

**INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN SOUTH AFRICA'S "BIG FOUR" BANKS:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK**

by

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INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN SOUTH AFRICA'S "BIG FOUR" BANKS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



SIGNATURE

June 2020

DATE

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my *beloved* parents, Prof. Mutendwahothe Walter (Wally) and Nnditsheni Irene, who taxed themselves dearly over the years to ensure that education is not only something I dream of but attain.

Ndo livhuwa Bakwebo.

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ABSTRACT

The success of an organisation in what is now a dynamic and increasingly competitive business environment relies on an engaged workforce, achieved through internal communication. Engaged employees are generally more productive, resulting in better-performing organisations. This indicates that engaged employees do not only provide organisations with substantial benefits but can also be valuable assets to their organisations. Additionally, internal communication, which influences employee engagement behaviours, has been shown to provide numerous benefits to organisations, namely advocacy, ambassadorship, commitment, competitive advantage, decreased turnover, innovation, satisfaction, and trust. Therefore, it can be argued that a crucial link exists between internal communication and employee engagement.

The purpose of this study was to develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement. This conceptual framework was customised for the South African banking sector. Qualitative data was collected through a review of available literature in the internal communication and employee engagement fields, and face-to-face interviews with four senior internal communications managers. Quantitative data was collected through a web-based self-administered survey questionnaire hosted on *SurveyMonkey*. Therefore, a mixed-methods research approach was used for this study.

The findings of the study confirmed the link between internal communication and employee engagement. Thus, internal communication is an important determinant of employee engagement. It was also found that South Africa's "big four" banks use traditional and innovative internal communication channels to effectively communicate with their targeted audience. Lastly, the internal communication elements that make up the conceptual framework of employee engagement were developed, namely Collaboration/ Cross-Functional Planning, Partner with Human Resources Function, Communication Channels, Two-Way Communication with Leaders, Counsel, and Measure Internal Communication Effectiveness. It is argued that the proposed

conceptual framework adequately addresses the role of internal communication and its key function within an organisation.

The study is particularly significant because it extends current literature on internal communication and employee engagement in the South African banking sector and confirms that internal communication is indeed important for employee engagement. Academically, the study added to the current body of knowledge in the field of communication. The findings of this study can be used by South African banks and other businesses as a guide to conduct their internal communication to achieve employee engagement.

Key terms: bank; banking sector; communication; conceptual framework; employee; employee engagement; internal communication; internal communication channels; leader; South Africa's "big four" banks

LIST OF KEY ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|-----------------------------|
| ATM | AUTOMATED TELLER MACHINE |
| CEO | CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER |
| FNB | FIRST NATIONAL BANK |
| HR | HUMAN RESOURCES |
| JSE | JOHANNESBURG STOCK EXCHANGE |
| SARB | SOUTH AFRICAN RESERVE BANK |

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The internal communication role has gained significance over the years as organisations make every effort to prioritise employees, their needs, and values of the organisation, and furthermore, to encourage employees to maintain open, two-way communication with leaders and managers (Asif & Sargeant, 2000). With the increasingly competitive business environment, financial service industry organisations such as the banking sector have had to re-evaluate the role that their employees play in remaining relevant and in attaining competitive advantage. The financial sector is one of the highest contributors to economic growth in South Africa (Brand South Africa, 2013), thus, South Africa's "big four" banks have been selected as the study's focus as it is important that their employees are engaged in order to assist the bank achieve its objectives. More importantly, the "big four" banks refers to the four largest banking groups that have dominated the market for years (The Banking Association South Africa, 2019:2).

According to the literature, internal communication is, for example, defined as two-way communication between the organisation's leaders and employees (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013). Hume and Leonard's (2014) definition is of a different approach: the management of communication to align employees with the organisation's vision and mission. The study's preferred definition of internal communication is "the exchange of information and ideas among employees or members of an organisation to build trusting and open relationships and to create understanding" (Jacobs, Yu & Chavez, 2016:62). When communicating with employees, various written, verbal, print, electronic, digital and face-to-face communication channels are used to target various employee groups (Welch, 2015; Makgowe, 2012; White, Vanc & Stafford, 2010; Mutihac, 2010; Hayase, 2009; Chihocky & Bullard, 2009; Welch & Jackson, 2007; Chiocchio, 2007; Cheney, Christensen, Zorn & Ganesh 2004). Each communication

channel has its advantages and disadvantages but one thing that is clear is that the objective is not only to inform employees or create awareness, but to engage employees (Alexander, 2014).

Internal communication has been shown as a top employee engagement driver (Welch, 2015; AON Hewitt's, 2014; Ruck & Welch, 2012; Ruck, 2012; Welch, 2011). Employee engagement is defined as the level of commitment that one has to their role (Saks, 2000:602). According to Khan (1990:694), it is the physical, mental and emotional commitment to one's role. Findings from Karanges, Beatson, Johnston and Lings (2014) reveal that a crucial and beneficial link between internal communication and employee engagement exists. A number of researchers mention the significance of engaged employees for the success of the organisation (Rayton, Dodge & D'Analeze, 2012; Kruse, 2012; Welch, 2011; MacLeod & Clarke, 2011; KPMG, 2011; Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser & Schlesinger, 2008; Vance, 2006). A PricewaterhouseCoopers (2014) study proposed that organisations should aim to engage their employees, a strategy that can yield favourable results such as supporting the organisation's vision and mission, increasing earnings and profits, and committing to live the business values. Harris (2015:15) states that "happy employees usually translate into productive employees and ultimately; better-performing organisations".

This study explores internal communication in the South African banking sector, particularly in the "big four" banks – the "big four" refers to the four largest banking groups that have dominated the market for years (The Banking Association South Africa, 2019:2). The study further aims to develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement. Chapter 1 provides a brief background of the study and outlines the goals, objectives, key terms of the literature review, research problem, research questions, research methodology, anticipated findings, contributions, ethical considerations and the demarcation of the study.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

A study conducted by Cawe (2006) reported that internal communication was one of the three factors that yielded the highest responses for promoting happy employees. Other factors included reward and recognition, management and leadership style, work environment, transparency, career development and growth, workplace training, employee participation in decision making and work-life balance – all of which influence employee engagement behaviours. In support of this view, Public Display Technologies (PDT) South Africa (2014) attributes happiness to internal communication. Their findings also report that the level of an employees' happiness is primarily accredited to communication between the leaders and employees in an organisation. The researcher is of the view that this "happiness" can also be referred to as engagement, which is the problem this study seeks to address through internal communication. These studies indicate that internal communication directly influences an employee's engagement levels.

Findings from Deloitte's fourth annual Global Human Capital Trends Survey (2016:12) on engagement and culture argue that South African employees believe that they are "overwhelmed" with the amount of internal communication they receive daily. Whilst 32% of respondents believe that they are immensely challenged with information overload and they could rather contribute towards engagement and culture, 13% reported that they were not interested, and only 2% rated themselves as excellent with the set programmes. These findings highlight the need for reviewing the various internal communication methods and channels used for communicating with employees.

From an international perspective, an inquiry of internal communication in New Zealand banks found that from the six banks sampled, a second major finding correlating with effective internal communication channels related to the use of persuasive and available technology, as well as the inclusion of new technology (Horomia, 2007). Most of the study's participants mention their interest in trying out new ways of communicating with employees and further investigating the value that technology (such as online streaming, instant messaging, podcasts and blogs) offered

internal communication. Based on Horomia's (2007) findings, it is reasonable to suggest that internal communicators should consider the use of innovation and technology in their communication tools or channels.

Most recently, Atfield's (2017) study conducted with internal communication professionals found that most (71%) of the participants were in favour of the new principle of incorporating innovation in internal communications. This finding suggests that senior leaders are increasingly valuing internal communication and employee engagement. In the second finding of the study, 78% of the respondents agreed that their business leaders valued the internal communications work they produced, while 69% felt empowered by their business leaders to be innovative in their jobs. Thirdly, 40% of the respondents felt that their business leaders empowered them to introduce innovation in internal communication. Finally, 43% of the study's respondents found that creating innovative and encouraging internal communications was as much a priority as producing external communication of the same standard.

In addition to the two studies discussed above, the Netherlands ABN AMRO banking group established an internal communications team to resolve their employee engagement concerns. Their findings report that employees disapproved of the absence of leadership communication (Wadman, 2006). From these findings, the internal communications team arranged opportunities for leadership communication in the form of regular face-to-face meetings and provided detailed steps on how the organisation's goals and strategies would be achieved, including the time it would take. Additionally, Canada's Royal Bank measured the success of their internal communication. A key finding that emerged was that "technology and the speed of access have led to employee demands for two-way communication" (Horomia, 2007:26). In comparison to face-to-face communication, the organisations magazine publication, which was not only the most expensive and labour-intensive channel, was the least valued internal communication channel.

These findings from both the Netherlands and Canada banks suggest the importance of face-to-face communication with leaders and employees – to ensure effective communication and ultimately, to achieve employee engagement. This further

highlights the importance of face-to-face communication channels in order for South Africa's "big four" banks to achieve employee engagement (communication channels are discussed in Chapter 3). Moreover, both these findings further support Daft and Lengel's (1986) Media Richness Theory that suggests face-to-face communication as the richest, or most effective, communication medium as it uses both physical and verbal cues, thus ideal for conveying detailed information. Conversely, the magazine is the leanest communication medium due to its inability to convey physical and verbal cues. Based on this discussion, the researcher is of the view that the channels used for communicating certain messages have a direct impact on how employees experience the organisation, thus impacting their overall engagement.

Although the concepts highlighted in this section influence internal communication in the banking sector, the current study specifically focuses on South Africa's "big four" banks which include Absa, FirstRand Bank (First National Bank [FNB]), Standard Bank, and Nedbank (Smith, 2015; Moodycliffe, 2015; Ismail, 2015a, Ismail 2015b, The Banking Association South Africa, 2014; Slabbert, 2014). These four banks are all listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) and offer a range of financial services that include retail, business, and corporate and investment banking. A key differentiator for these banks is market capitalisation, customer base, profits, and brand value.

While this section provided the context of the study, the purpose of the study is provided below.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

According to Karanges, Beatson, Johnston and Lings (2014) and Welch (2011), internal communication is a key driver of employee engagement. The purpose of this study is **to develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement in the South African banking sector**. To achieve this, the study explores internal communication in the South African banking sector, particularly in the "big four" banks.

1.4 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY AND RELATION TO THE DISCIPLINE OF COMMUNICATION

This study is relevant to the field of communication as it aims to **develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks**. Thus, South Africa's banking sector may benefit from the newly developed conceptual framework as well as the study's findings. Additionally, the results of the study can also be adopted by organisations in other business sectors.

1.5 EXISTING RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

An extensive search on the Nexus Database System of the National Research Foundation (NRF) (2016) revealed that previous studies on internal communication and employee engagement had been conducted. However, research on internal communication and employee engagement in the South African banking sector, particularly in the "big four" banks, had not been conducted. Moreover, a study conducted by Mmope (2010:14) explored senior managers' role in contributing to effective internal communication and employee engagement at the North-West University, while Mmutle (2014:9) aimed to assess the strength of internal communication in driving the organisation's success and further establish the role of internal communication in employee engagement.

Findings from Mmope's (2010) study suggest that effective internal communication is a key requirement in the strategically aligning and achieving the organisation's goals and objectives. Additionally, the study's respondents acknowledged that internal communication plays an enabling and facilitating role in achieving and sustaining employee engagement, adding that achieving employee engagement is a result of effective internal communication. Essentially, the respondents emphasise that a correlation and interdependence between effective internal communication and employee engagement exists. Moreover, this research recommends that future studies should measure whether employee engagement levels are directly linked to manager communication styles. Secondly, future studies should also measure and

determine the effectiveness of internal communication channels, as well as develop a guide to assist managers in selecting appropriate internal communication channels for messages. Lastly, a recommendation is to identify key drivers of employee engagement and quantitatively measure the related effect of the specific drivers on the organisation's performance and the return on investment in employee engagement efforts.

Conversely, Mmutle's (2014) findings suggest that employees understand that internal communication is a key business function that strengthens culture and engagement. Their responses highlight the degree to which they understand the elements that contribute to internal communication as an incentive for performance, growth, and success. Both Mmutle (2014) and Mmope's (2010) studies acknowledge that two-way communication is important for achieving employee engagement and the critical role that managers play in building engagement through effective internal communication.

A review of available literature revealed studies that focus on internal communication and employee engagement. For example, Balakrishnan and Masthan (2013) identified ways of improving employee engagement in their study. The study's results indicate that internal communication was the best driver for employee engagement and that a positive relationship between the two concepts existed. In addition, Mishra, Boynton and Mishra (2014) acknowledge employee engagement as an integral part of internal communication. This study further proposes that organisations should use employee engagement as a tool that enhances the communications function. Banhwa, Chipunza and Chamisa (2014) surveyed 180 employees from five retail banks on important employee engagement strategies. From the thirteen strategies of employee engagement that were selected as fundamental, communication came out in the top four. Although employee engagement is different from internal communication, this finding indicates the level of importance that internal communication plays in achieving employee engagement.

Furthermore, surveys such as the annual "Deloitte Best Company to Work For" measure employee satisfaction in the various South African business sectors (Deloitte, 2015). Employees are requested to indicate how satisfied they are with their current

employer over 13 categories including communication and leadership. Again, these categories indicate that internal communication is key to successfully engaging employees. Other South African surveys include “Edelman Trust Barometer State of Employee Engagement” (2015), “PricewaterhouseCoopers Human Resource Quarterly Employee Engagement” (2014), “AON Trends in Global Employee Engagement” (2014), and “Hay Group Employee Engagement Survey” (2012) to name a few. These surveys suggest that internal communication is critical for engaging employees.

From an internal communication and innovation perspective, there were no studies that had been conducted in the banking sector, particularly in South Africa. However, research conducted by Mishra, Mishra and Walker (2019) examined how a global technology organisation uses innovative internal communication to promote engagement and collaboration across dispersed employees. The results of this study suggest that internal communication practices influence employee engagement, trust, and collaboration. Thus, it is important to use innovative internal communication channels to “cross both geographic and socio-cultural boundaries, as well as engaging employees in acting as brand ambassadors, and sharing critical information about their company to their customers, neighbours, colleagues, and friends” (Mishra, Mishra & Walker, 2019:461).

Moreover, Sergeeva (2018) aimed to propose innovative improvements to internal communication within an organisation. The proposed innovations were intended to eliminate the existing challenges of internal communication, such as distance and time barriers, language (jargon, technical or professional use of terms that may not be common across departments), physical disabilities (vision, hearing or speech impairments), and cultural aspects. These two studies highlight the importance of innovation use in internal communication.

The goals and objectives of this study are discussed in the following section.

1.6 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal or objective of research is described as being exploratory, explanatory or descriptive (Neuman, 2014). This study was exploratory as it explored an unknown area of research, which is the development of a conceptual framework for employee engagement that was customised for the South African banking sector.

1.6.1 Sub-goals of the study

The following sub-goals have been extracted from the goal of the study:

- To evaluate the impact of internal communication on employee engagement.
- To determine the benefits of engaged employees.

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

This section defines the study's key terms.

1.7.1 Bank

An organisation where people and businesses can invest or borrow money, change it to foreign money, etc., or a building where these services are offered (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020).

1.7.2 Banking sector

A key driver of the South African economy that provides the liquidity (in the form of loans and credit) required by households and organisations for ordinary day-to-day use and future investments (African Institute of Financial Markets and Risk Management, 2014).

1.7.3 Communication

The word communication is derived from the Latin word *communis*, which means 'to share', 'to impart', or 'to make common' (Holtz, 2016). It is further defined as an act of transmitting a message through certain channels, and as a process or an activity of sharing information, exchanging thoughts or experiences between two or more people or a group (Annan-Prah, 2015).

1.7.4 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is defined as "the system of concepts, beliefs and theories that support and inform the research, and the relationship among them" (Miles & Huberman, 1994:2002). Essentially, it guides the research, determines what will be measured, and the statistical relationships the researcher aims to look for.

1.7.5 Employee

(a) Any person, excluding an independent contractor, who works for another person or for the State, and who receives, or is entitled to receive, any remuneration; and; (b) any other person who in any manner assists in carrying or concluding the business of an employer (Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995).

1.7.6 Employee Engagement

A positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma & Bakker, 2002:74). Engaged employees are productive and tend to work harder.

1.7.7 Internal Communication

The exchange of information that establishes understanding through building trusting and open relationships between employees (Jacobs, Yu & Chavez, 2016).

1.7.8 Internal Communication Channels

The processes used for transmitting and receiving communication in an organisation (Rita, 2015). Internal communication channels discussed in this study include print publications (*magazines, posters, banners, newsletters, leaflets*), digital communication (*email, intranet, instant messaging, video broadcasts*), telecommunication (*phone calls*), and face-to-face communication (*team meetings, CEO Roadshows, town hall sessions*).

1.7.9 Leader

An individual who influences, motivates and enables others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organisations of which they are members (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman & Gupta, 2004).

1.7.10 South Africa's "big four" banks

The major diversified banking groups that dominate the South African banking industry, namely FirstRand Bank, Standard Bank, Nedbank and Absa (Khumalo, 2018).

The following sections will discuss the study's theoretical underpinning.

1.8 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) posit that a theory is based on concepts and principles which are intended to describe an occurrence. Johnson and Christensen (2007) suggest that it explains how and why something functions in the way it does. Four main approaches have been selected for this study, namely Systems Theory, Social Exchange Theory, McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y, and Media Richness Theory.

1.8.1 Systems Theory

Von Bertalanffy's (1950) Systems Theory explains that organisations are not isolated; instead, they are viewed as a dynamic process, consisting of several variables that constantly interact with one another and with the external environment (Almaney, 1972) – as is the case with South Africa's "big four" banks. The four banks are made up of several departments or business units which all work together to achieve once common objective. Chapter 2 provides a detailed discussion of South Africa's banking sector, with particular focus on the "big four" banks.

Systems Theory not only explains systems in natural sciences but also helps to create an understanding for other systems such as organisations and their employees (Heil, n.d.). It further plays a crucial role in communication theories because it helps develop strategies for effective employee communication (Heil, n.d.). It is worth noting that the Systems Theory views communication as an indispensable system binder, therefore, it is a valuable theory in organisational communication (Almaney, 1973). As the research focuses on internal communication, the Systems Theory assisted in identifying the importance of internal communication for employee engagement and ultimately for the success of the bank.

1.8.2 Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory's basic premise is that people give something with the hope of receiving something valuable in return (Blau, 1964). This exchange can be financial or socio-economical such as care, respect, and loyalty. The latter feelings provoke feelings of obligation, gratitude, and trust. The Social Exchange Theory can be described as informing the study by highlighting the importance of 'reciprocity'. It proposes that employees, who realise that their organisation values the contribution they make, develop an obligation to respond through positive employee behaviours that aid the organisation in the longer term such as commitment, productivity, loyalty, positive word of mouth, and decreased employee turnover. Furthermore, this theory assisted the study in determining the positive employee behaviours associated with engagement (this is discussed in Chapter 4).

1.8.3 McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Theory Y suggest that leaders' behaviours are shaped by how they perceive their employees' motivation. McGregor (1960) further believed that manager's views worked in two different ways: while Theory X employees dislike work and, therefore, must be supervised and managed, Theory Y employees enjoy work and as such are self-motivated and require little supervision. For this research, Theory Y is more relevant as employees have more responsibilities and are offered the opportunity to propose innovative solutions to some of the banks' challenges. In other instances, they develop solutions before the bank even recognises that there is an issue or a gap in the market.

1.8.4 Media Richness Theory

The Media Richness Theory describes media choices. Media richness refers to the ability of the medium to successfully transfer information to its target audience, while capability refers to the accessibility and time it takes to get feedback from the medium, and the use of physical and verbal cues to encourage understanding and focus of the message. In developing this theory, Daft and Lengel (1986) proposed a 5-step continuum of media options: at one end are rich media channels that possess most, if not all, of these capabilities and at the opposite end are lean media channels with limited characteristics. This particular theory is important for the research as it specifically focuses on the richness (or ability) of communication media – which in this research includes print publications, digital, telecommunication, and face-to-face communication channels. Furthermore, it is closely linked to the study's research question that addresses the internal communication channels available in South Africa's "big four" banks.

1.9 FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The study's research problem and research questions are summarised in the following sub-sections.

1.9.1 The research problem

According to Cresswell (2007), a research problem addresses the significance and need for the study. With the increasingly competitive business environment, financial service industry organisations such as the banking sector have had to re-evaluate the role that their employees play in remaining relevant and in attaining competitive advantage. South Africa's "big four" banks have been selected as the study's focus due to the financial sector being one of the highest contributors to economic growth in South Africa (Brand South Africa, 2013), thus it is important that their employees are engaged in order to assist the bank achieve its objectives.

The study's research problem is stated as follows:

To develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks.

In formulating the study's research problem, it was found that items such as one's job, rewards, recognition, retention, opportunities, teamwork, line manager, and communication were significant determinants of employee engagement (Anand, Banu, Badrinath, Veena, Sowmiyaa & Muthulakshmi, 2016). These findings support the belief that employee engagement is inextricably linked to the Social Exchange Theory of reciprocity which indicates that people do something with the hope that they will receive something valuable in exchange (or return) (Blau, 1964). Thus, employees may respond with favourable behaviours such as engagement. In addition, Jogi and Srivastava (2015) found that internal communication has a consequential impact on employee engagement in the banking sector. The freedom and opportunity that employees have to communicate with the organisation's leaders, line managers, and colleagues were the major contributing factors to an employee's satisfaction and

commitment to their job. This finding further supports the notion that open, two-way communication with the organisation's leaders impacts employee engagement.

The study's sub-research questions are stated below.

1.9.2 The sub-research problem

The following sub-research problems are extracted from the above research problem:

- **Sub-research problem 1:** To explore the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks.
- **Sub-research problem 2:** To explore the role played by internal communication in South Africa's "big four" banks.
- **Sub-research problem 3:** To explore the internal communication channels that are available in South Africa's "big four" banks.
- **Sub-research problem 4:** To develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks.

1.10 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) propose that research questions develop the research problem and provide a focus for the study. As such, they influence the study's research methodology and design.

In order to address the sub-research problems, the following research questions are posed:

- **Research question 1:** What is the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks?

- **Research question 2:** What role does internal communication play in the banking sector?
- **Research question 3:** Which internal communication channels are available in South Africa's "big four" banks?
- **Research question 4:** Which elements of internal communication make up the conceptual framework of employee engagement?

1.11 METHODOLOGY

The methodological strategy of the proposed study is discussed in terms of the research design, research approach, sampling strategy, and feasibility of the study.

1.11.1 Research design

A mixed-methods research approach was used for this study. The premise of combining qualitative and quantitative research methods provides detailed results than either method used individually (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Furthermore, Cronholm and Hjalmarsson (2011) posit that advantages of combining these two research approaches include 1) words and visuals can provide clarity to numbers, while numbers add accuracy to words and visuals, 2) researcher uses more than one research design, thus can accommodate a wider range of research questions, 3) they present detailed research conclusions, 4) through triangulation, they confirm data from single method approaches, 5) they can add insight and clarification that might have been overlooked with a single method approach; and, 6) they increase generalisability of results that may have been impossible through the use of one approach. These advantages suggest that combining qualitative and quantitative methods may be beneficial for obtaining richer research results for this study.

