RQ 3: What elements could an integrated approach to social media brand communication in South Africa comprise?	2	2 ,3 and 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In chapter 4, an IC approach was conceptualised by considering various perspectives and applications in multiple disciplines. The focus was mostly on the integration of social media brand communication with external stakeholders, as explicated in chapter 1. In this chapter, the origins of IC were investigated, an integrated approach to social media brand communication was conceptualised and the principles and present emphasis thereof were identified. • Moreover, in chapter 4, the proposed elements for integrating social media brand communication were deductively identified, together with supporting viewpoints in chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 4 focused on historical IC models (Integrated Communication Model, Stakeholder Relations Model and Integrated Business Marketing Model); integrated models in a South African setting (Integrated Communication Model and Strategic Integrated Communication Model); and digital IC models (Integrated Online Marketing Communication, Alternative Marketing Communication model and Integrated Marketing Communications Paradigm). The models were discussed and critically assessed and served as the basis for identifying possible elements of a conceptual framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important elements for a conceptual framework with theoretical aspects for integrating social media brand communication were identified and conceptualised. • The concept IC was defined on the basis of the reviews of related concepts in chapters 2, 3 and 4. • A <i>fifth revolutionary era</i> of IC was explained in the context of the study. • The concept of <i>content convergence</i> was conceptualised
Secondary research objective 4: To explore the proposed elements of an integrated approach to social media brand communication RQ 4: In what way would the proposed elements be justified for an integrated approach to social media brand communication?	3 and 4	5, 6 and 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 proposed an outline and justification for research methodology that directed the empirical verification of the proposed elements and theoretical aspects for a conceptual framework. Pragmatism as the adopted research approach and the research method, namely <i>survey research</i>, was explained. This approach was deemed best suited to exploring the real-life realities of the non-profit organisations when using social media. • Chapter 5 also pinpointed the online survey and interviews as the most suitable data collection methods for this study. The items and topics investigated in these methods 	Chapter 5 clarified and justified the research methodology that was used to corroborate the proposed elements for the conceptual framework for the integration of non-profit organisations' social media brand communication.

			<p>respectively were illustrated in tables 5.3 and 5.5 in chapter 5. These methods were implemented among experienced communication professionals in the non-profit sector. Respondents were firstly randomly selected, followed by a refinement by means of <i>purposive sampling</i> to ensure they met the set selection criteria. Participants were purposively selected to deliberately include suitable professionals who were available and willing to take part. A total of 45 respondents and 10 participants took part in the study by completing the online surveys and sharing their views in the interviews, respectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 6 and 7 focused on the presentation and interpretation of the findings of the data that was gathered from the online survey and interviews. <p>Data analysis of the questionnaire in chapter 6 included descriptive, inferential and bivariate statistics. The Cronbach coefficient alpha test and the Pearson coefficient test were applied to establish internal reliability and the strength of linear associations, and the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine the correlations between different groups of respondents.</p> <p>Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data by combining the approaches of Lapadat (2010), Braun and Clarke (2006) and Ryan and Bernard (2003) (chapter 7). Chapter 7 concluded with a discussion of the overall research findings of the study.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 6 and 7 contributed to the proposed framework either by confirming or disproving the proposed elements and theoretical aspects, based on the findings of the quantitative and qualitative research.
<p>Secondary research objective 5: To formulate guidelines for the integration of social media brand communication for use in the non-profit sector</p> <p>RQ 5: What are the guidelines for integration social media brand communication in the non-profit sector?</p>	5	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In chapter 8, the proposed elements for a conceptual framework for social media brand communication integration were refined. The findings from the empirical part of the study were weighed and decisions taken on the adaption of the proposed framework. The limitations of the study were highlighted, and the unique contributions of the study accentuated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A conceptual framework for the integration of non-profit organisations' social media was presented. • Foundational elements and theoretical aspects to ensure the integration of social media brand communication were formulated. • Theoretical perspectives that should guide interaction on social media were formulated.