Most definitions of qualitative research agree that it is presented using words and visuals, while quantitative research is represented numerically and is analysed using statistical procedures (Neuman, 2014; Babbie, 2010; Lune, Pumar & Koppel, 2010; Creswell, 2009; Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006; Collis & Hussey, 2003). In

contrast to qualitative studies, quantitative research findings can be generalised to the larger population as they typically focus on predicting or making general conclusions about the population (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

1.11.2 Research approach

According to Radwan (2009), research can either be deductive (quantitative) or inductive (qualitative). While deductive reasoning is regarded as research that works from the general to the specific, inductive approach is research that works from the specific to the general (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). This study used the deductive approach which allowed the researcher to generalise the study's findings to the "big four" banks.

1.11.3 Sampling Strategy

The sampling strategy of the proposed study is discussed in terms of the following: population, sample, unit of analysis, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability.

1.11.3.1 Population

A population is defined as a group of people whom the researcher wants to study (Babbie, 2013). The target population for this study is employees of South Africa's "big four" banks, namely Absa, FirstRand Bank (First National Bank [FNB]), Standard Bank, and Nedbank.

1.11.3.2 Sample

Neuman (2011:240) defines a sample as a group of people selected by the researcher to make general conclusions about the larger population. The sample size of the quantitative component was 300 employees across the four banks, i.e. 75 participants from each bank. The qualitative component, on the other hand, comprised of four senior internal communications managers as they are involved in the internal

communication strategy development and implementation, and the day-to-day business requirements of the internal communications team within their respective bank. Convenience sampling was used to select the participants for this research. This method was selected because it allowed the researcher to conveniently select participants who were available to provide the required information, quickly and efficiently (Mwape & Mumba, 2012).

It is worth noting that although the target sample was 300 employees, the study did not reach this target. Participant selection and sampling technique are discussed in more detail under heading *1.11.3.4 Data collection*.

1.11.3.3 Unit of analysis

Babbie (2013:97) defines the unit of analysis as the people being studied. Due to the relatively large population size of employees across South Africa's "big four" banks, it is impossible to sample all the population members. Although the original sample size of the quantitative component was 300 employees, a total of 97 employees responded to the survey, however, only 84 respondents completed all the questions in the survey. In addition, four senior internal communications managers made up the qualitative component of the study.

1.11.3.4 Data collection

The qualitative data collection constituted a review of available literature as well as face-to-face interviews conducted with four senior internal communications managers from each of the four banks. A key benefit of conducting interviews is that they enabled the researcher to probe further for clarity to a response or question. Additionally, responses can be recorded using audio and visual equipment, meaning that the collected data can be referred back to (Mertler, 2011).

From a quantitative perspective, a web-based self-administered survey questionnaire was used to collect data. The survey was hosted on *SurveyMonkey*, an online survey

tool, which was deemed the most effective and efficient data collection method for this research due to its low costs. Other benefits of using a survey include freedom in completing the questionnaire and obtaining information from a large group of respondents within a short time-frame (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2002). The study's respondents were directed to the survey questionnaire via an email containing the survey link and guidelines for completing the survey. The emails were sent to the senior internal communications managers from each of the four banks, who were requested to disseminate it internally within their business units and departments. This data collection method is known as snowball sampling. A key advantage of snowball sampling is that the sample can refer other people that have similar, if not the same, characteristics as the intended sample (Katz, 2006).

The survey was developed on a seven-point Likert scale that was used to determine the degree to which respondents agree or disagree with a question or statement. A Likert scale of this weighting has several benefits which include increasing reliability (Symonds, 1924), validity (Churchill & Peter, 1984; Barnes, Daswar & Gilbert, 1924), response rates (Malhotra, 1993), and result in stronger correlations with the t-test results (Lewis, 1993). The seven-point Likert scale had the following weightings: 7 = Strongly Agree, 6 = Agree, 5 = Moderately Agree, 4 = Neutral, 3 = Moderately Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree.

1.11.3.5 Data analysis

The data analysis process provides meaning to the data by interpreting it (De Vos *et al.*, 2002). Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS version 25.0. The findings of this research are presented using descriptive and inferential statistics in the form of non-parametric tests such as the Chi-square, Kendall's tau-b, and Gamma tests. Additionally, frequency tables, pie charts, and bar graphs summarise and visualise the results. Moreover, descriptive statistics summarise data from the results, while inferential statistics made conclusions about the wider population (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

Qualitative data in the form of one-on-one interviews was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006:17) six-phased thematic analysis that is useful for analysing qualitative verbal data in the form of interviews and speeches. The six-phased thematic analysis includes; 1) familiarising with data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) refining and naming themes; and, 6) writing report.

1.11.3.6 Validity and reliability

To ensure valid and reliable data, the researcher must establish that the measuring instrument has acceptable reliability and validity levels prior to conducting the study. Validity is described as showing if a measurement measures what it is meant to, and how accurately it does so (De Vos *et al.*, 2002). Furthermore, construct validity was used to test the study's validity. Construct validity focuses on what the instrument measures, how, and why it operates in that way (De Vos *et al.*, 2002; Grinnell & Unrau, 2011). This entails using univariate and multivariate statistical procedures as previously described.

Reliability refers to repeatedly using the same instrument to achieve similar results if not the same (De Vos *et al.*, 2002). To test reliability of the study's instrument, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and item-to-item correlations were performed to eliminate items with low reliability coefficients, in so doing, this increased scale reliability (Zohrabi, 2013).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative research, the interviewees were provided with a fair explanation of the purpose of conducting the interviews and study. Additionally, they were assured that interview transcriptions and recordings would not be shared with anyone (Neuman, 2014).

Moreover, a pilot study was conducted with ten knowledgeable and experienced individuals gained through convenience sampling. The purpose of conducting the pilot study was to validate the conceptual framework, determine the strengths and weaknesses of the survey and question format as well as possible ambiguity with

respect to the formulation of questions, as well as unclear choices. Neuman (2014) highlights key advantages of conducting a pilot study, these include estimating the time it will take, costs involved and highlighting other problems that may have been overlooked when developing the measuring instrument.

1.12 FEASIBILITY OF THE STUDY

Eldridge and Kelly (2012) define feasibility as conducting prior research to ensure that the research can be done. In determining a study's feasibility, common issues that are considered are its scope, the time it will require, its fiscal costs, ethical considerations, and the co-operation required from others (Rubin & Babbie, 2015).

These common issues are briefly addressed below:

- Scope – a pilot test was conducted to ensure that any ambiguities related to the survey are resolved prior to proceeding with data collection.
- Time constraints – the researcher experienced difficulties in recruiting participants to take part in the research and to follow-up with participants to complete the survey. Adequate time was also needed for interpreting and analysing data interpretation, as well as writing the report.
- Fiscal costs – the researcher encountered costs for reliable internet connectivity, telephone calls, *SurveyMonkey* subscription, data interpretation and analysis, proofreading and editing, as well as printing and bindery services upon completion of the study.
- Ethical considerations – a high degree of ethical considerations were upheld at all times (the study's ethical considerations are discussed in detail under heading *1.14 Ethical Considerations* of this chapter).
- Co-operation – obtaining co-operation from relevant members of the community. Receiving approval from the bank's relevant individuals impacted the time it took to start and complete the research.

1.13 ANTICIPATED CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DISCIPLINE OF COMMUNICATION

The researcher anticipates that the study will make a significant contribution to the communication discipline, more specifically internal communication, through the development of the conceptual framework for employee engagement. Additionally, the study extended the existing literature on internal communication and communication in the South African banking sector. Academically, the study added to the current body of knowledge in the field of communication.

1.14 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Being ethical means that the research will be conducted morally and legally (Dantzker & Hunter, 2011). This requires the researcher to be considerate and report findings honestly. In support of this, Neuman (2014) highlights ethical issues for consideration when conducting survey research:

- Invasion of privacy and confidentiality – the privacy of participants was respected by only asking questions related to the study.
- Voluntary participation – participation in the study was voluntary; participants had the option to withdraw from the study or not complete the survey if they did not wish to do so. Respondents' participation was kept anonymous. Moreover, permission to conduct the study was sought from the four banks.
- Exploitation of surveys – this survey was not misleading in any way, participants were provided with a fair explanation of the research purpose and the procedures to be followed.
- Misuse of survey results – responses were kept truthful, confidential, and for the benefit of this study.

1.15 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: Background of the Study

This chapter serves as an introduction to the study by describing the problem statement, research questions and objectives, as well as the importance and value of the study to be conducted.

Chapter 2: The South African Banking Sector

A description of the South African banking sector was provided in this chapter, with specific reference to its description, bank types, and an overview of each of the “big four” banks.

Chapter 3: Internal Communication

This chapter provides a theoretical discussion regarding the origin of the concept of internal communication, its importance, and current internal communication channels.

Chapter 4: Employee Engagement

This chapter discusses the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement, an employee engagement model, the benefits of engaged employees, and the role played by leaders in engagement.

Chapter 5: Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the study’s research methodology, with reference to the rationale for selecting a method, population, sampling process and sample size, the data collection method and specific measuring instruments.

Chapter 6: Findings and Interpretations

The results of the study are interpreted and presented in this chapter.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter outlines the key findings of the study, recommendations for future research and draws conclusions regarding the development of the conceptual framework for employee engagement in the South African banking sector.

1.16 SUMMARY

This chapter provided the background to the study. It further outlined the goals and objectives, key terms of the literature review, as well as the theoretical underpinning, research problem, research questions, research methodology, anticipated findings, contributions, ethical considerations and the demarcation of the study.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOUTH AFRICAN BANKING SECTOR

2.1 INTRODUCTION

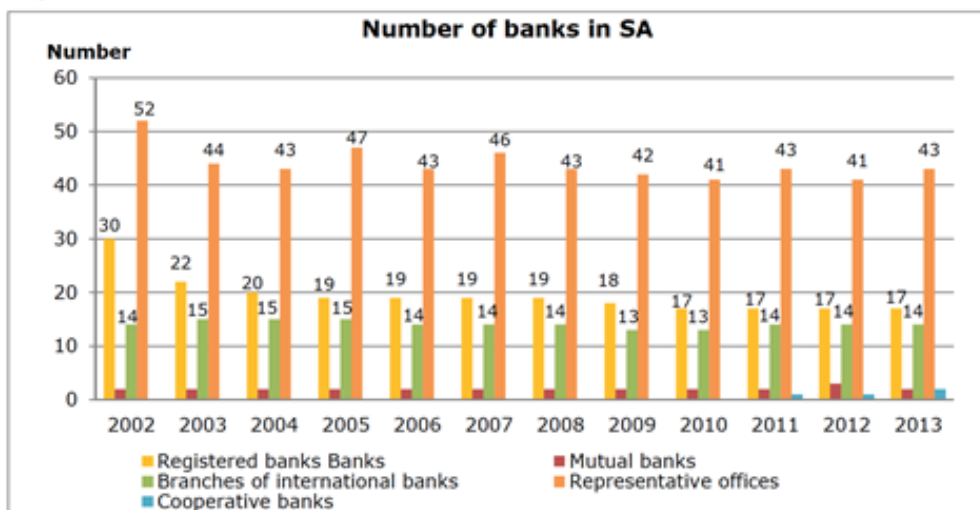
Chapter 1 served as an introduction to the study by describing the problem statement, research questions and objectives, as well as the significance and value of the study to be conducted. This chapter provides an overview of the South African banking sector, with specific reference to its description, types of banks, challenges, and a summary of the banks that make up South Africa's "big four" banks.

2.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN BANKING SECTOR

According to the Banking Association South Africa (2014), the South African banking sector is well-developed, regulated, and similar to banks in industrialised countries. As a result, it has attracted significant interest from investors abroad – numerous banks have established their African footprint in South Africa and many others have obtained significant stakes in the country's major banking groups. In the 2016/17 Global Competitiveness Index, South Africa ranked second out of 138 countries for "soundness of banks" and "financial services meeting business needs" (World Economic Forum, 2017). This ranking is an attestation to the South African banking sector's resilience during the current economic downturn brought about by political policy instability.

According to the African Institute of Financial Markets and Risk Management (2014), the banking sector is an important driver of South Africa's economy as it provides the liquidity required by households and organisations for ordinary day-to-day use and future investments. Banking institutions offer households and corporates alike loans and credit, suggesting that customers do not need to save up for large purchases; instead, they can get financial assistance from the bank and make interest charged payments at a later stage. Based on this analysis, it can be suggested that the South African banking sector is crucial for the stability of the South African economy.

Moreover, the South African banking sector consists of 17 registered banks, two mutual banks, 14 local branches, two cooperative banks and 43 foreign banks with representation in South Africa (The Banking Association South Africa, 2014); however, there are five major banking groups in South Africa. In addition, there are two banks in liquidation. The South African Reserve Bank (SARB), which is South Africa’s central bank, regulates the South African banking sector (SARB, 2016). SARB’s key objective is “to achieve and maintain price stability in the interest of balanced and sustainable economic growth in South Africa”. Along with other institutions, SARB plays an important role in guaranteeing financial stability. Moreover, all South African registered banks are represented by the Banking Association of South Africa industry body. Figure 2.1 below depicts the number of banks in South Africa.



Source: South African Reserve Bank (2016)

Figure 2.1: Number of banks in South Africa

2.2.1 Types of banks

This section briefly describes the five banking divisions in South Africa's "big four" banks (African Institute of Financial Markets and Risk Management, 2014:30-31):

2.2.2.1 Retail banking

Retail banking services and products are tailored to individuals, families, and small businesses.

2.2.2.2 Business banking

Business banks, also referred to as Commercial banks, provide services to medium-sized enterprises.

2.2.2.3 Corporate banking

Corporate banks tailor services to corporate and government institutions. Due to the customised and unique financial service requests of large corporate banking clients, most banks separate this division from others.

2.2.2.4 Private banking

Private banks offer financial services (significantly different from the services offered to retail banking customers) to high-net-worth individuals and households with wealth reaching a specified threshold. "Private" refers to personalised services such as a dedicated banker who acts as the clients' financial advisor.

2.2.2.5 Investment banking

Investment banks provide private (companies, individuals, households) and public-sector clients (state-owned companies, government institutions, municipalities) with the opportunity to raise capital.

2.3 SOUTH AFRICA'S "BIG FOUR" BANKS

A summary of South Africa's "big four" banks is provided in the section below.

2.3.1 FirstRand Bank

FirstRand Bank Limited was founded in 1838, 181 years ago. It is the largest listed financial services group in Africa by market capitalisation (Rand Merchant Bank, 2017) – as of 28 January 2020, FirstRand's current market capitalisation is R332 Billion (ShareData, 2020a). Listed on both the Namibian and Johannesburg Stock Exchanges (JSE), the Group's largest division, FNB, employs 33 000 employees (Bonorchis & Burkhardt, 2016) and has 723 branches (Tarrant, 2016). FirstRand's vision is "to be the African financial services Group of choice", and, with full representation in South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Zambia, and Tanzania, plans to open operations in Ghana are underway (Rand Merchant Bank, 2017). Differentiated by its owner-manager culture, FirstRand provides services through the following portfolios:

- Rand Merchant Bank (RMB) – the Groups' corporate and investment bank – offers financial services and products to large clients in various industry sectors.
- First National Bank (FNB) – the Groups' retail and commercial bank – offers financing to individuals and smaller businesses.
- WesBank – the Group's motor vehicle and business finance provider financing both individuals and businesses alike.

- Ashburton Investments – the Group’s investment management division – offers investment solutions to meet the needs of individual and institutional investors.



Source: Rand Merchant Bank (2017)

Figure 2.2: FirstRand Bank's market-leading franchises

2.3.2 Standard Bank

With a 156-year history in South Africa, Standard Bank is the largest African bank by assets and is listed on the JSE and Namibian Stock Exchange (NSX) (Standard Bank, 2017). As of 28 January 2020, Standard Bank’s current market capitalisation is R258 Billion (ShareData, 2020b). The Group employs more than 54 000 employees across the African region and has 1 221 branches and 8 815 automated teller machines (ATMs) regionally (Standard Bank, 2017). Standard Bank’s vision is “to be the leading financial services organisation in, for and across Africa, delivering exceptional client experiences and superior value” (Standard Bank, 2017). In addition to South Africa, Standard Bank operates in other countries in the sub-Saharan Africa region; Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Uganda, Angola, Mozambique, South Sudan, Botswana, Ghana, Namibia, Malawi, Tanzania, Swaziland, Mauritius, Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, and Congo. Standard Bank operates through three main business pillars:

- Personal and Business Banking (PBB) – the Group’s retail bank providing day-to-day banking services to individuals and small, and medium-sized enterprises.
- Corporate and Investment Banking (CIB) – serves governments, State-Owned Entities, corporates, other financial institutions and international counterparties.
- Wealth Management (Liberty) – offers a wide selection of wealth management products and services.



Source: Standard Bank (2017)

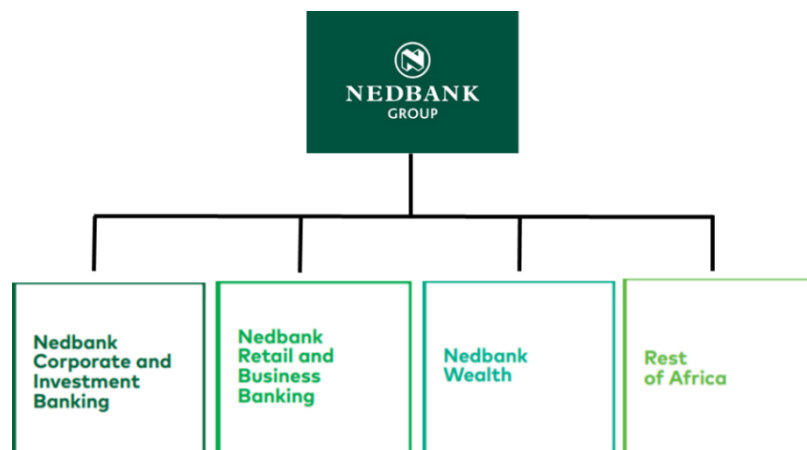
Figure 2.3: Standard Bank's main operating business pillars

2.3.3 Nedbank

Established in 2003, Nedbank Group is one of the largest banks in South Africa. Listed on the JSE since 1969 and NSX in 2007, as of 28 January 2020, Nedbank’s current market capitalisation is R99 Billion (ShareData, 2020c). Nedbank employs more than 30 739 employees in South Africa and has over 3500 ATMs and 708 branches (Tarrant, 2016). Nedbank Groups’ vision is to be the most admired bank in Africa by its stakeholders (employees, customers, shareholders, regulators) and communities it operates in (Nedbank, 2017). Although its primary market remains South Africa, Nedbank has expanded into other Africa countries including; Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and has representation in Kenya and

Angola (Nedbank, 2017). Nedbank offers financial solutions through four main business portfolios:

- Nedbank Corporate and Investment Banking (NCIB) – serves corporate and investment banking clients, together with a focus on relationship building.
- Nedbank Retail and Business Banking – serves individual customers and small businesses.
- Nedbank Wealth – offers insurance, asset management services and wealth management solutions to high-net-worth individuals.
- Rest of Africa – operates and offers financial services and solutions in select African countries. Nedbank Group also has a 36,6% shareholding in Banco Unico (Mozambique-based bank) and 20% shareholding in Ecobank Transnational Incorporated (Pan-African bank operating in 36 African countries).



Source: Researchers' own compilation

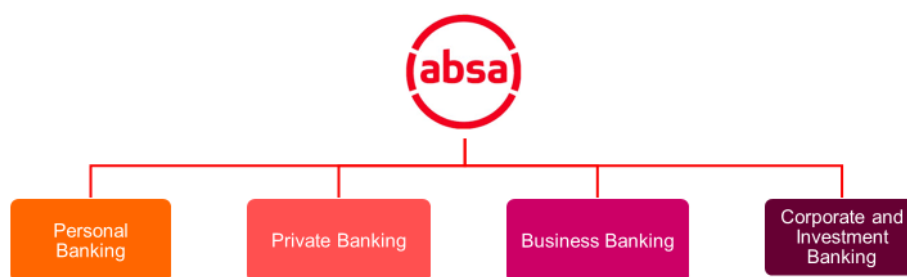
Figure 2.4: Nedbank's four main business clusters

2.4.4 Absa

Absa Group Limited (Absa), established in 1991, is a subsidiary of the Barclays Africa Group Limited and is listed on the JSE (Absa, 2017). As of 28 January 2020, Absa's market capitalisation is R3 Billion (ShareData, 2020d). With 31, 922 employees, 892

branches and 10 000 ATMs (Young, 2013), Absa had the largest footprint (Tarrant, 2016). The Group's vision is "to become the financial services provider of choice". In addition to South Africa, Absa operates in 11 African countries, including Zambia, Kenya, Uganda, Botswana, Ghana, Mozambique, Zambia, Seychelles, Tanzania and Nigeria (Absa, 2017). Absa offers a range of banking services and products through the following portfolios:

- Personal Banking – the Group's retail division – offers financial services to individuals and households.
- Private Banking – offers premium services to the Group's high-end clients – Barclay's private banking clients are offered customised solutions, access to a network of experienced specialists, and assured of confidentiality, discretion, and professionalism.
- Business Banking – serves businesses of all types and sizes with services such as online account opening, Financial Intelligence Centre Act (FICA), self-service banking, etc.
- Corporate and Investment Banking – serves government institutions, municipalities and large corporates across Africa.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 2.5: Absa's business portfolio

2.5 INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN BANKING SECTOR

The banking sector is faced with a competitive financial services environment that has affected the growth and future of the South African economy. In recent years, bank consumers have seen increased innovations from banks of all types and sizes; both locally and internationally, in the hopes to meet and exceed customer needs and behaviours. Thus, it is critical that innovative banking solutions are designed to address these needs and challenges to ensure that banks remain globally competitive in the rapidly changing financial services landscape. This section will discuss current innovations in the South African banking sector.

2.5.1 Employee and customer innovation programme

FNB introduced the FNB Innovators Programme, a platform that gives employees the opportunity to submit “radically disrupting and game-changing innovations within the financial industry” (ITWeb, 2017). An overall total amount of R54.5 million has been rewarded to employees since the programme’s inception in 2004. This initiative encourages employee participation through suggesting new and improved ways of banking. ITWeb (2017) further suggests that FNB capitalised on employee experiences and ideas on how the bank could improve internal processes and overall customer experience. It comes as no surprise that from more than 150 entries from over 30 countries, FNB was awarded the “Most Innovative Bank in the World” title in 2012 (BAI-Finacle Global Banking Innovation Awards, 2012) for “breakthrough innovations that positively impact banks and their customers”. Recently, FNB won “The Most Innovative African Bank” at the 2017 African FinTech Awards, an award they have now won for two consecutive years (Workman, 2017).

It is worth noting that the FNB Innovators programme has implemented over 10 000 innovations to date, with innovations such as eBucks – “the world’s first bank-backed, secure electronic currency” (ITWeb, 2017). The programme enables customers to accumulate eBucks for taking part in activities such as shopping, loading airtime, purchasing electricity, filling up with fuel, to name a few. Customers with a specified number of points can spend their eBucks on various products ranging from local and

international travel, clothing, electronics, appliances, and music (eBucks, 2018). Over R3 million in eBucks has been spent since the programme was established in 2000, making it one of the top loyalty programmes in the world.

Standard Bank launched an Incremental Innovations Award, an initiative that occurs twice a year and is targeted at employees who have implemented upgrades and minor improvements to the banks' products or processes. The business has benefitted from R170 million from the top entrants. At a gala event, the finalists compete in front of judges and a live audience comprising of their fellow colleagues for prizes worth R1 million. Standard Bank (2015) believe that a reward and recognition of this kind encourages employee participation in generating innovative ideas. Moreover, in the hopes to nurture, protect, and expand South Africa's innovation eco-system, Standard Bank hosts an annual Innovation Week event that is "an opportunity for innovators, investors, entrepreneurs, and fintechs to participate on an open platform, to network and showcase the ways in which they are contributing to digital disruption in financial services".

Additionally, Standard Bank launched The PlayRoom, its innovation lab that aims to discover "disruptive ideas" from employees, clients and small start-up businesses (BusinessTech, 2015). The lab assists Standard Bank in conducting research and thorough tests in a monitored environment through collaborative work with its customers, prior to sharing new solutions in the market, which will assist the bank in understanding their customers as they have direct access to shaping ideas, designing products and can help with building products that suit their lifestyle. The PlayRoom, featuring a testing area where customers can test new product innovations and provide insights to help create a "user experience journey", was tested on Standard Bank's Internet banking site launched in 2015. The concept, designs, and substantial testing were conducted at the PlayRoom. Through the PlayRoom, Standard Bank incorporates both its customer and employee ideas in the creative design process (Standard Bank, 2017).

Standard Bank further launched the Pathfinders Challenge, a platform for all innovators from individuals to entrepreneurs, young professionals, medium to large

businesses, and innovation and tech gurus to submit innovative solutions on how the banking and the financial services industry can serve customers better in the future (Standard Bank, 2015). Participants across the globe were required to submit ideas or concepts rooted in innovative and disruptive technology capabilities. They further had the opportunity to build a functional demo or preliminary versions of the product, service type or application. These creative solutions had to be designed with a bank or financial service industry in mind or demonstrate how it would make an impact in another business sector, provided that the solution could be applied within the banking and financial services sector. Contestants had the opportunity to win their share of more than R500 000 cash prizes plus development support, coaching and mentorship from experienced technology and business leaders, as well as acceleration and incubation support (Standard Bank, 2015). Standard Bank's Innovation Week, Pathfinders and The Incremental Innovation Awards are some of Standard Bank's initiatives for encouraging employee and customer participation in the innovation journey.

In 2013, Nedbank launched the Innovation Lab internally for employees to exhibit their innovation and entrepreneurial spirit through experimenting with the latest technology, testing their business ideas, and developing product concepts. 1 500 employees had used the facility since its inception from 2011 to 2013. The Innovation Hub is compared to "an innovation sandbox" or "creativity pen" – a creative environment that will develop innovative ideas that are essential for identifying new ways of conducting and growing businesses. Furthermore, the Innovation Lab showcases innovations from Nedbank's employees, as well as their partners, suppliers, and vendors. In addition, "it reinforces Nedbank's commitment to create an empowering environment in which employees have the freedom to contribute to a culture that encourages growth, values alignment, innovation and a shared vision for the future" (BizCommunity, 2013).

From an external perspective, Nedbank partnered with LaunchLab, "a network of African university campus-based business incubators to increase disruptive innovations in the fintech sector". They introduced a challenge to record new business models and ideas that may serve as the latest innovation in the banking sector. For the challenge, entrants were required to submit a three-minute video pitch to stand a

chance of winning their share of R80 000 in start-up funds and support from the LaunchLab incubation for a period of six months to develop their business ideas. This support included working space, access to the internet, mentorship, and portfolio management. To ensure that these business ideas add value to the bank's services, Nedbank monitored the idea developmental process. Furthermore, Mo (2016) believes that the fintech industry has experienced great disruptions as a result of new technologies and changing consumer banking behaviour in Africa. Further, Nedbank has identified the need to tap into these progressive innovations to identify new ways of using mobile technology to further advance financial inclusion, improve client experiences using connected devices and establish innovative solutions to increase their client numbers.

Conversely, Absa did not have a great start in the employee or customer innovation race. In 2014, the organisation's culture was poor and employee morale was at an all-time low, employee disengagement was common and attracting the ideal candidates to end the cycle seemed impossible. The Groups' senior leadership realised that this situation required urgent attention and the first item they ticked off their list was defining a new strategy and recruiting the right talent. It was then that the Technology Hackathon idea originated and launched in 2016 in an effort to boost employee morale and reduce high turnover. According to Edwards (2016), the Technology Hackathon is an employee challenge made up of 40 teams from around the country. The teams convene to identify challenges within the business, develop technology driven solutions and then code design samples to address the issues at hand – all within 24 hours.

Moreover, Edwards (2016) is of the view that the decisive moment for Absa was the first hackathon in 2015 which had 100 employees split between 20 teams designing extraordinary technology solutions that included 1) a virtual credit card – enables customers to use their credit facility securely, even if they do not have their card on them, 2) an innovative banking app for children – allowing parents to allocate tasks, which can be rewarded with small payments through the app, thus instilling good financial principles from childhood; and, 3) a credit card 'stop' button – used on a

smartphone and allows customers' to stop a stolen card (or if fraudulent transactions are noticed) with a single click.

In 2016, the Absa Technology Hackathon was extended to developers, designers, financial industry members, technology entrepreneurs and social innovators interested in discovering affordable and accessible innovative financial technology products and services for low-income communities. Barclays (2016) mentions that the hackathon aimed to develop affordable savings solutions, financial education, micro-credit and responsible lending practices, and micro-insurance. For this challenge (hackathon), teams experienced the true meaning of financial exclusion and had to rely on their creativity to invent, code and test their new ideas through rapid prototyping, to meaningfully build bridges that will reach the unbanked.

2.5.2 Banking App

The FNB Banking App was a first for banking in South Africa (FinTech Africa, 2017). It offers seamless integration of additional value-added services such as contactless payment, financial, retail, rewards, and security applications. Conversely, App Suite, Nedbank's banking app achieved 115,000 downloads six months after its launch in 2012. The app was made available for BlackBerry, Apple, or Android devices, as well as users with a range of Nokia handsets (BusinessTech, 2013). Additionally, Standard Bank has achieved numerous firsts over the years; however, it was the third bank to launch its mobile banking app. The app, called Standard Bank Mobile Banking, allows up to 10 devices to be linked to an account and further allows users to access several of the bank's services, even if they are not account holders (BusinessTech, 2012).

As the largest African bank (EFMA, 2018), Standard Bank was the first South African bank to introduce a banking app for children, called Kidz Banking App (Standard Bank, 2016). The app is accessed on both smartphones and tablets and is aimed at children aged between six and 11. It makes managing money more realistic for children while assisting parents to enforce healthy financial habits. It features colourful characters, animation, games, and is themed on South Africa's Big Five animals. Additionally, Standard Bank's Shyft App won an international bronze award in the "Most Disruptive

Innovation” category at the 2016 EFMA-Accenture Distribution and Marketing Innovation Awards held in Barcelona. Shyft facilitates forex transactions without manual paper forms or queuing at branches. Through accessing a “foreign exchange mobile wallet”, customers can “purchase several different currencies, store funds in eWallets, make purchases using physical or virtual card capability, or make international transfers using the cross-border payments capability” (Standard Bank, 2016).

According to McLeod (2013), Absa were the last South African “big four” bank to develop a banking app for smartphones and tablets. Instead, Absa mentions that they had realised that in the innovative race; “it is not about being first to market, it’s ‘What is appealing to customers?’”. Although Absa was behind, both FNB and Standard Bank have suffered reputational damage with their apps being temporarily down on several occasions (Alfreds, 2016). Whilst introduced later, Absa also designed an innovative children’s app that allows parents to list chores or tasks that, similar to Standard Bank’s children app, can be rewarded with small payments on the app, thus teaching kids about money from a young age (Edwards, 2016).

2.5.3 Value-added service innovations

FNB has revealed several new banking technology offerings, the latest being a “seamless and paperless” way of opening a bank account by taking a selfie (BusinessTech, 2018a). This new feature, which is integrated with the Department of Home Affairs, uses biometrics and location tracking to simplify the sign-up process. Previously, FNB was one of the two South African banks that collaborated with South Africa’s Home Affairs Department to assist with issuing Smart ID documents and passports. This pilot was initially limited to bank employees (Turnbull, 2016). Moreover, FNB previously launched Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) registration to provide business registration and account opening services. FNB has also positioned itself as an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and retailer of computer and mobile devices, thereby expanding its service offering and attracting customers to join the bank.

Other FNB innovations have included SMS and email verification communication technologies that facilitate transactions that would require long queues at bank branches, thereby giving customers the security and confidence they need to bank on their smartphones (Turnbull, 2016). Additionally, FNB introduced nav >> (short for navigation) which provides smart new tools on the FNB App, designed to assist customers when experiencing uneasiness. nav >> Home launched in 2016, its key attribute is the ability to provide a free and instant property value estimate. In 2017 nav Car >> was launched to provide seamless car licence disc renewal with delivery to the customers' preferred address (FinTech Africa, 2017).

Standard Bank was the first South African commercial bank to launch an ATM and the first to establish a fully functional electronic branch (Standard Bank, 2016). According to EFMA (2018), Standard Banks' other innovations include the launch of S#IFT: a mobile platform that enables all Standard Bank employees to 'shift' from bank employee to brand ambassador as they are often expected to answer bank-related queries in their personal capacity, however, employees have their own areas of expertise, and may not know all the banks' products or service offerings. Thus, Standard bank developed S#IFT, a platform that allows employees to draw from existing relationships with their family and friends to help generate new business for the bank. In addition, Standard Bank launched Always On: a relationship banking Instant Messaging service. Powered by WeChat, Always On aims to simplify banking for Prestige and Private banking customers, but also to deliver outstanding personal service. The inconvenience of having limited contact with a bank through visiting a branch, phoning the call centre or emails is in the past: the new system is similar to adding a personal banker to a customer's social media follower list and having access to them anytime, anywhere. This provides a new level of convenience and eases customers' daily communication with the bank and helps them manage their banking.

In what may be considered "a first for the banking sector", Nedbank established a "digital-only branch" in Johannesburg. According to Khumalo (2017), The NZone, located at the Sandton Gautrain station, was designed for clients to engage with the bank in a digital environment. The digital-only branch is designed to provide customers with a safe, convenient and affordable experience where clients can surf the internet,

experiment on digital banking platforms, and learn how to manage their banking. The NZone has interactive capabilities, featuring touch screens that guide customers on how to use digital banking and information on banking services and products. Additionally, there's an area dedicated to virtual reality that uses games to prepare customers on the future of banking. It also has a secluded and secure video area where customers can remotely interact with a banker ("Skype for banking") and print certified bank statements. An additional attraction is that the branch offers a free Wi-Fi area where customers can interact on their own digital devices.

Amongst a host of innovations, Nedbank is acknowledged for its industry-leading digital innovations, such as being the first bank to introduce pre-paid options through electronic banking channels instead of physical vouchers – something that is now a standard offering (Nedbank, 2018). Other Nedbank innovations range from: CIPC Online (a business registration and account-opening service offering available through the nedbank.co.za website), GAP Access™ (a cash advance solution for merchants based on their point-of-sale device turnover), Nedbank Masterpass™ (a mobile payment solution), GAP Access™ (a cash advance solution for merchants based on their point-of-sale device turnover), MyPocket (a savings pocket that can be linked to a client's transactional account, allowing the client to manage spending and saving money more easily), and Nedbank Business mobile enhancements (a business banking application on both tablet and smartphone devices – Nedbank is the only local bank that offers this service).

Additional Nedbank innovations include being one of the first major banks globally to implement Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) banking (a form of cellphone banking). Moreover, Nedbank (2018) are of the view that they are the real forerunners to the popular cellphone banking app. The industry-leading Instant Bond Indicator provides prospective home loan applicants with a speedy response (almost immediately) to their loan application. Nedgroup Investments also launched an online Invest With Us tool, which provides potential investors with a six-phased approach to opening a new bank account (Nedbank, 2016).

Although Absa may appear to be laggards in producing innovative solutions for customers and the banking sector, Absa Life was recognised for its innovative insurance technology and customer focus at the 2015 Annual National Business Awards (NBA), winning an Innovation through Technology award. According to Venter (2015), Absa Life has developed big data technology to introduce the first African (and globally) predictive underwriting solution. The innovation's value proposition is that it has made the medical underwriting process more convenient. Instead of requesting that customers undergo comprehensive medical screening tests, which is often an inconvenience, they consider transactional data to assess the clients' health status. Absa believes that this has significantly increased customer convenience.

In catching up with the other banks, Absa launched Payment Pebble, a mobile payment device that enables small businesses and entrepreneurs to receive debit or credit card payments through their smartphones or tablets (Brand South Africa, 2012). McLeod (2013) describes it as "a small piece of hardware that connects to the 3.5mm audio jack on smart devices and has both a slot for chip cards and another for swiping magstripe cards". Furthermore, Absa launched Potentiate, a transactional banking product aimed at graduates and senior professionals. Potentiate has a first-to-market Titanium MasterCard which is embedded with the tap-and-go payment feature that allows customers to transact for low-value payments, and an LCD screen providing a one-time PIN for increased security when shopping online (Kamhunga, 2012). Other Absa innovations include an Accelerator programme, a number of Proof of Concepts that are in progress, SensorIt (an Internet of Things start-up) and Hello Soda (an alternative credit scoring method aimed at the younger generation where getting a credit score can prevent one from accessing financial services) (BusinessTech, 2017).

Based on this discussion, a bank's innovation activity may attract, retain or repel customers and employees alike. In fact, banks that prioritise innovation (such as FNB, Standard Bank, and Nedbank) have proven to be successful over the years as they've gained an advantage over their competitors in the battle for market share, profits, brand value, customers and employees. Moreover, as these banks design innovative solutions in their unique ways, what is also clear is that banks should solve real

customer needs and challenges by working closely with their employees and clients, often collaboratively, to design meaningful solutions.

2.6 CHALLENGES FACING THE SOUTH AFRICAN BANKING SECTOR

According to S&P Global Ratings agency (2018), the South African Banking sector is currently facing similar risks it encountered in 2017 though things are more positive due to the recent political shift that saw Cyril Ramaphosa become South Africa's President. Specifically, South Africa is currently experiencing tough economic conditions, policy uncertainty, and state-owned entities with ongoing financial difficulties and a breakdown in governance structures that hinder investor confidence. BusinessTech (2018) is of the view that this will affect the banking sector and may delay market recoveries. However, due to their strong credit ratings, South African banks may overcome these challenges.

An earlier study by Fin24 (2017) found that although South Africa's banking sector had the ability to survive a challenging environment, there are significant risks forecasted. South African banks have been criticised for a while now given the persistent low-growth environment and political uncertainty. Although the banking sector remains protected by their positive balance sheets and the diversification of their earnings, there are consequential risks such as a local currency debt downgrade by credit rating agencies and a confidence catastrophe with the possibility of a continued low growth environment for a lengthier period. The direct impact of a local currency downgrade results in an increase in the funding costs for banks that would introduce margin pressure. This usually gets passed on to consumers through higher borrowing costs.

Moreover, a key challenge facing the South African banking sector is the rate of job creation and job losses. South Africa has failed to create jobs since 2015. With the population growing annually at a pace of around 1.6%, the unemployment rate in South Africa increased to an estimated 28% in the second quarter of 2017 from 25% three years ago (BusinessTech, 2018a). Despite the banking sectors' positive standing, it is still significantly impacted by the country's economic challenges. As a result, S&P Global Ratings agency believe that households still pose the most

significant risk for South African banks – based on their higher leverage ratio and low wealth levels compared to those in other emerging markets.

On a more positive note, the health of domestic South African households has improved. Worth noting is that household debt-disposable income ratio is on an eight-year improvement streak. It was predicted to be around 72.5% by the end of 2018, down by 13% since its peak in 2009 (BusinessTech, 2018a). Furthermore, S&P Global Ratings agency anticipates that debt repayment to disposable income will improve. S&P Global Ratings agency further affirmed that the appointment of Cyril Ramaphosa as South Africa's President has improved consumer and business confidence and set political issues on a more positive path. The South African banking sector continues to be resilient to the current negative political landscape.

2.7 SUMMARY

Given the increasingly competitive banking environment and the challenges facing the South African banking sector, it is essential that banks recognise the value of innovation – which presents organisations with several opportunities. Banks that remain focussed on innovating to improve customer lives and experiences are likely to survive. Moreover, innovation has become a way for organisations to attract and retain customers, and ultimately to increase their market share. At a time when the economy has deteriorated, banks are designing innovative banking and value-added services (solutions) that not only help the consumer, but that also help drive South Africa's economic growth, including job creation. This chapter provided an overview of the South African banking sector, with specific reference to its description, types of banks, challenges, and a summary of South Africa's "big four" banks.

CHAPTER 3

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided a description of the South African banking sector, with specific reference to its description, bank types, and an overview of each of the “big four” banks. This chapter provides a discussion regarding the concept of communication, with particular reference to internal communication, its importance, current traditional and innovative internal communication channels, and models.

3.2 COMMUNICATION

The word “communication”, according to Holtz (2016), originates from the Latin word *communis* meaning ‘to share’, ‘to impart’, or ‘to make common’. Although various definitions of the word communication exist, Holtz (2017) suggests that the one that should be used is “the exchanging of information or news”. Thus, communication is a process or an activity of sharing information, exchanging ideas and experiences between two or more people, or a group. It is also an act of transmitting a message through a certain channel (Annan-Prah, 2015:3). Zulkepi and Mohtar (2015) define it as the words that are understood through interaction with people in information exchange. Additionally, Blau’s (1964) Social Exchange Theory has been used to understand the role of communication, which facilitates human interaction. Communication is, therefore, defined as a value-add that plays a critical role in engagement.

While the value of communication is evident, Sebastiaoa, Zulato and Trindade (2017) suggest that business communication occurs in two forms: internal and external. The two concepts are briefly discussed.

Internal and external communication are defined as corporate communication (Surbhi, 2017; Zulkepi & Mohtar, 2015; Cornelissen, 2010). Moreover, both internal and

external communication are important for the survival of an organisation. While internal communication fosters employee engagement (Mishra, Mishra & Walker, 2019; Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014; Karanges, Beatson, Johnston & Lings, 2014; Welch, 2011) through guiding, informing and motivating employees, external communication ensures the success of products and services (Lundkvist & Yakhlef, 2004) by managing or presenting a positive image of the organisation to the public, “i.e. customers, suppliers, investors, dealers, society, government agencies, general public, etc.” (Surbhi, 2017). However, the importance of internal communication is often underestimated in comparison to external communication; internal communication acts as the basis for external communication and marketing, and also influences the overall atmosphere of an organisation, employee well-being, and the company’s image. Moreover, Von Bertalanffy’s (1950) Systems Theory views communication as a system binder and indispensable, thus organisational communication is a valuable asset.

Based on the above discussion, it is evident that internal and external communication are important functions of organisational communication (Tankosic, Ivetec & Milekic, 2017) which is the sharing of information, and views internally and externally. In other words, internal and external communication are both viewed as organisational communication as their main aim or purpose is to communicate particular messages with their target audience to achieve a specific objective. Although there are common characteristics and elements between internal and external communication, the messages should be consistent, involving multi-dimensional channels, and allow simultaneous engagement across multiple audiences (Sebastiao, Zulato & Trindade, 2017:864) to create loyal and committed stakeholders – both internally and externally.

3.2.1 Defining internal communication

As internal communication is the focus of the study, it is crucial to adequately define this concept. Numerous definitions relating to internal communication and often used interchangeably in the literature include *internal relations* (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006), *employee relations* (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Argenti, 1996; Oliver, 1997; Quirke, 2000), *internal media* (Greenbaum, Clampitt & Willihnganz,

1988), *internal public relations* (Kreps, 1989; Wright, 1995; Kennan & Hazelton, 2006), *corporate communication*, *business communication* (Kitchen, 1997; Argenti & Forman, 2002), *integrated internal communication* (Kalla, 2005), *management communication* (Kitchen, 1997; Goodman & Hirsch, 2012; Carroll, 2013), *internal corporate communication* (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006; Welch & Jackson, 2007), *internal marketing* (Quirke, 2000; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002; DeBussy, Ewing & Pitt, 2003), *strategic communication* (Argenti, 2007), *corporate public relations* (Goodman & Hirsch, 2012; Argenti, 2013), *employee communication* (Farrant, 2003; Doorley & Garcia, 2007; Argenti, 2013), *organisational communication* (Quirke, 2000; Bakar & Mustaffa, 2013; Borcaa & Baesu, 2014), and *intra-organisational communication* (Malhotra & Ackfeldt, 2016).

The numerous synonyms and definitions provided have contributed to the confusion in the use of concepts and in defining internal communication. For the purpose of this study, the preferred concept is *internal communication*, defined as the “the exchange of information and ideas among employees or members of an organisation (social actors) to build trusting and open relationships and to create understanding” (Jacobs, Yu & Chavez, 2016:62).

Table 3.1 highlights some of the internal communication definitions available in the literature, particularly those that are closely linked to this study.

Table 3.1: Internal communication definitions

| Author | Definition |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Scholes (1997:xviii) | “The professional management of interactions between all those with an interest or ‘a stake’ in a particular organisation”. |
| Kalla (2005:304) | “All formal and informal communication taking place internally at all levels of the organisation”. |
| Welch and Jackson (2007:186) | “Communication between an organisation’s strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims”. |
| Welch and Jackson (2007:193) | “The strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders within organisations across a number of inter-related dimensions including, internal line manager communication, internal team peer communication, internal project peer communication and internal corporate communication”. |
| Berger (2008:1) | “The central process through which employees share information, create relationships, make meaning and ‘construct’ organisational culture and values”. |
| Chen (2008:167) | “A management tool that helps identify, establish and maintain relationships between an organisation’s management and its employees”. |
| Carriere and Bourque (2009:31) | “The full spectrum of communication activities, both formal and informal, undertaken by an organisation’s members for the purpose of disseminating information to one or more audiences within the organisation”. |
| Cornelissen (2011:258) | “All methods (internal newsletter, intranet) used by a firm to communicate with its employees”. |
| Balakrishnan and Masthan (2013:2) | “The exchange of information both informal and formal between management and employees within the organisation”. |

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Hume and Leonard (2014:296) | “The strategic management of communication to align the organisation’s internal stakeholders with its strategic intent”. |
| Jacobs, Yu, and Chavez (2016:62) | “The exchange of information and ideas among employees or members of an organisation (social actors) to build trusting and open relationships and to create understanding”. |

Source: Researchers’ own compilation

While numerous definitions of internal communication have been provided, the definitions cited above suggest that internal communication is:

- Employee targeted
- Leader driven
- Plays a strategic role
- Knowledge sharing tool
- Relationship-building
- Facilitates information exchange between the leaders and employees of an organisation

The above definitions also highlight the importance and role of internal communication, however, Anreder (2007) is of the view that internal communication practitioners are often faced with the challenge of competing with other messages for the attention of employees and presenting information in an engaging way. Thus, it is important to select an appropriate communication channel to ensure that messages are not only read but are engaging and, therefore, internalised.

3.2.2 The role of internal communication

To retain satisfied and motivated employees, Kitchen and Daly (2002) are of the view that senior leaders and managers within organisations must actively establish ways to meet the needs of employees and encourage creativity while influencing them to behave in ways that are aligned with the organisation’s purpose. A fundamental

approach that organisations use to foster satisfied and motivated employees is internal communication (Du Preez & Bendixen, 2015; Karanges, 2014; Chitrao, 2014). Welch and Jackson (2007:187) “identify four goals for internal communication; 1) to promote commitment to the organisation, 2) a sense of belonging to it, 3) awareness of its changing environment; and, 4) understanding its evolving aims”. They argue that these goals are achieved through communication emanating from the organisation’s leaders to employees.

According to Smidts, Pruyn and Van Riel (2001:1051), “internal communication facilitates interactions between the organisation and its employees which creates social relationships based on meaning and worth”. In turn, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) believe that this increases productivity and drives positive employee attitudes. This is supported by the McKinsey Global Institute study (2019), which highlights that internal communication can increase productivity by 20 to 25%. The idea of information (i.e., communication) as an exchange resource is consistent with the Social Exchange Theory where employees translate communication into positive or negative actions (Karanges, Beaston, Johnston & Lings, 2014:332). It was previously stated that the Social Exchange Theory posits that individuals give something with the hope of receiving something (valuable) in return. In this case, engaged employees reciprocate with positive behaviours for the organisations’ benefit.

Thus, internal communication is considered an integral part of the organisation’s success. Moreover, “it strengthens the connection between an organisation and its stakeholders, particularly employees” (Karanges, 2014:31). Therefore, it is essential that senior leaders and managers communicate frequently with employees to share organisational goals and establish trust (Men, 2015a; Men, 2015b; Men, 2014). Similar studies report the positive effect that internal communication has on employee engagement within an organisation while other studies found that employee engagement is a result of the organisation’s internal communication (Vercic & Vokic, 2017; Welch, 2015; Ruck & Welch, 2012; Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011; Welch, 2011). DeMaria (2016:77) identified a key commonality across organisations included in the “Best Places to Work” list: “open and free-flowing communication that encourages employee feedback and participation”. This finding is aligned to Asif and

Sargeant's (2009:299) study which found that the internal communication role has gained significance as organisations make every effort to prioritise employees, their needs, and values of the organisation, and furthermore, to encourage employees to maintain open, two-way communication with management and leaders. A study by Watson Wyatt (2008) found that organisations that communicate effectively are four times more likely to have engaged employees as compared to organisations that do not communicate as effectively, thus confirming the crucial link between employee engagement and internal communication.

At a time when South African organisations, particularly the banks, are facing disruption and rapid change as a result of the fourth industrial revolution (Centre of Excellence in Financial Services, 2019), it's more important than ever that organisations keep employees engaged and informed. This section discussed the importance of internal communication for achieving employee engagement. The following section highlights the importance of integrated internal communication.

3.2.3 Integrated internal communication

Earlier research conducted by Welch and Jackson (2007:182) suggests that integrating internal communication "emphasises message consistency to avoid message fragmentation". According to Kalla (2005:310), an organisation's competitive advantage relies on effective and continuous internal knowledge sharing through formal or informal communication channels. According to Blakeman (2018), it aims to engage specific employees by sharing a message through specific channels. The goal is to establish a relationship between employer and employee in an interactive or two-way information exchange. Strategically placed channels and targeting audiences plays a crucial role in delivering messages, as does the development of both a consistent verbal and visual message using all available channels to reinforce a message. Pursuit and McDowell-Marinchak (2016:ii) are of the view that integrated communication integrates "advertising, public relations (PR), branding, promotions, event and experiential marketing, and related fields of strategic communication". This notion suggests that integrated internal communication accounts for all engagement

initiatives and efforts within the organisation, as well as messages that are directed to external stakeholders.

For the purpose of this study, integrated communication is important as it focuses on communication distribution. Its premise is on promoting a message through the use of multiple and varied channels to reinforce a message. For example, an organisation may communicate changes within the organisation through multiple communication channels such as printed posters or digital channels. Although the message is essentially the same, it is tailored to suit the selected communication channel and targeted audience. Moreover, integrated communication strategies have proven to be beneficial as incorporating traditional and innovative internal communication channels assures that communication will reach all targeted employees – most importantly because individuals prefer certain channels over others.

Based on the above review, the researcher is of the view that communication channels should be integrated to successfully target all employees and reinforce messages. Moreover, when planning communication, channels should be selected based on the target audience (for example, region-wide, selected division, warehouse, telecommuting, or office-based employees, etc.), objective of the message, actual message, message format, content deadline, individual or department responsible for content design (internal communication practitioner or the individual who requested the communication), communication channel, timeframe, and associated costs. When selecting channels, it is also important to understand the strength and weaknesses of each communication channel from a general perspective, as well as in delivering a particular message. In measuring the effectiveness of communication channels, Mishra, Boynton & Mishra (2014) suggest surveying employees about the effectiveness of current channels and communication received. In this particular instance, it is suggested that the survey be limited to internal communication and marketing teams in order to elicit responses that may assist the internal communications team to achieve its objectives. The following section discusses internal communication and employee engagement.

3.3 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

According to research conducted by Gallup (2012), the most effective way that organisations can increase engagement is through clear and effective internal communication. In defining engagement, Dhanesh (2017:925) is of the view that “it is an affective, cognitive, and behavioural state wherein employees and organisations who share mutual interests in salient topics interact along continua that range from passive to active and from control to collaboration, and is aimed at goal attainment, adjustment, and adaptation for both employees and organisations”. Based on this definition, it can be suggested that internal communication is, therefore, a critical function that assists in the retention, engagement, productivity, and increased performance of employees.

Moreover, Pierson, Miller and Moore (2007) note that all attempts to become a leading organisation depend on the ability to engage employees. To achieve employee engagement, a structured and detailed internal communication plan is required – as well as ongoing positive communication. Table 3.2 below is an example of an internal communication plan (or schedule) for distributing communication to employees.

Table 3.2: Guidelines for drafting an internal communication plan

| Group | Objective | Timeline |
|--|---|--|
| Professional Nurse Practice Council | Leads and implements project initiative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies key communication areas and discussion points during meetings for project communication team planning | Meets last Wednesday of the month |
| Project Communication Team: Chief Nursing Officer, Project Coordinator, PR Coordinator | Communications responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drafts communication plan - Researches and creates monthly communication messages and determines appropriate communication channel - Identifies opportunities to engage clinical staff in discussion and feedback related initiative | Meets last Friday of the month following Professional Nurse Practice Council meeting |
| PR Coordinator | Responsible for drafting and distributing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agenda document - Monthly newsletter - Content for Physician newsletter | Communication distributed on the 1 st of each month |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|------------|
| PR Graphic Artist | Develops history logo and newsletter template | 16 January |
| Project Coordinator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drafts and distribute email communications to relevant staff - Addresses queries - Shares communication feedback with Professional Nurse Practice Council meeting and communication team | Wednesdays |
| Chief Nursing Officer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approves all communication messages prior to distribution. May defer to project coordinator for approval - Presents department progress at management meeting and nursing forum - Presents to senior leaders and medical staff, where necessary | Ongoing |
| Nursing Directors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviews and discusses agenda at each staff meeting - Posts newsletter in relevant department area | Monthly |

Source: Pierson, Miller and Moore (2007)

The table above highlights the following important tasks and objectives for consideration when drafting the internal communication plan:

- Plan and organise
- Identify target audiences for specific messages
- Communicate clearly and visibly
- Identify a tagline or visual representation
- Assist employees in communicating messages
- Reinforce messages
- Re-evaluate content and channel effectiveness regularly
- Celebrate wins
- Use various communication channels

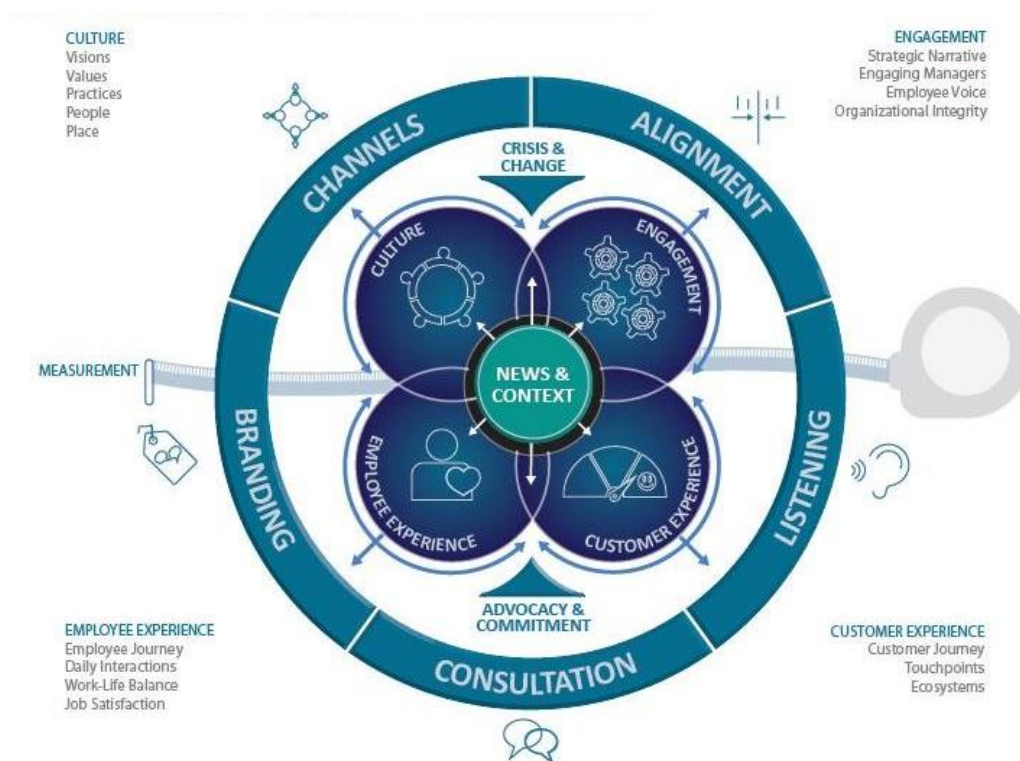
Although Table 3.2 is a guideline for drafting an internal communication plan, its key limitation is that it does not discuss all the key steps involved in the drafting of an internal communication plan as several other steps have been omitted from this plan. Thus, additional internal communication models that address the key steps or processes that should be followed are discussed in the next section.

3.4 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION MODELS

3.4.1 Holtz’s New Model for Employee Communication

Although the study uses the term internal communication and not employee communication, Holtz (2017) is of the belief that “employee” keeps the focus on the people with whom you are communicating with while “internal” is a place. Holtz’s (2017) New Model for Employee Communication, presented in Figure 3.1, was designed to accomplish three overarching goals:

- Use skills that are unique to internal communications and are value-adding.
- Deliver measurable results that matter to the organisation’s leadership.
- Position internal communication as a critical function.



Source: Holtz (2017)

Figure 3.1: A New Model for Employee Communication

The various components of the New Model for Employee Communication are briefly discussed below:

- **The arrows:** convey the idea that dialogue is inherent in communication. The model further proposes that internal communication is a two-way process – as suggested by the various arrows flowing in different directions.
- **News and context:** central to the model and the function of internal communication, is *news and context*. It is of importance that all internal communications should be centrally managed and distributed through the Communications department, which acts as the voice of the organisation. The model further suggests that the internal communication function is one of creating engagement, alignment, consultation, cultivating employee experiences and enhancing the organisation's culture – all of which are important roles of the internal communication function.
- **Outer ring:** the five elements reflected in the outer ring are not only vital to the function of internal communication, but they also comprise the work that internal communication puts into all its activities, regardless of the objectives for other campaigns, projects or communication. *Alignment* is the blending of employee goals with those of the organisations, including its strategy, vision, and mission. *Listening* refers to knowing what conversations employees are having, their concerns, frustrations, questions, and challenges. *Consultation* is about advising leaders on how to communicate with employees and helping them to be authentic in their communication. *Branding* is how people think and/or feel based on their experience with the organisation. Lastly, *channels* refer to selecting the appropriate medium for distributing a particular message effectively to the intended audience.
- **Inner circles:** the four overlapping circles in the centre of the model summarise the internal communications function. Most communication should fit into either one of these categories. The model is designed as a link between these four categories. *Culture* refers to the way an organisation does things, and how leaders and employees handle or respond to issues. An organisation's culture is influenced by its vision, values, practices, people, and place. *Engagement* refers to employees who enjoy going to work and helping the organisation

succeed. Organisations that have engaged employees enjoy benefits such as loyalty, growth, profitability, productivity, and decreased turnover. *Employee experience* is the overall experience that an employee has with the organisation. It may stem from the employee's experience with HR, their leaders, managers and co-workers, benefits, job satisfaction, and work-life balance, to name a few. *Customer experience* aims to create a connection between employees and customers.

- **Communication inputs:** Internal communication practitioners should consider the communication elements of the four key categories (discussed above). *Advocacy and commitment* suggest that communication should inspire employees to be brand ambassadors and *crisis and change* refer to how organisations manage and communicate change in difficult times and how this ultimately influences engagement.
- **Measurement:** the only way to know if communication is value-adding is by measuring it. This assists in knowing whether the communication was received, opened, read, internalised, or whether it changed attitude or behaviours. While the literature refers to several examples of researchers that measure internal communication, this study further proposed measuring internal communication effectiveness as one of the elements of the employee engagement conceptual frameworks that may assist the organisation in improving its communication, frequency and channel choices.

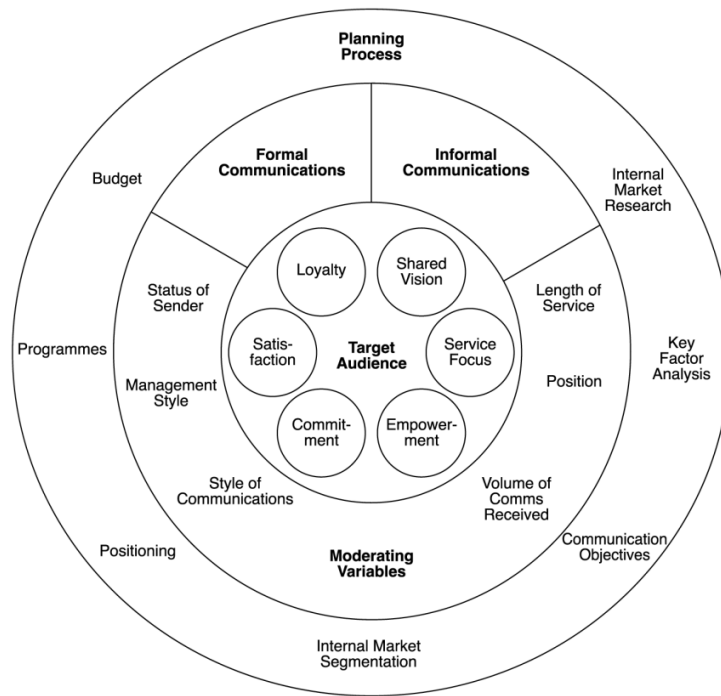
Holtz's (2017) New Model identifies internal communication functions that are relevant and meaningful. The proposed model focuses on connecting organisational culture, employee engagement, and the customer and employer experience. This process appears to be employee-centred by perceiving employees as "people", and not merely as people that are hired to execute specific tasks to increase the organisations profits. This is evident in the name of the model, for example, which uses the word employee and not internal. Often, the internal communication function operates in silos believing that their work excludes what happens externally (from a PR/Marketing perspective). The model's constructs regarding branding, customer experience, and news are inseparable, further suggesting that internal communication and external communication are interlinked. In some cases, external communication messages are

communicated internally to create awareness, while in other instances, messages are shared internally with employees prior to being shared externally with the public.

The model accurately illustrates the critical and inter-connected nature of many features of internal communication that are too often spread out across various functions (most typically with Human Resources or Marketing). While Holtz (2017) acknowledges that the elements of the framework may be executed by different parts of the organisation, the model conveys the idea that these functions are part of a greater whole – and should be treated as such. The models' framework has a strong focus on consultation, engagement and listening – the complex role of internal communication that organisations struggle with the most. By clarifying that these dynamic elements are fundamental parts of internal communication, this model is important for this study as it reflects the importance of a well-functioning internal communication department.

3.4.2 Asif and Sargeant's Model of Internal Communication

Asif and Sargeant's (2000) Internal Communication model was designed based on findings from research conducted with two clearing banks in the United Kingdom (UK). The basic premise of the model was that the increasingly competitive business environment, specifically financial service industry organisations such as the banking sector, has had to re-evaluate the role employees play in remaining relevant and in attaining competitive advantage. Thus, the internal communication role has gained significance as organisations attempt to communicate customer needs and organisational values to employees at all levels within the organisation and; moreover, to encourage two-way communication between employees and business leaders. The purpose of this model is to establish this process and its outcomes.



Source: Asif and Sargeant (2000:306)

Figure 3.2: Internal communication model

Asif and Sargeant's (2000) internal communication model consists of three separate layers: *target audience and desired communication objectives*, *moderating variables*, and *communication planning process*. These three layers are briefly discussed:

- **Target audience and desired communication outcomes**

The model illustrates the target audience at the core (centre) of internal communication, and the smaller circles represent the desired internal communication objectives, which are to foster: shared vision, service focus, empowerment, commitment, satisfaction, and loyalty.

- **Moderating variables**

The second layer consists of moderating variables for effective internal communication. Examples of these variables include both formal and informal communication, status of sender, management and communication style, receiver (employee) length of service, job position or level, as well as the volume of

communication received daily. These variables have the capacity to moderate the internal communication outcomes or objectives.

- **Communication Planning Process**

The outer layer represents the internal communication planning process that comprises internal market research, key factor analysis, communication objectives, internal market segmentation, positioning, programmes, and budget. Often, employee initiatives are not conducted due to budget constraints, thus suggesting that the budget is a key component of internal communication that hinders the production of engagement building initiatives or campaigns.

While the model acknowledges that identifying the target audience is of paramount importance for effective communication, the objectives for internal communication are limited and some critical constructs have been omitted from the model. Some of these include awareness, motivation, trust, employee engagement, productivity and performance, positive word of mouth, employee well-being, transparency – all of which are critical objectives of internal communication. Asif and Sargeant (2000) further suggest that the two UK clearing banks which served as a sample for this study were particularly focussed on achieving the six communication objectives (shared vision, service focus, empowerment, commitment, satisfaction, and loyalty), hence they only measured the six points.

Moreover, the model suggests that formal communication may be best suited for delivering business-specific communication from senior leaders. It may also be ideal for facilitating vertical (top-down) communication between employees and leaders. Conversely, informal communication may be ideal for facilitating horizontal peer-to-peer communication among colleagues, ad-hoc campaigns and initiatives, day-to-day messages, as well as creating or improving the company culture. The model further references the use of formal and informal communication but does not mention the communication channels that would be ideal for delivering both communication types.

In this instance, the researcher is of the view that informal internal communication is related to specific campaign messages, staff offering's or messages about new products, and targeted at specific staff groups. Conversely, formal communication or

formal communication channels may be distributed via email and may be for messages from the executive office, brand and marketing teams or HR, and must be distributed to all staff. However, both formal and informal communication must have an objective such as – for example – to inform, educate, inspire, create awareness, illicit a response (through a survey), and engage employees, to name a few. However, these objectives differ based on the distribution channel used as well as the sender (i.e. the executive office, HR, team leader, security office, etc.). Thus, prior to distributing a message, it is important to ascertain the objective of the communication (why) as this will guide the message (what), channel used (how), time of distribution (when), and targeted audience (who).

3.5 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

In organisations of all types and sizes, some employees do not have access to the most immediate forms of communication channels such as email, intranet and voice messages. In fact, Grates (1999) posits that internal communication and Human Resources (HR) practitioners alike are concerned that the split between desk-bound, client-facing, and telecommuting employees is increasingly widening, thus challenging organisations to implement solutions to communicate with all three employee groups. Grates (1999) further adds that desk-bound employees with computers should be communicated with through the intranet. However, client-facing and building management/warehouse employees are unable to access the intranet in their environments. In addressing this issue, Berger (2008) suggests that on determining the communication strategy, objective, target audience, and message content, the appropriate media or medium must then be selected.

The media or medium issue has existed for decades. Daft and Lengel (1986) developed the Media Richness Theory that is used to describe media choices. Media richness refers to the medium's ability to successfully convey information to its target audience, while capability refers to the accessibility and time it takes to get feedback from the medium, the use of physical and verbal cues to encourage understanding, and focus of the message. Moreover, the Media Richness Theory proposes a 5-step

continuum of media options: at one end there are rich media channels that possess most, if not all, of these capabilities and at the opposite end are lean media channels with limited characteristics.

Later research indicates that various traditional and innovative internal communication channels have been used by organisations to communicate with targeted employee groups to get specific messages across (Alexander, 2014). These internal communication channels range from *print publications* (magazines, newsletters, memos, posters, leaflets, brochures, banners), *digital communication* (email, intranet, video broadcasts, instant messaging), *telecommunication* (phone calls), and *face-to-face interactions* (team meetings, Chief Executive Officer [CEO] roadshows, town hall sessions) (Men, 2015b; Welch, 2015; Men, 2014; Hussein, 2014; Makgowe, 2012; Crescenzo, 2011; White *et al.*, 2010; Chihocky & Bullard, 2009; Crescenzo, 2009; Hayase, 2009; Welch & Jackson, 2007; Kelly & Keaten, 2007; Byrne & LeMay, 2006; Jo & Shim, 2005; Cheney, Christensen, Zorn & Ganesh, 2004; Miller, 2003; Wood, 1999).

A discussion of these internal communication channels is provided below.

3.5.1 Print publications

Parsons (2016) is of the view that internal print publications should communicate the organisations achievements, organisational values, vision and mission, and should inform employees about fellow colleague achievements and promotions. Hussein (2014) believes that print publications are a great and engaging communication channel when used correctly. Topics can range from *employees* (recognition, benefits, health, safety and finance, promotions, retirement planning, social events, family features such as recipes, crossword puzzles, etc.), *business* (company news, updates, compliance, policies, management changes such as realignment and new executives), *general* (general topics that are not company or industry-related), and *adverts* (company products, classifieds section) (Roach, 2018; Anreder, 2007;

Johansen, 1995; Click, 1967). Therefore, the wider the content is, the more it caters to a wider audience.

Print publication communication channels include:

3.5.1.1 Magazines

Employee magazines can serve as forums for the CEO to address topics of interest or concern to employees while sharing key business and industry updates. They are an effective channel for ensuring that employees stay connected by creating a tangible link to one another and to the organisation, thus giving employees a feeling of connectedness (Grates, 1999). Most importantly, the employee magazine plays a significant role in building employee engagement, informing, motivating and boosting employee morale (Parsons, 2016).

Despite technological innovations, employees still prefer a physical magazine copy so that they can make notes in it, read at their leisure, share with families, and refer back to it (Gates 1999). Magazines have also been commended for connecting employees (such as building management/warehouse, telecommuters, plant-based, and desk-bound employees) with limited access to the intranet and other internal communication channels to each other and providing them with updates about what is happening in the organisation, both locally and internationally (Grates, 1999). Most employees consider magazines and other print communication as a credible source of information (Parsons, 2016).

3.5.1.2 Posters and banners

Although Lengel and Daft (1988) consider posters and banners as lean media, Hussein (2014) suggests that if they are strategically and conveniently placed on every floor in high visibility areas such as the reception foyer, pause area, elevators, canteen and coffee shop, and by the water cooler, they can have great results. However, Hussein (2014) further cautions that posters and banners can be costly but are

efficient in getting the message across as they offer the advantage of using a combination of both visual and text cues. Further, internal communication practitioners are advised to supplement poster and banner messages with detailed information in another communication channel such as the newsletter or intranet.

3.5.1.3 Newsletters

The employee newsletter plays a critical role in reinforcing, enhancing and educating employees about a particular message, changes in the organisation and provides senior leadership insights into a range of topics (Anreder, 2007; Grates, 1999). Most recently, Roach (2018) found that employee newsletters could make a significant contribution to building a community if organisations produce a newsletter targeted at and about employees. Nonetheless, newsletters are less about urgency as their primary focus is on providing detailed analysis, meaning that they are not suitable for getting news out immediately and this may pose as a major disadvantage of this communication channel. Instead of news briefs and time-sensitive announcements, newsletters are ideal for discussing a topic in depth; thereby providing detailed stories, Executive Committee (EXCO) profiles, and lighter feature articles (Grates, 1999).

3.5.1.4 Leaflets

Although leaflets increase awareness and land on the desks of all employees, it is not guaranteed that they will be read (Grates, 1999). They are considered the leanest communication medium as their ability to convey physical and verbal cues is limited. Additionally, they have lesser characters in comparison to richer mediums (Lengel & Daft, 1988). Using visuals in leaflets has been shown to have a greater capacity for a positive effect on memory recall than words – they minimise the amount of reading and provide clarity to information (Dowse, Ramela & Browne, 2011). There are numerous ways to distribute flyers – Wright (2016) suggests using desk drops as this ensures that all colleagues receive a copy. However, for field workers, plant workers and telecommuters that are not desk-bound, this channel may not be effective.

3.5.2 Digital communication

There has recently been an increased interest in incorporating digital communications to further enhance engagement. According to Woolliscroft, Caganova and Cambal (2012), the rapidly growing popularity of digital communication has led to the adoption of new and innovative digital channels as a preferred channel for internal communication. Digital communication has benefits for large organisations because, during a crisis, communication can be distributed immediately to all employees. The key advantage of the digital communication channel is the ability to share information efficiently and effectively (Freedlander, 2016). Efficiently, because the content is accessible by any employee, anywhere, on any device, and; effectively, because the message can make use of video, and visuals/graphics to successfully influence the user.

Digital communication channels are innovations that can be incorporated simultaneously or can be used to supplement an existing message. However, earlier research by Davison, Ou and Martinsons (2013) cautioned that the increase in digital communication and virtual connectedness increases security risks, with organisations concerned about the information that is made available digitally and that employees share outside of work.

Research conducted by Ruck and Welch (2012:297) found that there was a reliance on digital channels and a decrease in print publications in the workplace, suggesting that internal communication practitioners were becoming aware of the benefits associated with digital communication channels. Rauwers, Voorveld and Neijens (2016) found that digital channels are seen as more interactive, which has positively influenced employees' digital channel attitudes. Further, Adams (2018) is of the view that digital communication innovations present opportunities for flexibility— a typical example of this is the opportunity for telecommuting, revisiting messages, and accessing communication in one's own time, to name a few.

The split between desk-bound, client-facing and telecommuting employees, and the rapidly changing technology present a challenge for internal communication. Melcrum (2013) is of the view that fixed communication no longer works, it is now about being diverse, flexible, and constantly innovative so that solutions include the complexities required by different employees while aligning with external communication. The advent of technology has assisted organisations in mastering these principles and best practices, thus internal communication practitioners ought to work across all departments and business segments to design innovative communication solutions, taking complexities from different employees into account. From a distribution perspective, Spenner (2016) is of the view that internal communication practitioners are increasingly using graphics, multimedia content, and visual templates that reinforce and enhance the brand and organisation values, which can be pushed to employees on any device. These new interactive capabilities and channels allow organisations to engage with employees on a new level.

Dvorak and Pendell (2018) are of the view that innovation is critical in order for organisations to create a digital workplace culture that is effective to ensure that all employees receive timely and detailed communication from their organisation. Moreover, with an increasing number of employees working remotely, it is crucial that organisations maintain open, two-way communication with their employees, regardless of their location (Mishra, Mishra & Walker, 2019). Zauskova (2014) suggested that innovation drives the organisation's performance and provides organisations with an advantage in the competition for top talent, customers, and market share, thus making it relevant. Reaiche, Corral de Zubielqui and Boyle (2016:57) defined it as "something new that can create value, the integration or generation of new ideas to generate products or services is widely viewed as a key driver for a country's economic growth". Based on the definitions cited, innovation is the implementation of new ideas, new concepts, and new ways of doing things.

Digital communication channels include:

3.5.2.1 Email

Earlier research by Lengel and Daft (1988) states that the email channel is limited to text, reinforcing its place as one of the leanest communication channels. It further lacks detailed information and is ineffective in communicating complex information required to influence its target market (White *et al.*, 2010). However, over the years, email has been the fastest and most effective channel to distribute news immediately (Men, 2014), proving to be both effective and efficient (Men, 2014; Smith, Patmos & Pitts, 2015). Email also offers telecommuters the advantage of staying up-to-date with the latest organisation updates, despite not being desk-bound. Additionally, internal communication practitioners and target audiences alike prefer email for its convenience (Men, 2014).

3.5.2.2 Intranet

The purpose of the intranet is to effectively and efficiently share detailed information with employees (Freeland, 2016). Shortened information distributed via email or print can be detailed on the intranet, thus it is referred to as “the organisation’s memory” (Hussein, 2014). Bottazzo (2005:79-80) suggests that intranet portals can include many different services, the most frequently used are *shared access to documents* (documents published or made available in a central location, accessible by employees), *controlled access* (although employees have access to the intranet, other pages may be limited to a select group), *events calendar* (key organisational events visible to all employees), *suggestions tab* (enables employees to express their opinion or give feedback), *latest news* (allows employees to subscribe to a topic of interest, news results are then populated under this section), *directory* (employee details such as name and surname, job title, email address, telephone number, office or building, line manager and business unit), *search functionality* (allows users to search for information on the portal), *frequently asked questions* (employees can ask

questions about HR policies, products, learning and development, etc.), and *surveys* (can be put up when required, ranging from service offerings, feedback, products).

3.5.2.3 Instant Messaging

Similar to email, instant messaging (IM) is also text based-communication (Smith, Patmos & Pitts, 2015). However, unlike email, IM has numerous functionalities such as text messaging, video chats, group chats with individuals across vast destinations (Young & Hinesly, 2014), file exchange (Ou & Davison, 2016), allows for immediate feedback, engaging in informal conversation, and to switch between work and communicating, otherwise known as multi-tasking (Zhang & Fjermestad, 2008). A study conducted by the McKinsey Global Institute (2012) estimates that productivity increases by 20% to 25% in organisations with social software or connected employees, thus IM is a great communication tool for employees.

The increased ease and speed of communication means that IM is the “next best thing” when face-to-face interactions are impossible with other employees or global teams (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Young & Hinesly, 2014:428). IM applications are inexpensive, and users can communicate concurrently by being notified when other users are available online (Jacobsen, 2007). Additional benefits of using IM in the workplace include employees staying connected with each other and providing an opportunity for instant communication and responses (Quan-Haase, Cothrel & Wellmann, 2005). However, there is a concern about the decreased productivity, distraction, and interruption that IM brings, implying that the workplace benefits of IM are debatable.

Sievert and Scholz’s (2017) research found that internal social media platforms, as a form of internal communication, could be effective in supporting employee engagement in general.

3.5.2.4 Video broadcasts

Video broadcasts, unlike email and IM, encourage affective communication which provides employees with communication that imitates face-to-face communication (Walther, 1996). A study conducted by Sias, Pedersen, Gallagher and Kopaneva (2012) found that field workers, client-facing consultants, and teleworkers – when compared to their desk-bound colleagues – prefer video communication to substitute face-to-face communication. Thus, it can be suggested that video communication fosters symmetrical communication and engagement in an organisation. Although video broadcasts are limited in their ability to convey multiple cues when compared to face-to-face communication, they offer additional audio or video clips, webcams, interaction through commenting and sharing, and online chat functions.

3.5.3 Telecommunication

As email and digital communication channels for internal business communication are becoming increasingly important, a desk telephone may become unnecessary for teleworkers. Although desktops are critical for any organisation, the need for them may decrease, as employees prefer to use convenient communication devices such as a laptop, desk computer, and mobile phone (Communications News, 2008).

Telecommunication is ideal in emergencies and for launching initiatives. Employees also have access to current information when an email or face-to-face communication is not possible (Finch, Hansen & Alexander, 2010). It is also suitable for telecommuters, sales, client-facing, service repair, shift workers, and employees on sick/maternity leave. When using telecommunication, Barrow and Davenport (2012) advice internal communication practitioners to send follow-up detailed communication, in the form of an email, for employees to read further. Conversely, the disadvantage of telecommunication is that employees who are not desk-bound miss important telephone announcements or phone calls. In most cases, calls may be ignored or missed due to employees being out of the office on lunch or in meetings. It is important

to note, however, that not all office-based employees have access to telephones and thus may not have access to this channel (Finch, Hansen & Alexander, 2010).

Telecommunication channels include:

3.5.3.1 Phone calls

Similar to IM, phone communication is immediate and allows for detailed information exchange (Hinds & Kiesler, 1995). Phone calls are in the middle of Daft and Lengel's (1986) continuum, meaning that they may be suitable or unsuitable for specific messages and urgency levels. However, it is worth noting that like IM, for phone communication to take place, both employees must be available at the same time. Some things to consider when selecting the phone as a communication channel is that it differs from other communication channels in that it only makes use of a voice channel and no visuals, graphics, nor body language. It also does not allow for sending mass messages (Smith, Patmos & Pitts, 2015) and may thus be time-consuming and costly.

3.5.4 Face-to-face communication

According to the Media Richness Theory, face-to-face communication allows for both physical and verbal cues, thus it is the richest and most satisfactory communication channel – ideal for conveying detailed information or resolving conflicts (Daft & Lengel, 1986), and sharing information simultaneously (Lengel & Daft, 1988; Men, 2014). Moreover, it keeps employees informed, helps employees feel secure about their jobs, reduces employee turnover, promotes employee engagement, provides immediate feedback (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014), provides personal focus and the opportunity to probe further, as well as the use of verbal and non-verbal communication (Men, 2014). It is also beneficial for establishing rapport (Nandi & Platt, 2017).

The disadvantage, however, is that face-to-face communication is not the fastest communication channel and thus may delay in getting the message out, and may not be appropriate for teleworkers, field workers and client-facing employees that are not office based (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014). Furthermore, to avoid conflict and victimisation, employees may not necessarily reveal their true selves or honest opinions. Thus, face-to-face communication may not be suitable for all situations.

A study by Ruck and Welch (2012:298) highly valued face-to-face communication, although many employees mention that meetings are time-consuming. Additionally, a survey completed by 400 employees in the USA suggests that transformational leaders should use 'information rich' face-to-face channels to communicate with employees (Men, 2014). Conversely, Mishra, Boynton and Mishra (2014) found that engagements such as performance discussions require a more personal approach such as face-to-face communication. They further note that executives believe that despite the various internal communication channels, face-to-face communication still plays an important role in the way leaders communicate with employees. One of the study's respondents mentions that face-to-face communication was one of the most satisfactory way that employees preferred to receive internal communication as people read the body language and can then decide whether it is credible.

Face-to-face communication channels include:

3.5.4.1 Team meetings

Results from a study conducted by Stray, Sjoberg and Dyba (2016) found that team meetings have positive attitudes associated with them, such as providing information sharing with the team and presenting an opportunity to discuss and resolve issues. Additionally, team meetings are ideal for translating the broad company vision into departmental and team objectives and allow the opportunity for further probing on difficult topics. Although team meetings were viewed positively, employees preferred them short and to the point and not too frequent. Hussein (2014) found that team meetings are successful when supplemented with another communication channel.

For example, an email sent out by the CEO may be more effective if followed by a team meeting facilitated by the team's line manager (White *et al.*, 2010). The two-way communication benefit of team meetings enhances the employee-manager relationship better than email or publications. Thus, team meetings foster communication uniformity and a sense of engagement and belonging among employees.

3.5.4.2 CEO Roadshows

Together with other EXCO team members, the CEO travels to all regions and cities and has the opportunity to meet employees and share the organisation's strategy with them (Holbeche, 2015). CEO Roadshows provide the opportunity for employees to engage with senior leaders directly and ask questions that concern them (Holbeche, 2015; Mchunu, 2014). Another benefit of CEO Roadshows is that they keep employees informed about future plans for the organisation, provide feedback on employee issues such as career and self-development, company benefits, ethical issues such as discrimination, nepotism and favouritism, thus making the annual CEO Roadshow a highlight on the company calendar (Mchunu, 2014). Direct engagement with employees at all levels is important for building the CEO and EXCO teams' credibility. Therefore, CEO Roadshows ensure that employees are informed about the organisation's strategic direction.

3.5.4.3 Town hall sessions

Town hall sessions, also referred to as "All-Hands", provide senior leaders with the opportunity to inform and engage with employees (Woodward, 2006). They are also an opportunity for senior leaders and employees to share ideas and suggestions that contribute to the company culture (Nichol, 2015). Levin (2016) adds that the aim of town hall sessions should be to encourage two-way communication between employees and senior leaders. In fact, the key advantage of a town hall meeting is that it offers employees the opportunity to directly engage with the organisation's executives (by having a question and answer session) so that employees feel valued,

in turn making them feel connected to the organisation's vision and mission, and belief that they have a voice in the direction of the company. Furthermore, Nichol (2015) believes that town hall sessions are "company-wide meetings" and can prove to be time-consuming and difficult to get everyone together. Moreover, it is important that town hall content is followed up with an email to all employees after the session.

Based on this internal communication channel discussion, it is evident that organisations that promote two-way communication between employees and the organisation encourage employee participation, in turn building brand ambassadorship, engagement and loyalty – employee behaviours that are critical in the competition for attracting and retaining the best talent. Most importantly, it supports the previous discussion about integrating communication channels not only to effectively target all employees but to also reinforce messages.

A summary of the internal communication channels discussed in this section are provided in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Summary of internal communication channels

| Print publications | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Communication Channels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magazines • Newsletters • Posters and banners • Leaflets |
| Key benefits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plays a critical role in employee engagement • Informs, motivates, connects, increases awareness and boosts employee morale • Reliable, accurate and credible source of information • Visual, graphics, text combination efficient in getting the message across and positive effect on recall and memory • Reinforces, enhances and educates employees |
| Digital | |
| Communication Channels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Intranet • Instant messaging • Video broadcasts |
| Key benefits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convenient • Fastest and most effective channel for distributing news immediately • Telecommuters stay up-to-date • Accessible from anywhere • Visuals, text and/or video to impact reader • Fosters employee engagement |
| Telecommunication | |
| Communication Channels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone calls |
| Key benefits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate • Greater exchange of social information |

| Face-to-face | |
|------------------------|--|
| Communication Channels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team meetings • CEO Roadshows • Town hall sessions |
| Key benefits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses multiple cues • Provides immediate feedback • Ideal for communicating complex information or resolving conflict • Facilitates Q&A's or probing further • Employees interact directly with leaders • Enhances employee-manager relationships • Builds leadership credibility • Keeps employees up-to-date with organisations strategic direction • Reduces employee turnover • Promotes employee engagement |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

3.6 SUMMARY

Based on the internal communication definitions provided, it is suggested that internal communication is; 1) employee targeted, 2) leader driven, 3) plays a strategic role, 4) knowledge sharing tool, 5) relationship-building; and, 6) facilitates information exchange between the leaders and employees of an organisation. This chapter defined and discussed the internal communication concept, its importance, current traditional and innovative internal communication channels, and models.

CHAPTER 4

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided a theoretical discussion regarding the origin of the concept of internal communication, its importance, and current internal communication channels. This chapter discusses the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement, an employee engagement model, the benefits of engaged employees, and the role played by leaders' in engagement. The ever-changing and increasingly connected modern society has reinforced the significance of employees as the organisation's key stakeholders (Men, 2014). While employees are seen as the organisation's main stakeholders who contribute directly to the organisation's performance, they are also seen as individuals who represent the organisation externally to stakeholders such as customers and shareholders (Kim & Rhee, 2011). Therefore, employee-organisation relationships not only boost employee morale and productivity, they also help foster a significant relationship that helps protect the organisation's reputation (Berger, 2008) and helps promote employee engagement behaviours (Men, 2015b; Ruck & Welch, 2012; Bovee & Thill, 2012; Welch, 2011; Asif & Sargeant, 2000).

The results of engaged employees extend beyond significant improvements in the organisation's performance, an increase in company profit margins, and improved employee retention, to a greater ability such as attracting and retaining the best talent (Ditchburn, 2012). This suggests that organisations must actively empower their employees as they are seen as brand ambassadors. Several other benefits of engaged employees have been offered in the literature, however, a significant link between employee engagement and internal communication was also identified (Parsons, 2016; Holbeche, 2015; Men, 2014; Mishra, Boynton & Mishra 2014; White *et al.*, 2010; Woodward, 2006; Grates, 1999).

Moreover, Jenkins and Delbridge (2013:2670) posit that there are 'hard' and 'soft' management approaches that examine and explain employee engagement. "The soft approach promotes positive workplace conditions and relationships between management and employees, designing work and forging a work environment which is conducive to promoting employee engagement. The hard approach refers to the objective of gaining a competitive advantage through increased employee productivity wherein employee engagement aims to directly increase employee effort to improve organisational performance". Thus, engaged employees contribute to the organisation's success, both internally and externally (the benefits of engaged employees are discussed later in this chapter). In comparison, the soft approach reported higher levels of engagement. While this example indicates the costs and benefits of employee engagement, these two approaches also highlight the challenges that leaders encounter in promoting engagement.

Internal communication has two main functions: sharing organisation updates, news, and creating a strong workplace community in the organisation (Friedl & Vercic, 2011). Thus, it is a critical component for building employee engagement (Welch, 2011; MacLeod & Clarke, 2009; Papalexandris & Galanaki, 2009). For example, the Corporate Leadership Council (2004) reported that employee engagement was hugely impacted by organisational strategies such as effective internal communication, an innovative culture, and being known for having integrity. In support of this notion, research by Kress (2005) and Grunig (2001) posits that excellent internal communication had the potential to foster quality employee relationships and employee behaviours that support the organisation's vision and mission.

It has been indicated that great internal communication is value-adding because it positively affects job satisfaction, employee attitudes, employee satisfaction and employee morale, thus it contributes to overall engagement (Hayase, 2009). Moreover, great internal communication fosters better and lasting employee relationships, thus increasing employee engagement (Kress, 2005; Lockwood, 2007). Kahn's (1990) work suggests that engagement is constantly changing. In agreement, Welch (2011) is of the view that engagement can be influenced by internal communication efforts from leaders.

Another issue highlighted in the literature was communication between the organisation's management or leadership and employees. Kular, Gatenby, Rees, Soane and Truss (2008) maintain that effective internal communication improves engagement. They further emphasise the importance of senior managers in clarifying how the roles of employees fit the leadership vision and organisational goals. Unsurprisingly, they suggest that poor communication hinders engagement and ultimately causes disengagement. These principles lead to a highly engaged workforce (Bindl & Parker, 2010).

To understand the value of internal communication on employee engagement, this chapter provides a discussion on employee engagement. Specifically, the relationship between employee engagement and internal communication, employee engagement dimensions, the role played by leaders' in building employee engagement, employee engagement in the banking sector, as well as the benefits of engaged employees. It further addresses the study's two research questions; *What is the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement? What role does internal communication play in the banking sector?*

4.2 DEFINING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The employee engagement concept has attracted substantial attention over the years, more recently within the academic discipline. The literature on employee engagement identifies four stages of the employee engagement concept evolution, referred to as "a series of waves" (Welch, 2011:329-335). These waves are briefly discussed below.

4.2.1 Pre-wave

This era was characterised by the idea that employees had to engage with both their work and organisations. During this era, Katz and Kahn (1966:388) suggested that employees should engage in various innovative and co-operative employee engagement behaviours needed for achieving organisational effectiveness.

4.2.2 Wave 1

This era occurred between 1990-1999 and received considerable interest from industry practitioners. During this era, Kahn (1990:694) established 'personal engagement', defined as "the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance". He further postulates that three psychological conditions were required for employees to perform their tasks. These conditions are; "meaningfulness (work elements), safety (social elements, including management style, process and organisational norms), and availability (individual distractions)" (Welch, 2011:332). It was during this era that the employee engagement concept was introduced and believed to "drive customer loyalty" and that, "the right people in the right roles with the right managers drive employee engagement" (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999:248). The brief mention of employee engagement prompted the introduction of employee engagement in businesses, particularly organisations offering consulting services.

4.2.3 Wave 2

This era occurred between 2000-2005 and received considerable interest from both practitioners and academics alike. The "Gallup Workplace Audit" and the "Q12 Employee Engagement Questionnaire" were introduced to measure employee engagement. For this wave, the birth of the movement of positive psychology was a key development. It focused on positive drivers such as engagement, and no longer on negative repercussions of attitudes to work such as job burnout. This switch promoted the emergence of academic work within this wave. Academic work relied on Kahn's (1990) definition of engagement and established a conceptual link between the Gallup Workplace Audit and Kahn's (1990) engagement dimensions. This established a way to measure employee engagement through the Gallup Workplace Audit. Additional work in this era supported Kahn's (1990) view that employees' psychological conditions are positively related to engagement.

4.2.4 Wave 3

This era occurred between 2006-2010 and saw a great interest from academics, which resulted in two employee engagement textbooks being published. In this era, Saks broadened the employee engagement concept to include job and organisation engagement. Scientific interest increased and saw the publication of a new scientific journal edition discussing the employee engagement concept. Furthermore, during this wave, literature reviews focusing on Communication were influenced by disciplines in the HR and Psychology fields.

Various attempts to define employee engagement have created confusion and frustration regarding the definition of employee engagement (Welch, 2011:329) and have led to the use of various concepts such as personal engagement (Kahn, 1990), work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; 2004; 2010; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma & Bakker, 2002), and job engagement (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). For this study's purpose, the preferred term of use is employee engagement, which refers to the emotional commitment an employee makes to an organisation – which means that employees care about their organisation and jobs. It is worth noting that employee engagement includes job and organisation engagement (Saks, 2006).

Table 4.1 highlights some of the employee engagement definitions available in the literature.

Table 4.1: Employee engagement definitions

| Author | Definition |
|--------------------------|---|
| Kahn (1990:694) | "The harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work role; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". |
| Katz and Kahn (1996:388) | "...Engage in occasional innovative and cooperative behaviour beyond the requirements of the role but in the service of organisational objectives". |

| | |
|---|--|
| Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001:417) | “A persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfilment in employees that is characterised by high levels of activation and pleasure”. |
| Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker (2002:74) | “A positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption”. |
| Towers Perrin (2003:2) | “The extent to which employees put discretionary effort into their work, in the form of extra time, brainpower and energy”. |
| Hewitt Associates Consultants (2004:2) | “The state in which individuals are emotionally and intellectually committed to the organisation or group, as measured by three primary behaviours: say, stay, and strive”. |
| Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2004:x) | “A positive attitude towards, and pride in, the organisation... Belief in the organisations’ products/services... A perception that the organisation enables the employee to perform well... A willingness to behave altruistically and be a good team player... An understanding of the bigger picture and a willingness to go beyond the requirements of the job”. |
| Truss, Soane, Edwards, Wisdom, Croll and Burnett (2006:2) | “Passion for work”. |
| Fleming and Asplund (2007:2) | “The ability to capture the heads, hearts, and souls of your employees to instill an intrinsic desire and passion for excellence”. |
| Macey and Schneider (2008:4) | “Persistent positive state”. |
| MacLeod and Clarke (2009:9) | “A workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organisation’s goals and values, motivated to contribute to organisational success, and are |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| | able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being”. |
| Schaufeli and Bakker (2010:22) | “The psychological state that accompanies the behavioural investment of personal energy”. |
| Aon Hewitt (2017:2) | “The level of an employee’s psychological investment in their organisation” and “is often confused with satisfaction or happiness”. |

Source: Researchers’ own compilation

The common characteristics derived from the above definitions suggest that employee engagement is related to attitudinal, psychological, physical and emotional factors such as:

- Commitment
- Satisfaction
- Innovative behaviour
- Energy
- Co-operation
- Self-starter
- Intellectuality
- Productivity
- Motivation
- Positive behaviour
- Dedication
- Well-being
- The desire and ability to do more work

These behaviours suggest that engaged employees have a positive attitude towards their organisation and job. Moreover, they are passionate about their job, are willing to do more than are required, act as brand ambassadors, display positive employee behaviours, thereby willing to assist the company achieve its objectives. These behaviours further suggest that employee engagement is critical from a business performance perspective.

4.3 DIMENSIONS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Bakker and Schaufeli (2015) and Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker (2002) are of the view that employees that are engaged in their jobs have “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption”. Engaged employees are, therefore, identified by the physical (strength), emotional (enthusiasm) and cognitive (optimistic) characteristics they display at work. These characteristics are referred to as dimensions and are further discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.3.1 Vigour (physical)

“Vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work and persistence in difficult times” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295). In later research conducted by Schippers and Hogenes (2011), it was found that energetic employees are essential for an organisation’s performance. Moreover, Baker (2016) posits that an energetic employee – both physically and mentally – positively influences others, ensuring that everyone performs better. Thus, the researcher is of the view that employees with vigour are productive and do more work for the benefit (success) of the organisation.

4.3.2 Dedication (emotional)

Dedication is based on “a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295). Thus, dedicated employees have an emotional attachment to their jobs and organisations (Yohn, 2018; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), so much so that they display positive employee behaviours. These behaviours are discussed in section 4.5 *Benefits of Engaged Employees*. Moreover, Kular *et al.*, (2008:3) posit that dedication is concerned with how employees feel about the dimensions of employee engagement, whether their attitudes towards the organisation and its leaders are positive or negative, and if they are emotionally connected to their leaders and colleagues (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

4.3.3 Absorption (cognitive)

Absorption refers to the state in which employees are highly focussed and immersed in their work so much that they lose track of time while busy with work activities (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Being fully absorbed in work suggests that employees focus attentively, have clear minds, concentrate easily, lose self-consciousness and do not track time as they are enjoying their jobs and being at work (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). This suggests that the cognitive dimension of employee engagement influences employees' beliefs about their organisation, leaders and their jobs.

Based on this discussion, it is suggested that engaged employees are energetic (vigour), involved (dedication), and absorbed in their work (absorption), further suggesting that employee engagement can be seen as being guided by these three dimensions. The following section discusses employee engagement and internal communication.

4.4 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The literature highlights numerous variables that influence employee engagement. These include career development, talent management and recognition, leadership, familiarity with organisation values, employee treatment, satisfaction, personality factors, policies and practices, ethical behaviours, empowerment, performance review, salary, benefits and compensation, health and safety, family appreciation, communication, job requirements, office politics, emotions, and productivity (Chandani, Mehta, Mall & khokhar, 2016:2-5). It is worth adding that internal communication facilitates the distribution, support, and communication of these variables. The suggested link between employee engagement and internal communication supports this notion.

In challenging times, communication can be critical for sustaining the business. Hoover (2005) is of the view that when an organisation is silent, this prompts employees to agree with media speculation and rumours within the organisation,

which managers often deny until the organisation is ready to make a public announcement. Moreover, when there is an inconsistency between a leaders' communication to employees, versus what is in the media, it leads to a loss in trust in the leaders and employees get demotivated – regardless of whether the allegations are true or false. Conversely, “good communication, even in a crisis, keeps employees engaged and the organisation moving forward” (Hoover, 2005:25). In response to this, the researcher suggests that organisations must develop a communication plan detailing who, what, when, why, and how certain business messages will be communicated in challenging times and during changes within the business. It is also important to link external messages with internal communication to ensure consistency in messaging and simultaneous engagement across multiple audiences.

While it is important to communicate, DesRochers (2017) offers guidelines on internal communication:

- Using the appropriate communication channel.
- Prioritising a channel that is aligned to employee use.
- Aligning messages with organisation goals, vision, and mission.
- Repeating messages to increase and ensure understanding, and internalisation.
- Creating an internal communications plan to ensure timely distribution of messages across the different communication channels.
- Aligning digital communication with verbal, print, or other communication channels to reinforce key messages.
- Targeting audience using effective communication channels.

Vercic and Vokic (2017) conducted a study to explore the relationship between internal communication satisfaction and employee engagement. The study sought to measure employees' satisfaction of eight internal communication dimensions (feedback, communication with managers and leaders, lateral communication, informal communication, business messages, communication climate, channels of communication, and communication during meetings) and three employee engagement dimensions (vigour, dedication and absorption) (Vercic & Vokic,

2017:887). The study found that satisfaction with internal communication plays a critical role in increased employee engagement levels. The study's findings also provided additional evidence, which suggests that successful internal communication that results in internal communication satisfaction leads to employee engagement. This supports previous arguments that state that employee engagement is influenced by internal communication and successful manager and employee communication (Ruck & Welch, 2012). Regarding internal communication elements that are critical for employee engagement, "an employees' satisfaction with feedback, informal communication, and communication during meetings are the most relevant dimensions for employee engagement" (Vercic & Vokic, 2017). Their results support previous findings that feedback, open communication channels, communication between manager and employees, and sharing information with employees are important engagement enhancers.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Meng and Berger (2012:342) aimed to explore how senior communication executives measure internal communication and how the results affect the organisation's overall performance. Based on the study's findings, participants indicate that although organisations use specific standards to evaluate specific items of internal communication efforts, there were five aspects that should be measured regularly. From the five aspects, 55% of internal communication initiatives influence employee behaviour changes and 49.7% influence the effect of internal communication efforts on employee engagement. The findings of this study confirm the link between employee engagement and internal communication, and the fact that internal communication not only influences employee engagement but that it is crucial for engagement.

Earlier research by Hayase (2009) aimed to provide an understanding of the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. The study's findings suggest that organisations that prioritise internal communication are successful in increasing employee commitment. Moreover, "as a result of commitment, employee turnover may reduce, and the organisation will save money by having fewer employees to replace and retrain" (Hayase, 2009:51). The results of the study indicate that there is a positive relationship between internal communication and employee

engagement factors. Hayase's (2009:iii) research found that "internal communication is linked to commitment, discretionary effort, and meaningful work; all factors of engagement". Additionally, the results indicate that channel satisfaction and the combination of channels is also linked to employee engagement.

To address the link between internal communication and employee engagement, Welch (2011) proposed a model that establishes a relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. Welch's (2011) research concluded that if senior management were transparent and shared meaning, including the organisation's culture, internal changes and goals, trust could be established through continuous communication. This leads to a greater understanding and employees would be committed and engaged and would, therefore, contribute physically to achieving the new goals with "improved business performance". Welch's (2011) conceptual model of employee engagement and internal communication is discussed in the following sub-section.

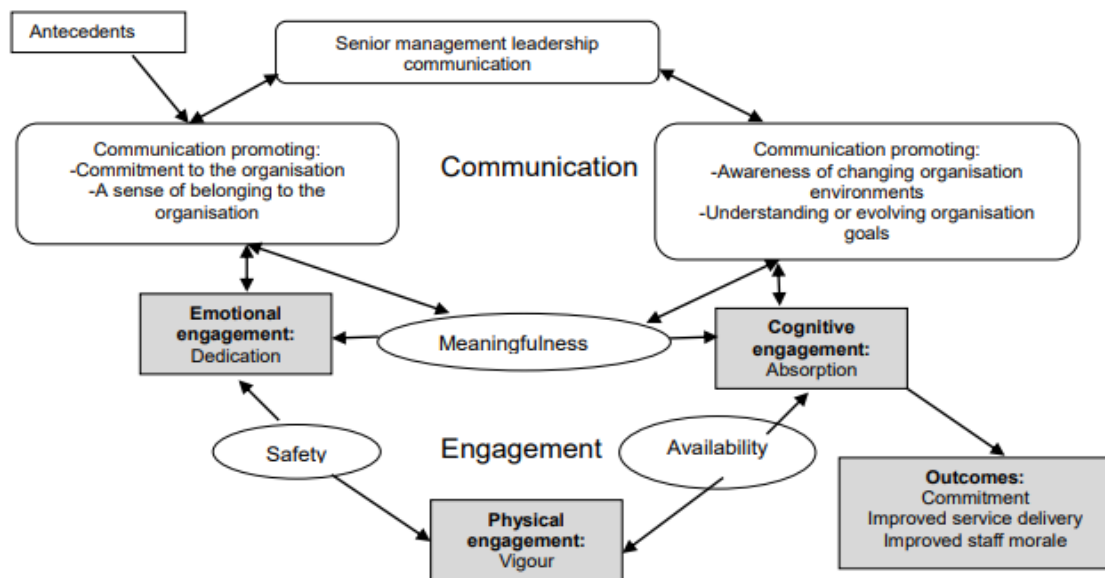
4.4.1 Conceptual Model of Employee Engagement and Internal Communication

Welch's (2011:340) model aims to explain how internal communication contributes to how organisations achieve employee engagement. The conceptual model illustrates that employee engagement is comprised of physical, emotional and cognitive dimensions. Conversely, Khan (1990) identified three psychological conditions of engagement: vigour, dedication, and absorption. Moreover, the model associates vigour with physical engagement, dedication with emotional engagement, and absorption with cognitive engagement. As previously mentioned, employees with vigour (physical aspect) are productive and take on more work for the success of the organisation. Dedication (emotional aspect) is related to how employees feel towards the organisation and its leaders, and their emotional connection with colleagues and leaders. Absorption (cognitive aspect) focusses on employee beliefs about the organisation, its leaders, and their job.

The model further conceptualises senior management leadership communication as facilitating two antecedents; 1) communication promoting commitment and belonging

within the organisation; and, 2) communication increasing awareness of changes in the organisation, and creating an understanding of organisational goals (Welch, 2011:340). This suggests the significance of the leader's role in promoting awareness of organisational strategies, key messages, and changes. It also suggests the importance of the leader's role in creating and maintaining engagement. Based on this critical responsibility for leaders, the leader's communication skills and behaviour are considered important.

In summation, the model proposes that effective internal communication fosters organisational innovation, competitiveness, and effectiveness (Welch, 2011). In summation, the model suggests that employee engagement is directly influenced by internal communication and that internal communication is important for employee engagement. It also supports findings from previous studies regarding the link between internal communication and employee engagement.



Source: Welch (2011:349)

Figure 4.1: Conceptual Model of Employee Engagement and Internal Communication

4.4.2 The Leaders' Role in Employee Engagement

House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman and Gupta (2004:15) define leadership as “the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organisations of which they are members”. Bass (1990:11) termed it “the focus of group processes, as a matter of personality, as a matter of including compliance, as the exercise of influence, as particular behaviours, as a form of persuasion, as a power relation, as an instrument to achieve goals, as an effect of interaction, as a differentiated role, as initiation of structure and as many combinations of these definitions”. In a later definition, Men (2015a) identified a ‘leader’ as the key roles in which the CEO represents his organisation. Thus, the leader is often seen as one of the most credible sources of information as “they are able to play the role of chief engagement officer internally and be directly involved with the organisation’s communication efforts” (Men, 2015a:463). Kent (2014) asserts that as leaders of the organisation, their credibility is crucial in the communication process. Moreover, senior management communication and open, two-way communication strategies play an important role in developing positive employee engagement (Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011; Bindl & Parker, 2010; Saks, 2006).

The cited definitions suggest that the leader’s actions and behaviours have the power to influence employee behaviours, attitudes, and engagement. Moreover, leaders have the ability to inform and persuade employee behaviours in order to achieve organisational goals. Recent studies on employee engagement from AON Hewitt (2017), Deloitte (2016), and Gallup (2016) have highlighted the critical role that leaders play in promoting employee engagement. Employee engagement is a concerning topic for organisations and leaders across the globe as it is recognised as a critical function that affects employee effectiveness, innovation, and the organisation’s overall competitiveness (Welch 2011). Moreover, leader communication, provided that it is open and effective, plays a significant role in positively impacting the development of employee engagement (Welch 2011; Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011; Bindl & Parker, 2010; Wiley, Kowske & Herman, 2010; Saks, 2006), trust, and collaboration (Men & Stacks, 2014).

Furthermore, Men (2015a) and Men's (2015b) studies revealed that the two-way, open, responsive, and symmetrical communication between leaders and employees significantly influences employee engagement. In support of this, Mmutle (2014) and Mmope's (2010) studies acknowledge that two-way communication is important for achieving employee engagement and the critical role that managers play in building engagement through effective internal communication. A recent PricewaterhouseCoopers (2017) survey found that 71% of employees indicated that they had effective two-way communication with their leaders, thus suggesting that they felt appreciated and were aware of what was happening in their organisation.

In academic research, the leaders' role on employee engagement has not been well researched (Carasco-Saul, Kim & Kim, 2014) but has become an important topic as this interest is based on the critical link between employee engagement and the organisation (Ones, Anderson, Viswesvaran & Sinangil, 2017). Zahid and Ozyapar (2017) measured whether effective leadership led to high employee engagement, and if so, to what degree these organisational concepts correlate. The results of the study confirm the close and positive relationship between the two concepts. In fact, it was reported that "the more efficient the leadership, the higher the employee engagement (Zahid & Ozyapar, 2017:28). Zahid and Ozyapar's (2017) explanation for such results is that the leader's role allows them to affect the drivers of employee engagement, thus the engagement itself is based on their attitude.

Moreover, an earlier study by Shuck and Herd (2012) explored the conceptual relationship between leadership behaviour and employee engagement. Two research questions guided the conceptual framework: 1) How are employee engagement and leadership related? 2) What framework can be developed from their potential relationship? The study's findings indicate that a conceptual relationship exists between the leader's behaviour and the development of employee engagement. This relationship is important for organisations seeking to achieve higher levels of employee engagement.

Another area of research that has received significant attention is leadership styles, the most common being transactional and transformational leadership. According to

Ammeter, Douglas, Ferris and Goka (2004), leadership style refers to the individual's personal characteristics, decision-making process, personality, behaviours, and interaction with others. Khan, Tufail, Qadir and Khan (2016) conducted a study with employees in the Mardan region banking sector of Pakistan to explore the influence of different leadership styles, specifically the influence of transformational and transactional leadership on employee engagement. Their results indicate that there is a crucial link between transactional and transformational leadership styles, and the employee engagement dimensions (vigour, dedication and absorption) previously discussed. Mahomed (2016) conducted a study to inform management about the importance of a suitable leadership style during changes within the organisation – this not only ensures successful execution of change initiatives but also drives employee engagement. The study's findings suggest that the leadership style can have a noticeable impact on the organisation. Moreover, Hay (2002:53) established that "many employees leave their jobs because they are unhappy with their boss". These studies suggest that leaders play a significant role in employee behaviours that in turn influence their engagement.

Similarly, the primary objective of a study conducted by Oliver (2012) aimed to determine the impact that leadership styles had on employee engagement. The study sampled 104 employees in a retail business that had a line manager. Results indicate that transformational leadership positively predicts the three employee engagement dimensions (vigour, dedication and absorption), suggesting that leaders are, ultimately, responsible for enhancing vigour (strength), dedication (emotional), and absorption (cognitive) in their employee behaviours. Moreover, it further suggests that leaders are responsible for building employee engagement.

In addition, Carasco-Saul, Kim and Kim (2014) conducted a review of 16 studies that explored the relationship between leadership and employee engagement. It is evident from the reviewed studies that leadership is significantly correlated with employees' work engagement. Furthermore, the findings cited were that transformational leaders might temporarily affect positive employee engagement.

It is worth noting that for the purpose of this research, a leader also refers to the CEO, executives, senior managers, and line managers. Transactional and transformational leadership styles are briefly discussed below.

4.4.2.1 Transactional leadership

The relationship between most leaders and employees is transactional as leaders offer employees something in return for doing what they are required to do (Armstrong & Stephens, 2005; Burns, 1979). Therefore, it can be proposed that the transactional leader draws from the Social Exchange Theory that states that individuals give something with the hope of receiving something (valuable) in return. In this case, engaged employees reciprocate with positive and beneficial behaviours.

4.4.2.2 Transformational leadership

Pieterse, Van Knippenberg, Schippers and Stam (2010:610) define transformational leadership as “a style of leadership that transforms followers to rise above their self-interest by altering their morale, ideals, interests, and values, motivating them to perform better than initially expected”. An older definition by Burns (1978:4) sees “transformational leadership as a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders”. Transformational leaders question rules and procedures within the organisation, prefer finding new ways of doing, and expect the same from their employees. Further, they encourage their employees to take advantage of all available opportunities (Macit, 2016:98). This suggests that they are innovative in their jobs, are risk-takers, and they prefer working in a dynamic environment that does not limit one’s abilities.

Based on the comparison of the two leadership styles, transformational leadership appears most appropriate for building employee engagement. This is based on the fact that transformational leaders are not considered powerful, but rather as individuals working for the greater good of an organisation. From this view, transformational leaders can directly influence their employees’ engagement levels. Conversely, the

transactional leader uses reward mechanisms to encourage higher participation and performance – this leadership style may only produce short-term results as opposed to the long-term desired results. However, it is worth suggesting that all efforts by leaders to increase or encourage engagement should be acknowledged as a step towards building employee engagement. Therefore, all leadership styles are valid in positively influencing engagement.

4.5 BENEFITS OF ENGAGED EMPLOYEES

Milliman, Gatling and Kim (2018) posit that employee engagement has received significant attention in recent studies; however, considerable research is still required to address its job and work-related benefits. This section presents the benefits of engaged employees available in the literature, including how these benefits contribute to the organisation.

4.5.1 Advocacy

Engaged employees displayed higher levels of positive communication behaviours than disengaged employees did (Kang & Sung, 2017). Employee communication behaviours are critical, as employees are perceived as reliable sources of information regarding the organisation (First & Tomic, 2013). Moreover, a Gallup (2016) study found that 67% of engaged employees revealed that they would engage in positive word of mouth on behalf of their organisation, while 78% said they would endorse their organisation's products or services.

4.5.2 Ambassadorship

Engaged employees are emotionally connected to the brand, and voluntarily act as brand ambassadors who actively recommend the organisation and share positive information about the brand with their family and friends (Yohn, 2018; Kim & Rhee, 2011). Employee ambassador characteristics are considered as being 'productive' or 'extra-role behaviours', meaning that they are not part of an employees' formal job responsibilities but are important for the organisation's success (King & Grace, 2010;

Gonring, 2008). Kahn (1990:2) defines this as physical engagement, “being willing to go the extra mile for your employer”. Schaufeli and Bakker (2010:22) define it as work engagement, “the psychological state that accompanies the behavioural investment of personal energy”. These definitions suggest that employees develop and display reciprocated behaviours if they believe that their organisation cares about them.

4.5.3 Commitment

Commitment is considered a fundamental engagement component as it relates to whether employees find meaning in their work (Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Schreurs, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2009). Earlier research by Bakker and Schaufeli (2004) found that commitment to an organisation occurs in three ways, namely organisational (emotional attachment), continuance (staying with the organisation), and extra-role behaviour (the desire to do more than one is required). Yalabik (2015) found a critical link between employee engagement and organisational commitment.

4.5.4 Competitive advantage

Engaged employees are an organisations greatest competitive asset (Wellins & Bernthal, 2015); without them, organisations cannot successfully compete against their competitors as employee engagement levels greatly influence a customer’s attitude towards the brand (Deloitte, 2017). Moreover, organisations considered as an “employer of choice” have higher levels of loyalty as compared to their competitors, and thus have a better chance of attracting and retaining the best talent (Balakrishnan, Masthan & Chandra, 2013; Lockwood, 2007).

4.5.5 Decreased turnover

High levels of engagement significantly reduce employee turnover (De Oliveira & Da Costa Rocha, 2017; Schaufeli, 2013; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2007; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). While turnover can assist in bringing new ideas and techniques, it can be costly (Hellman, 1997). Turnover costs may

include *resignation* (administration and leave pay out), *recruitment* (training and job advertising fees and processes), *decreased morale*, *loss of key employees*, and *the sharing of company insights* (Berry & Morris, 2008).

4.5.6 Innovation

Engaged employees are important for innovation within the organisation (Ruck, Welch, Menara, 2017). Organisations are increasingly recognising the value of innovation in the workplace. This is not surprising as innovation drives the organisation's performance and provides organisations with an advantage in the competition for top talent, customers, and market share, thus making it relevant (Zauskova, 2014). Moreover, innovation is an important growth and productivity contributor; it also provides the means for developing new tools and approaches that are necessary for addressing crucial challenges within society (Royal Academy of Engineering, 2015). Rao (2016) found that a strong and critical link exists between engagement and innovation, suggesting that employee engagement assumes a critical role in the innovation activities of employees.

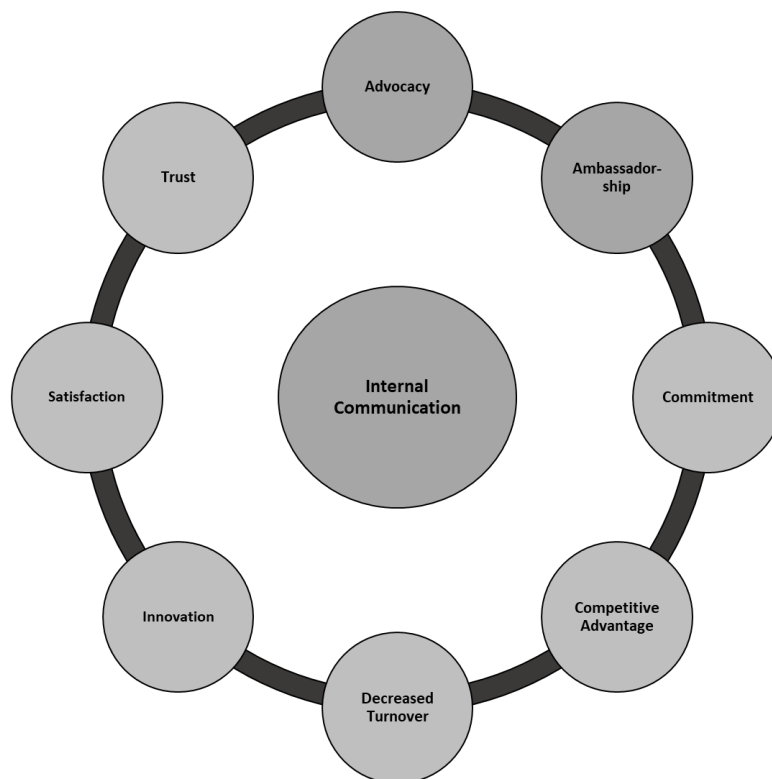
4.5.7 Satisfaction

Employee satisfaction helps to increase the organisation's value in several ways. Firstly, it can improve employee commitment, which increases competitive advantage (Vance, 2006; Bridges & Harrison, 2003). Secondly, it can promote positive employee behaviours, which improve operational efficiency (Organ, 1988). Thirdly, job satisfaction can attract top talent and engage employees, which helps increase the organisation's value (Hoole & Hotz, 2016). Cao and Chen (2016) add that high employee satisfaction levels can help retain and motivate employees, in turn, improving productivity and profitability. Based on this discussion, it is suggested that satisfied employees can contribute to higher organisational value.

4.5.8 Trust

Engagement is an indication that employees trust the organisational values and hence are keen on contributing to it so that it achieves its business goals (Jena, Pradhan & Panigrahy, 2017). Trust means employees are confident that their organisations are honest with them, that leaders are concerned about their overall health and well-being (apart from how they can help the organisation), that their qualifications, experience and skills are valued, and that each employee is appreciated (Rogers, 1994). Trust is thus enhanced when employees realise that the organisations have fair reward and recognition systems in place.

The employee engagement benefits discussed above are somewhat connected, further suggesting that they are inter-related. Moreover, the benefits suggest that an engaged workforce offers a competitive advantage to the organisation. Figure 4.2 summarises the benefits of engaged employees discussed above.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 4.2: Engaged employee behaviours

4.6 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE BANKING SECTOR

Garg and Dhar (2017:245) are of the view that jobs in the banking sector require creative employees in order to develop and execute innovative ideas. While maintaining their competitiveness, banks are often faced with challenges that include meeting customer expectations to increase loyalty and satisfaction by providing valuable services (Krishna, Goyal & Joshi, 2012). This offers an explanation as to why South Africa's "big four" banks have introduced employee innovation programmes (as discussed in section 2.4 Innovation Opportunities in the South African Banking Sector) – to encourage employees to actively participate in suggesting innovations that will create value for customers and that may distinguish them from their competitors. This section provides examples of studies, specifically in the banking sector, that focus on employee engagement.

In Gerber's (2016) study conducted with four of the largest South African banks, respondents define employee engagement as "the level with which an employee applies energy to their day-to-day job", "someone that is prepared to go the extra mile and puts effort in training and advancement of their skills, they research their area of work, and are loyal to their company. In terms of the brand, they speak well of the company, and encourage other people to work for the company. Additionally, they see themselves as the CEO of the company, meaning that they go the extra mile" (Gerber, 2016:62). One employee responded differently, "there is a selfish element as to what I can gain from benefitting or making the company bigger" (Gerber, 2016:63). These responses reinforce the view that engaged employees offer numerous benefits to organisations, whereas the last response supports the Social Exchange Theory of reciprocity previously discussed.

Anand *et al.*, (2016) sampled employees of a bank in rural India. The study's findings revealed that factors such as one's job, rewards, recognition, retention, opportunities, teamwork, line manager, and communication were significant determinants of employee engagement. Additionally, a study conducted in the Co-operative Bank in Kenya found that employees that trusted their bank as an employer were loyal to the bank, contributed to the bank's success, were committed to working for the bank, and

enjoyed working for the bank, thus were willing to continue working for the bank. According to the study's findings, this suggests a positive relationship between engagement, retention, productivity, profitability, customer loyalty, and job safety (Mokaya & Kipyegon, 2014).

With the intention of identifying determining factors of employee engagement and establishing how they influence internal communication, Jogi and Srivastava (2015) conducted a study on private banks in England. The findings of the study suggest that internal communication has a consequential impact on employee engagement in the banking sector. The freedom and opportunity that employees have to communicate with the organisation's leaders, line managers, and colleagues were the major contributing factors to an employee's job commitment and satisfaction. This finding supports the notion that open, two-way communication with the organisation's leaders influences employee engagement.

Findings from Egwuonwu's (2015:177) study conducted in Nigeria suggests three components of employee engagement: effective communication, organisational support, and career development. Banhwa *et al.*, (2014:60) surveyed 180 employees from five South African retail banks in the Eastern Cape on the important employee engagement strategies which included; "training and development, management support, diversity and inclusion, communication, working conditions, health and safety, co-operation, performance appraisal, job satisfaction, equal opportunity and fair treatment, empowerment, work-life balance, and pay and benefits". From the 13 employee engagement strategies that were selected as fundamental, communication came out in the top four. Although employee engagement is different from mere internal communication, this finding indicates the level of importance that communication plays in achieving employee engagement in the banking sector.

Nel's (2014) study aimed to determine which focus areas will be more likely to improve employee engagement within Standard Bank South Africa's Procurement Division. Based on the factors discovered within the study, namely 1) A place to work – it was recommended that the Division should focus on establishing a culture of achieving the division's strategy, and meeting employee's basic work needs, 2) Opportunity to grow

in the job – it was recommended that the leadership team increase employee involvement by identifying developmental needs necessary for growth in an employees' job, 3) Materials and equipment to do the job – it was recommended that all job roles within the division are equipped with the right tools, systems and materials so that employees can perform their jobs with the least amount of frustration; and, 4) Supervisor openness and approachability – it is recommended that leaders should change the way they interact with employees to ensure that they are approachable. The researcher is of the view that these employee engagement factors directly influence the vigour (physical), dedication (emotional), and absorption (cognitive) dimensions that an employee has or brings to their job. It further influences an employee's decision to work for or resign from the organisation.

Ntsane (2014) investigated the high turnover rate and engagement factors at Absa South Africa's Branch Network Division (particularly in the Free State, North-West, and Northern Cape provinces). To achieve this objective, literature was reviewed to understand the causes of employee turnover. The key drivers of employee engagement were also interpreted. The first finding from the study revealed that the respondents were in agreement with the theoretical causes of turnover, which include heavy workload, unnecessary tasks, and insufficient time to complete tasks. They also include doing things incorrectly, conflicting job requests, compensation, working conditions, insecurity in one's job, and a lack of career growth. Although the respondents indicate that they were happy working at Absa, these highlighted factors indicate that they are disengaged, further suggesting that they may resign in search of organisations that offer better working conditions and working hours, appropriate compensation, have a clear strategy and work direction, etc.

Moreover, Mokaya and Kipyegon (2014) measure performance management, personal development and growth, workplace entertainment, and remuneration package as constructs of employee engagement in a Kenyan bank. Based on these four engagement constructs, the study's results indicate that "employee engagement was high, with remuneration as the most important contributor to engagement, and workplace recreation having the least impact. The study also states that low engagement and low job satisfaction are causes of high turnover and increased

absenteeism which lead to decreased productivity and low performance, both of which negatively impact the bank” (Mokaya & Kipyegon, 2014:196). Both Ntsane (2014), and Mokaya and Kipyegon’s (2014) studies support the view that employee engagement is linked to the Social Exchange Theory of reciprocity.

Lastly, Mishra, Kapse and Bavad (2013) studied factors influencing employee engagement in four Indian banks: two private and two public sector banks. The results found that the organisation’s culture and communication help shape employee engagement in the bank. (Horomia, 2007:27). This finding is similar to Anand *et al.*, (2016), Egwuonwu (2015), Banhwa *et al.*, (2014), and Nel’s (2014) research results, which state that internal communication positively influences employee engagement.

Although the degree of importance varies for internal communication and employee engagement, these studies are consistent with many other studies that suggest that various organisational factors are important for banks to increase employee engagement, maintain their competitor status, increase loyalty and satisfaction; in turn, improving customer service and retaining loyal employees. Moreover, these studies confirm that engaged employees do more than are required for the greater benefit of the organisation. However, the physical, emotional, and cognitive efforts that employees bring to their jobs are in exchange for organisational resources such as effective communication, appropriate compensation, rewards and recognition, line manager support, job satisfaction, sufficient time for job tasks, leadership communication, career development, training and development, job safety, equal opportunity and fair treatment, clear goals, organisational support, growth opportunities, good working conditions, teamwork, and work-life balance. These are all important determinants of employee engagement highlighted in the above discussion.

4.7 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT MODEL

Given the limited research on employee engagement, particularly in the banking sector, limited theories and models have been developed (Saks, 2006). Khan's (1990) study identified three psychological conditions (meaningfulness, safety, and availability) that are associated with employee engagement, suggesting that employees were more engaged at work in duties that offered more meaningfulness, safety, and psychological availability (Saks, 2006). Furthermore, as previously discussed in this chapter, Welch (2011:340) conceptually developed an employee engagement and internal communication model to explain how internal communication contributes to achieving employee engagement. The model supported the notion that a link exists between internal communication and employee engagement.

The antecedents and consequences of employee engagement are discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.7.1 Antecedents of employee engagement

Saks (2006:604) identified earlier factors from Kahn (1990) and Maslach *et al.*'s., (2001) models of employee engagement; "job characteristics, rewards and recognition, perceived organisational and line manager support, and distributive and procedural justice". It is reasonable to suggest that engagement is a direct result of these antecedents, and, therefore, a result of various job characteristics and employee behaviours. These antecedents are briefly discussed below.

4.7.1.1 Job characteristics

In addition to demanding jobs, work overload and time pressure, Maslach *et al.*, (2001) believe that the absence of job resources (lack of line manager and colleague support, and inconsistent feedback) affect employee engagement. In a study conducted in the Indian banking sector, Rai, Ghosh, Chauhan, and Mehta (2017) found that employees

who favourably viewed their organisation and line managers' support are more likely to respond positively to job characteristics, and thus more likely to be engaged in their jobs. From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, employees who work regular hours and receive consistent feedback respond through favourable employee behaviours and higher levels of engagement. Thus, it is suggested that job characteristics positively influence organisation and job engagement.

4.7.1.2 Rewards and recognition

Maslach *et al.*, (2001) are of the view that the absence of rewards and recognition "devalues" both the organisation and its employees. From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, employees who are recognised for their hard work and contribution respond through admirable behaviours and higher engagement levels. Thus, it is suggested that appropriate rewards and recognition should be introduced to positively impact organisation and job engagement.

4.7.1.3 Perceived organisational and line manager support

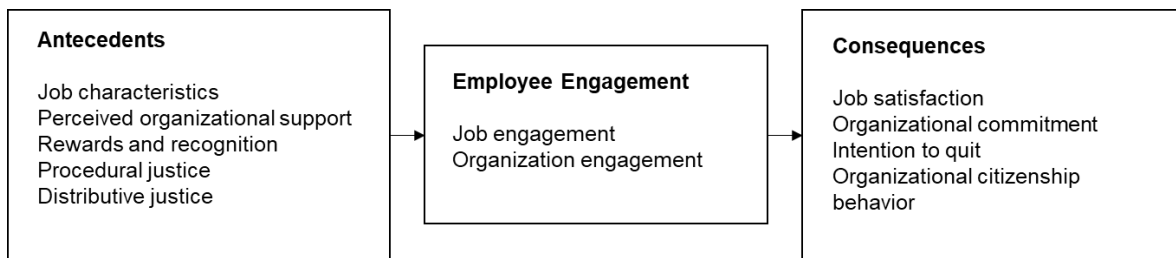
Perceived organisational support refers to employees' belief that their organisation recognises their efforts and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel & Lynch, 2001). Based on the Social Exchange Theory, these beliefs may lead to reciprocity, positive employee behaviours, and higher levels of engagement. Conversely, perceived line manager support is defined as the degree to which employees believe that their line managers value the contributions they make, offer assistance, and are concerned with their well-being (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski & Rhoades, 2002). Line manager support is the most important support an employee can receive at work (Saks, 2006). According to Maslach *et al.*, (2001) a lack of support from line managers is related to burnout. From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, employees who feel that their organisations and line managers care about them and their well-being respond through favourable employee behaviours and higher levels of engagement. Thus, it is suggested that perceived organisational and line manager support positively impact organisation engagement and job engagement.

4.7.1.4 Distributive and procedural justice

Distributive justice refers to employees' belief in the fairness of decisions. Conversely, procedural justice refers to the fairness in determining quantity and resource distribution processes (Colquitt, 2001; Rhoades Eisenberger & Armeli, 2001). According to Saks (2006), the role that justice plays may be due to employee engagement. This can suggest that employees who believe that their organisations have justice are more likely to behave "fairly" in how they use their time at work, and by displaying positive employee behaviours. Conversely, disengagement is likely caused by low perceptions of fairness. Maslach *et al.*, (2001) found that a lack of fairness aggravates burnout in two ways: it upsets employees and creates trust issues. Thus, it is suggested that distributive and procedural justice positively relates to organisation engagement and job engagement.

4.7.2 Consequences of employee engagement

The underlying premise of employee engagement is that "it has positive consequences for the organisation, some of which include job satisfaction, organisational commitment, intention to quit, and organisational citizenship behaviour" (Saks, 2006:606). The literature mentions that there is a positive link between engagement and business performance. However, Saks (2006) is of the view that engagement is a personal issue that affects the individual prior to affecting the organisation. According to the Social Exchange Theory, individuals give something with the hope of receiving something valuable in return (Blau, 1964:89). Thus, engaged employees reciprocate with positive and beneficial behaviours. This exchange can be financial or socio-economical such as care, respect and loyalty. The latter feelings provoke emotions relating to personal obligations, gratitude and trust. As a result, Saks (2006:607) believes that "engaged employees are more likely to have trusting and quality relationships with employers, and further display positive attitudes and intentions towards their organisation". Figure 4.3 below depicts a model of antecedents and consequences of employee engagement.



Source: Saks (2006:604)

Figure 4. 3: A Model of Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement

Although this model offers various antecedents of employee engagement and its consequences, it does not mention internal communication as a key construct that affects overall engagement, or as a construct that impacts and encourages the positive consequences of engagement. However, the researcher is of the view that the consequences of employee engagement presented in the model are a direct result of internal communication, which facilitates the models' antecedents.

4.8 SUMMARY

This chapter provided a discussion on employee engagement; specifically, employee engagement in the banking sector, the relationship between employee engagement and internal communication, employee engagement dimensions, benefits of an engaged workforce, the critical role that the Social Exchange Theory plays in engagement, as well as the role that leaders play in building employee engagement. A conceptual model of employee engagement and internal communication was also provided. From this chapter, it is suggested that employee engagement is related to attitudinal, psychological, and physical and emotional factors (such as commitment, satisfaction, innovative behaviour, energy, co-operation, self-starter, intellectuality, productivity, motivation, positive behaviour, dedication, well-being, and the desire and ability to do more work).

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 discussed the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement, an employee engagement model, the benefits of engaged employees, and the role that leaders play in engagement. This chapter discusses the study's research methodology, with reference to the rationale for selecting a method, population, sampling process and sample size, the data collection method and specific measuring instruments. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:30-31) state that research methodology is the detailed action plan for conducting the research, which includes the 'how', 'when', 'where' and 'from who' the data will be obtained. It explains how the study was conducted, what happens to the subject of enquiry and which data collection methods are used. Thus, this chapter discusses the selected research design, sampling procedure, provides a detailed discussion of how data was collected and analysed, as well as the data collection instruments, namely the web-based survey and face-to-face interviews. This study used a mixed-methods research approach which integrates both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Additionally, the measures of quality in research (validity and reliability) and the study's ethical considerations are discussed.

5.2 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Shields and Twycross (2003:24) are of the view that "quantitative research contains numbers and statistics, and is crucial for measuring people's attitudes, their emotional and behavioural states, and their ways of thinking" – such as in the case of employees. In agreement with this, Babbie (2010) postulates that quantitative studies provide objective measurement obtained using statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of results collected through various instruments such as polls, questionnaire surveys or systematic computational techniques. According to Johnson and Christensen (2012:35), a weakness of quantitative researchers is that they prefer to remain

objective by being detached from the participants. Being detached ensures that they do not influence the participant's responses or views. Another weakness highlighted by Neill (2007) is that the quantitative study's design is conducted prior to data collection, thus it is limiting, as it does not provide the flexibility to evolve as the study progresses. Conversely, Creswell (2009:4) and Bryman (2012) are of the view that this detachment or researcher bias is a strength of quantitative researcher's as it eliminates their direct contact with the study's participants. A quantitative research strength may also include replicability – the level of confidence that repeating the process would ensure the same results (Melville & Goddard, 1996). Babbie (2010) further identifies key characteristics of quantitative research that guide this study:

- Structured research instruments are used for data collection
- Findings are based on a large sample size that represents the population
- Due to its reliability, the study can be replicated
- The study's design is developed prior to data collection
- Data results are presented numerically and statistics and are usually presented in tables, charts, graphs, or figures
- Data is collected through surveys, questionnaires, or computer software

5.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In comparison to quantitative research, qualitative data is analysed through using words, not numbers (Mesec, 1998). According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:156), "qualitative research is conducted through a range of methods which use qualifying words and descriptions to record and investigate aspects of social reality". Leedy and Ormrod (2005:94) suggest that "the purpose of qualitative research is to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants' point of view". Moreover, as statistical procedures are not used in qualitative studies, data is analysed to identify, analyse, and report any patterns, codes, keywords or themes that may emerge (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, a qualitative study uses non-statistical methods

and smaller sample sizes that are often selected purposively (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011:65; Fouche & Delport, 2002:79).

It is worth noting that due to its small sample size, generalising the qualitative research findings to the wider population is not possible (Harry & Lipsky, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; De Vos, 2002). Moreover, replicability in qualitative research has proven to be a challenge as it does not give reliable and consistent data when compared to using quantifiable data (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). Despite its limitations, qualitative research has numerous strengths such as its flexibility, which ensures that the research plan can be revised at any time (Marxwell, 2012), and its reliance on non-numerical data makes it appropriate for providing factual and descriptive information (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Creswell (2007:45-47) identified the essential characteristics of qualitative research that were considered for this study:

- Data is collected where the research participants experience the problem or issue being investigated
- Researchers are key instruments – they collect data, observe participants behaviour, and interview participants themselves
- Data is typically collected through multiple sources
- The aim is to understand the issue or problem rather than generalise to the population
- Holistic account – they try to develop a thorough description and understanding of actions and events

Based on the above discussion on quantitative and qualitative research, it can be concluded that quantitative or numerical research methods are used for measuring something. Whereas, qualitative research aims to answer a question, such as understanding which internal communication channels are available in the literature or which internal communication channels are available in South Africa's "big four" banks.

Table 5.1 highlights the differences between quantitative and qualitative research as indicated by several authors (Neuman, 2014; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012;

Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Babbie, 2010; Rubin & Babbie, 2010; Lune, Pumar & Koppel, 2010; Creswell, 2009; Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Collis & Hussey, 2003; Shields & Twycross, 2003; De Vos, 2002; Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000).

Table 5.1: Differences between quantitative and qualitative research

| | Quantitative research | Qualitative research |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Data Form | Numerical | Words and visuals |
| Data Type | Rational or interval | Ordinal or nominal |
| Analysis | Statistical procedures | Theoretical |
| Aim | Tests hypotheses | Examines research questions |
| Results | More generalisable | Less generalisable |
| Data Collection | Highly structured | Semi-structured or unstructured |
| Data Collection Instruments | Surveys, interviews, observations, document review | Focus groups, interviews, document review |
| Sample size | Large and randomly selected | Small and purposively selected |
| Approach | Deductive reasoning | Inductive reasoning |
| Epistemology | Positivist | Constructionist |
| General Overview | Objective – provides observations of an issue | Subjective – describes a problem or condition based on opinion, experiences, and feelings |
| Design | Developed prior data collection | Flexible, evolves as the study progresses |
| Bias | Eliminated | Encouraged |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

5.4 EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

As the name suggests, “exploratory research can be defined as research into an area that has not been studied and in which a researcher wants to develop initial ideas and a more focussed research question” (Neuman, 2000:510). Du Plooy (2009) is of the view that exploratory research explores an unknown area of research, provides new insights, develops hypotheses, and confirms assumptions. Additionally, Brown (2006:43) believes that exploratory research tackles “new problems on which little or no previous research has been done”. Moreover, the major purpose of exploratory research “is the development and clarification of ideas, and the formulation of questions and hypotheses for more precise investigation later” (Struwig & Stead, 2007:7).

Struwig and Stead (2007:8) suggest three purposes for using exploratory research; 1) for the study of secondary information sources, 2) analysing selected cases; and, 3) surveying individuals who have an opinion on the subject or issue under investigation. Conversely, Nargundkar (2003) states three limitations of exploratory research, namely 1) generating qualitative information and a bias interpretation of the information; 2) these studies use a small number of samples that fail to adequately represent the target population. Therefore, findings from exploratory research cannot be generalised to the larger population; and, 3) their findings are not useful in decision making.

This study is exploratory as it explores an unknown area of research, which is the development of a conceptual framework for employee engagement. A discussion on sampling is provided in the next section.

5.5 SAMPLING

According to Terre Blanche and Durheim (1999:44), “sampling is a process that involves clarifying ‘which people’, ‘settings’, ‘events’, ‘behaviours’, and/or ‘social processes to observe’”. De Vos *et al.*, (2011) posit that sampling allows the researcher to focus on a

smaller group as it is not feasible to conduct the research with the entire population under study. Huysamen (1976) suggests that sampling can also be viewed to involve decision making about which people from the population of interest are to be included in the survey. The sampling strategy of the proposed study is discussed in terms of the following: population, sample, sampling methods, unit of analysis, data collection, data analysis, and validity and reliability.

5.5.1 Population

Babbie (2013) defines a population as a group of people the researcher wants to study. This study's target population is employees of South Africa's "big four" banks, namely Absa, FirstRand Bank (FNB), Standard Bank and Nedbank.

5.5.2 Sample

According to Neuman (2011), a sample is a group of people selected by the researcher to make general conclusions about the larger population. Although the original sample size of the quantitative component was 300 employees, a total of 97 employees responded to the survey, however, only 84 respondents completed all the questions in the survey. In addition, four senior internal communications managers made up the qualitative component of the study. The rationale behind conducting face-to-face interviews with the senior internal communications managers was that they could provide detailed insight and understanding as they are involved in the internal communication strategy development and implementation, and the day-to-day business requirements of the internal communications team within their respective bank. Furthermore, it is worth noting that although the terms internal communication, communication and marketing are used interchangeably, they do not refer to the same thing. Additionally, target market may at times refer to the same stakeholder group. The sample was drawn from employees within various business units and departments of South Africa's "big four" banks. The study's sampling methods and techniques are discussed in the following sections.

5.5.3 Sampling methods

Sampling methods are categorised into either probability sampling or non-probability sampling. Quantitative research uses probability sampling, while qualitative research studies use purposive or non-probability sampling techniques (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Probability sampling selects a set of characteristics that represent the total population through random selection (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). Conversely, in non-probability sampling, not all individuals have an equal opportunity of being selected (Du Plooy, 2009). Put simply, probability sampling is rooted in randomisation, while non-probability is conducted without randomisation (De Vos, 2002). It is worth mentioning that this study uses a non-probability sampling method – this sampling technique is supported by SurveyMonkey. Moreover, convenience sampling was used to select the participants for this research. This method was selected because it allows the researcher to conveniently select participants who are available to provide the required information, quickly and efficiently (Mwape & Mumba, 2012).

The study's sampling methods are discussed in the sub-sections below.

5.5.3.1 Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling, also called haphazard or accidental sampling, is a method where individuals who meet certain criteria (such as available, easily accessible, closely located, and willing to participate) are included in the study (Dornyei, 2007). DeBus (1986) is of the view that researchers select individuals who are available and who meet the screening criteria. Although convenience sampling is considered fast and easy to use, its results seldom represent the population (Meyer & Wilson, 2009:59). In line with these differing opinions, convenience sampling was used in this study as the sample only comprised of individuals who expressed their interest in taking part in the study. Additionally, one-on-one interviews were conducted with four senior internal communications managers from each bank.

5.5.3.2 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling enables the researcher to select the study's sample because it is believed that the sample is a rich source for the study (Gay, 1996:213). "When conducting purposeful sampling, the researcher searches for information-rich key informants, groups, places, and events to study. The chosen sample is thus considered to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena under study/investigation" (Mouton, 1996:213). For this study's' purpose, purposive sampling was used in two ways: firstly, as the study was specifically focused on South Africa's "big four" banks, only the banks that fall within the "big four" category were approached. Secondly, the study is based on internal communication within South Africa's "big four" banks, thus the sample comprised of employees within various business units and departments of South Africa's "big four" banks.

5.5.3.3 Snowball sampling

Snowball sampling is based on referrals received from initially sampled individuals to other respondents believed to have the same characteristics (Johnson, 2014). For this sampling method, the researcher collects data from the small number of individuals of the target population that are available and then seeks information from those individuals that assist in targeting other individuals of that population (Babbie, 2001:180). This type of sampling usually commences with one respondent who identifies other key informants. For this study, the survey link was emailed to the senior internal communications managers of each bank, who were then requested to disseminate it internally within the bank. One of the advantages of snowball sampling is its cost-effectiveness and efficiency (Johnson, 2014), and the sample can refer other people that have similar, if not the same, characteristics as the intended sample (Katz, 2006).

5.5.4 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis refers to the entity or phenomenon to which one's conclusions ought to apply (Mouton, 1996:91). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:84), "it refers to the 'what' of your study: what objective, phenomenon, entity, process, or event you are interested in investigating". A later definition by Babbie (2013:97) defines it as the people being studied. Due to the relatively large population size, it is impossible to sample all the population members, as such; the researcher will observe a smaller sample. The study's unit of analysis is employees of South Africa's "big four" banks.

5.6 DATA COLLECTION

For this study's purpose, the triangulation method was used – this method entails combining qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data (Neuman, 2014; Patton 1999), with the aim of confirming data from single method approaches (Halcomb & Andrew, 2005). It further entails using several data collection methods to measure and enquire about the same subject. Qualitative data was collected through a review of available literature and face-to-face interviews conducted with the four senior internal communications managers from each bank. Conversely, for quantitative data, a web-based self-administered survey questionnaire was used to collect data from employees within various business units and departments of South Africa's "big four" banks.

The study's research problems and methods of addressing them, including the respective chapter in which they are addressed, are highlighted in Table 5.6 below.

Table 5.2: Sub-research problems, method, and chapter

| Sub-research problems | Method | Chapter |
|--|--|-----------------|
| Sub-research problem 1: To explore the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement in South Africa’s “big four” banks. | Review of available literature | Chapter 4 and 7 |
| Sub-research problem 2: To explore the role played by internal communication in the banking sector. | Review of available literature | Chapter 4 and 7 |
| Sub-research problem 3: To explore the internal communication channels that are available in South Africa’s “big four” banks. | Results/findings from the data collection instruments (web-based survey with employees and face-to-face interviews with senior internal communications managers) | Chapter 7 |
| Sub-research problem 4: To develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement in South Africa’s “big four” banks. | Results/findings from the face-to-face interviews with senior internal communications managers) | Chapter 6 |

Source: Researchers’ own compilation

The study’s data collection methods are discussed in the next section.

5.6.1 Qualitative data collection

The qualitative data collection methods used in this study are discussed in the sub-section below.

5.6.1.1 Literature review

While there are numerous definitions of a literature review, Hofstee (2006:91) simply defines it as the “body of works previously published by other scholars”. According to Fink (2014), “a literature review surveys books, scholarly articles, and any other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, and by so doing, provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works in relation to the research problem being investigated”. An extensive search on the Nexus Database System of the NRF (2016) revealed that although previous studies on internal communication and employee engagement had been conducted, however, research on internal communication and employee engagement in the South African banking sector, particularly in the “big four” banks, had not been conducted. Thus, the literature review for this study gathered and presented information pertaining to the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement based on previous research, publications, and global surveys.

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:20) suggest that a literature review offers the following benefits:

- Sharpens the study’s theoretical framework.
- Keeps the researcher informed of the latest developments in areas related to the study’s research.
- Identifies gaps in literature and limitations in current studies by establishing research that has/hasn’t conducted and what needs improvement.
- Discovers similarities or contradictions by comparing various investigations
- Identifies variables that should be included or excluded in a study.

- Examines the definitions used in previous studies and the characteristics of the individuals under study, with the aim of using them as a sample.

Although a literature review has benefits, Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:20) suggest that its key disadvantage is that researchers may “be influenced by the results of previous research, or may accept without criticism their chosen characteristics and explanations such that they fail to discover new possibilities and observe without bias”.

5.6.1.2 Face-to-face interviews

According to Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008:294), “the purpose of the research interview is to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations of individuals on specific matters”. Moreover, it is believed that interviews provide a detailed understanding of the issue at hand, which would not have been the case through using pure quantitative methods such as a survey. Face-to-face interviews are, therefore, relevant when not much is known about the issue under study or where detailed insights are required from knowledgeable participants. Kvale (1996) further suggests that face-to-face interviews provide an opportunity to understand the world from the particular individual’s point of view and experiences.

According to Tharenou, Saks and Moore (2007:103), “different types of interviews include structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. In differentiating between the three, structured interviews comprise completely pre-set standardised questions, normally close-ended and following each other sequentially”. It has been suggested that these interview types are presented verbally to respondents but still yield a fixed response option. Tharenou *et al.*, (2007:103) further explain that “semi-structured interviews have a topic, general themes, targeted issues and specific questions; they are more flexible than structured interviews, but more focused than unstructured interviews because the interviewer is still free to pursue matters as the situation dictates, just as in unstructured interviews”. Conversely, “unstructured interviews are open-ended, and the interview is

conducted in a manner similar to a friendly conversation, with no pre-determined order of questions or specific wording to the questions”.

This study has a key focus and topic, targeted issues, and makes use of specific questions and a general theme, thus adopts the semi-structured interview as it follows pre-determined questions presented in the same order to the interview participants (see interview schedule in Appendix C). The objective of using a semi-structured interview is to explore the themes identified in the study, as well as understand how internal communication plays a role in engaging employees in South Africa’s “big four” banks. Moreover, the rationale behind conducting face-to-face interviews with the senior internal communications managers is that they can provide detailed insight and understanding, as they are involved in the internal communication strategy development and implementation, and the day-to-day business requirements of the internal communications team within their respective bank.

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:104-109) state the following benefits of face-to-face interviews:

- The research process involves the respondent, thus empowering respondents.
- Allow further probing from both the interviewer (researcher) and interviewee.
- Allow the opportunity for clarification, thus the interviewer and interviewee can probe further for clarity to a response or question.
- Maximise description and enquiry.
- Offer researchers access to respondent’s ideas, thoughts and opinions in their own words and not in the researcher’s words.

Other benefits of using the face-to-face interview include (Mertler, 2011; McBurney & White, 2009; Babbie & Mouton, 2005; Bryman, 2001):

- Responses can be recorded using audio and visual equipment (with participant permission) – meaning that the researcher can refer back to the collected data.
- They are characterised by synchronous communication; thus respondents can leverage off social clues such as voice pitch, body language, etc.
- There are no delays between questions and answers; both the interviewer and interviewee can directly respond based on what has been said.

However, interviews have been criticised for being time-consuming, focusing on small scale studies as the interview sample is relatively small, not being anonymous, presenting a potential for subconscious interviewer bias due to race, gender and tone of voice, and are associated with high costs and potential inconsistencies in estimating the extent of a postulated statement (Bell, 2010; Neuman, 2006; Bennet, 2003; McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Although the interview method is a great way of getting insight into a respondent's perceptions, Ho (2006) believes that it can be simultaneously used with other data collection methods to provide detailed information regarding participants' values and beliefs. In support of this view, Alshenqeeti (2014) proposed that using more than one data collection instrument helps in obtaining richer data and validating the research findings.

5.6.1.3 The interview schedule

Fowler (2011:2) is of the view that “an interview schedule is the guide an interviewer uses when conducting interviews”. The interview schedule communicates what questions need to be asked and guides how respondents should answer the posed questions. Gill *et al.*, (2008) advice researchers to ask questions that yield detailed responses and that address the study's aims and objectives. In designing good interview questions, Kurtz and Snowden (2003) further suggest that questions should be open-ended (i.e. more than a

yes/no or multiple-choice answer), neutral, and sensitive as it helps respondents relax and answer questions more confidently – which generates rich data for the collected data. Section A of the study's interview schedule poses general questions relating to the respondent's biographical data, whereas the remaining sections pose questions relating to employee engagement, the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement, internal communication in the banking sector, and internal communication channels used in the respondents' bank.

Moreover, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed to protect against interviewer bias and provide a permanent record of the interview discussion (Gill *et al.*, 2008). The interviewer also made notes during each interview about their observations, thoughts and ideas in relation to the interview, as this may be helpful during the data analysis process.

5.6.2 Quantitative data collection

The quantitative data collection method used in this study is discussed in the following section:

5.6.2.1 Web-based survey

Web-based surveys, commonly referred to as web-based questionnaires or online surveys, are used for gathering knowledge about the attitudes and sentiments of the study's respondents regarding the topic at hand (White, 2014). There were three primary reasons for selecting the web-based survey method as a data collection tool; firstly, it allowed the researcher to share the survey link via email (Jansen, Corley & Jansen, 2007). Secondly, due to the limited time, it was impossible to conduct face-to-face interviews, telephone calls or traditional mail surveys with all respondents (Wyatt, 2007). Thirdly, there was no budget for setting up the interviews and travelling to meet with all respondents, as well as printing and posting the survey. Therefore, the web-based survey was considered low cost (Toepoel & Emerson, 2017).

Other benefits of using the web-based survey are that it ensures anonymity and allows the respondents to complete the survey questionnaire in their own time and without any fear of being biased (De Vos, 2002). Additionally, Cooper, Cooper, del Junco, Shipp, Whitworth, and Cooper (2006) believe that this data collection method expedites data processing and analysis, and further eliminates the need for time-consuming activities such as data entry and verification. The web-based survey tool has become an increasingly popular way to collect data as internet accessibility for the South African population has increased, reaching 21 million, and is expected to grow an estimated 22 million in the year 2018 (Sha, 2017). This allows data to be entered centrally onto a database and also provides less dependency on special data capturing equipment. Additionally, the web-based survey method allows for instant editing or revision as and when responses are entered. Moreover, without additional software programme installations, the researcher can use a variety of response technique options such as textboxes, checkboxes, dropdown options, or other available styles on the survey website.

Although the web-based survey has been praised for its countless benefits, it also has its disadvantages. In comparison with other traditional data collection techniques, this data collection method has a high non-response rate (Wyatt, 2007), and presents reliability and validity concerns regarding the data findings (Best, Krueger & Hubbard, 2001). Other disadvantages of the web-based survey that have been raised include the fact that it can only be accessed by literate people who have access to computers (White, 2014), and it is biased by low and selective participation (Heiervang & Goodman, 2009). Such biases exclude Building Management employees in the “big four” banks who may not have access to laptops and computers due to the nature of their jobs but may not necessarily affect the quality of responses received.

5.6.2.2 The web-based survey design

In designing the web-based survey, Saxon, Garratt, Gilroy and Cairns (2003:52) state that surveys offer “the ability to create different types of items – for example, yes/no items, multiple responses, rating items, grouped items, and free-text response items. Furthermore, various colours and fonts can be used to increase the attractiveness of the survey, and instructions can be added to items to provide guidance for respondents. Some systems provide branching facilities, so questions can be skipped according to the answers given. Once created, the survey is placed on the website ready for use. Data can be viewed and reported online and can be downloaded and imported into other packages for analysis”.

This study’s survey was hosted on *SurveyMonkey*, an online survey tool, which was deemed the most effective and efficient method of data collection method for this research due to its low costs. As previously mentioned, the survey link and guidelines for completing the survey was emailed to the four senior internal communications managers from each bank. These individuals were requested to distribute the link internally within their bank. For this step, snowball sampling was used.

In developing this study’s survey, a seven-point Likert scale was used to determine the degree to which respondents agree or disagree with a question or statement. A Likert scale of this weighting has several benefits which include increasing response rates (Malhotra, 1993), stronger correlations with the t-test results (Lewis, 1993), increasing reliability (Symonds, 1924) and validity (Churchill & Peter, 1984; Barnes, Daswar & Gilbert, 1924). The seven-point Likert scale had the following weightings: 7 = Strongly Agree, 6 = Agree, 5 = Moderately Agree, 4 = Neutral, 3 = Moderately Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree.

The study's web-based survey was comprised of the following sections:

Section A: Biographical data

Section B: Employee engagement

Section C: The relationship between internal communication and employee engagement

Section D: Internal communication channels

Section E: Internal communication function

For the full web-based survey questionnaire, please refer to Appendix B.

5.7 PILOT TEST

A pilot study is defined as a “feasibility study that comprises small-scale versions of the planned study, trial runs of planned methods, or miniature versions of anticipated research in order to answer a methodological question(s) and to guide the development of the research plan” (Prescott & Soeken, 1989:60). According to Gorman and Clayton (2005:98), “it means taking the draft research plan and applying it in a neutral location that will not be used in the actual fieldwork, or collection of preliminary data in the actual location from which data are to be collected”. De Vos (2002:211) states that “it is the pre-testing of a measuring instrument by trying it out on a small number of people with similar characteristics to those in the population of the research project”.

Furthermore, Gill *et al.*, (2008) suggest that piloting the measurement instrument allows the researcher to establish if the questions are clear, understandable, if they address the research question, and if there should be any changes to the posed questions. Based on these definitions, the researcher believes that the key features of a pilot study are that it is conducted with a small group of individuals who represent the study's proposed sample. Moreover, these individuals guide the development of their measurement

instrument by offering their feedback and suggestions to improve it. In agreement with the above-stated rationale, pilot testing in this study was conducted with ten internal communication employees who are individuals who are experienced in both internal communication and employee engagement. The purpose of conducting the pilot study was to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the survey and question format, possible ambiguity with respect to the formulation of questions, as well as unclear choices. The pilot study consisted of questions for both the web-based survey and face-to-face interview.

5.8 DATA ANALYSIS

The following section discusses the mixed-methods data analysis processes used in this study.

5.8.1 Quantitative data analysis

According to De Vos, Fouche and Venter (2002:223), quantitative data analysis entails breaking down data into integral parts to derive answers to the study's research questions. Data is interpreted through data analysis that entails "categorising, ordering, manipulating, and summarising data into an interpretable form to draw conclusions". In support of this view, Rubin and Babbie (2008) suggest that in quantitative data analysis, researchers transform data to numbers to subject it to statistical analysis. For this study's purpose, data was analysed in two stages:

- First stage: In this stage, findings were analysed and presented using descriptive statistics. According to Babbie (2010) and Rendon-Macias, Villasis-Keever and Miranda-Novales (2016), descriptive statistics present data in tables, graphs, figures or charts. The descriptive statistics described the sample of the study and measure the degree to which respondents agree or disagree with a statement

relating to internal communication and employee engagement. The descriptive statistics results are presented in bar graphs, pie charts, and frequency tables (see Chapter 6).

- Second stage: This stage included the analysis and assessment of the relationships that existed between the responses given for each employee engagement and internal communication question. Due to the nature of the questions used, non-parametric tests were the most appropriate test to use for assessing association and/or independence between variable responses. The tests of association were conducted in SPSS version 25.0.

In summation, the findings of this research were presented using descriptive and inferential statistics in the form of non-parametric tests such as the Chi-square, Kendall's tau-b, and Gamma tests (the study's quantitative results are presented in Chapter 6). In addition, frequency tables, pie charts, and bar graphs were used to summarise and visualise the results. Moreover, while descriptive statistics were used to summarise data from the results, inferential statistics made conclusions about the wider population (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The study provided insight into internal communication and employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks, therefore, the findings can only be generalised to these banks.

5.8.2 Qualitative data analysis

Baptiste (2001:3-4) is of the view that "the qualitative data analysis includes capturing, recording, interpreting, and coding information in a continuous process". According to De Vos (2002:223), it is "a process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data". Similarly, Rubin and Babbie (2008) state that qualitative data analysis is an interpretation of observations that do not include numbers, capturing the essence of the observations primarily in narrative form. To analyse the qualitative interview data, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phased thematic analysis process was used (the study's qualitative results are presented in Chapter 6). The thematic analysis is described as "a

method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:16-23).

The six phases of the thematic analysis are discussed below.

Phase 1: familiarising with data

The researcher started by familiarising herself with the data. This was achieved through transcribing all field notes and interview transcripts into written form. It is important that this step be done prior to data collection. Williamson and Whittaker (2014) further add that seeing the data written down enables the researcher to identify new patterns (themes) such as repeated words and phrases, or similar concepts phrased differently but with the same meaning.

The aim of this phase was to understand the data in order to identify ideas and meanings within the data that are linked to the study’s research questions.

Phase 2: generating initial codes

Once the researcher was familiar with the data, she proceeded to producing the initial codes for the data. A code is a building block of an analysis that identifies labels and data features potentially relevant to the study’s research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). These codes are usually a summary of basic elements in the data that can be meaningfully assessed (Coolican, 2014). Moreover, codes describe the content of the data or provide interpretation about the data content (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It was important to code for several potential codes and themes. Williamson and Whittaker (2014) believe that the coding process involves breaking down data into small parts (codes) prior to rebuilding it into patterns (themes). Once the interview transcripts and surveys were coded, the researcher generated initial codes, and the data extracts with similar codes were then grouped together for ease of analysis when building themes. For this study’s purpose, the researcher coded manually and thus used highlighters, coloured pens and notes to identify data sections.

All the data was coded in this step.

Phase 3: searching for themes

The different codes were sorted into potential themes in this phase. Braun and Clarke (2006:19) suggest “the use of visuals such as tables, mind maps or writing the name of each code (and a brief description) on a separate piece of paper and organising them into a themed pile for sorting the data”. The process of generating themes and sub-themes involved discarding or grouping codes that were similar or that share the same features so that they describe meaningful data patterns.

By the end of this stage, the researcher had used the data to identify and develop themes and sub-themes.

Phase 4: reviewing themes

Reviewing themes involved two levels (Braun & Clarke, 2006:20-22):

- Level 1: Reviewing the coded data extracts

This level entailed reading the collated data extracts for each of the themes and deciding if they formed a logical pattern. In cases where the themes did not fit, they needed to be reworked, regrouped or altogether discarded from the analysis. Once satisfied that the data logically fits into each theme, the researcher proceeded to the next level.

- Level 2: Reviewing the themes

In this phase, the researcher was required to the data set numerous times to ensure that the themes were related to the data set. Moreover, it provided the researcher with the opportunity to code additional data within themes that had been missed in earlier coding stages. The thematic map worked, and it accurately reflected the participants’ responses, thus the researcher moved onto phase 5 (refining and naming themes) of the thematic analysis process.

This phase involved reviewing and refining the themes previously identified in phase 3 of the thematic analysis.

Phase 5: refining and naming themes

In defining the themes, the researcher summarised what was unique and what stood out about each theme. A good thematic analysis has related themes with a clear focus, scope, purpose, addresses research questions, builds on and develops the previous themes, and provides a logical summary about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The other aspect of this phase is naming each theme. According to Braun and Clarke (2012:9), short titles that are informative, concise, and catchy are ideal. By the end of this phase, each theme was described in a few sentences, with a name that is brief and conveyed a logical sense of what the theme was about (Williamson & Whittaker, 2014).

This step entailed understanding each theme through defining and naming the themes, and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures.

Phase 6: writing report

In producing the report, Williamson and Whittaker (2014) suggest that each theme should be analysed and discussed in detail, including how it fits into the overall data. In order to show the study's importance in addressing the gap in the literature, it was essential to link the study's findings to the literature review in this stage.

In this last step of the data analysis process, the researcher produced a written report discussing the themes.

5.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Golafshani (2003) believes that understanding the definitions provided by various scholars is necessary for understanding the meaning of validity and reliability. Validity is

defined as “the level to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure” (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). In agreement, Cohen and Briggs (2002) further define validity as “the tool used to judge whether the research accurately describes the phenomenon it is intended to describe”. Conversely, Osborne (2008:132) is of the view that validity refers to “the meaning of the test scores as well as a summary of both the evidence for and the actual, as well as potential consequences of score interpretation and use”. Validity’s basic premise refers to “the ‘appropriateness’, ‘meaningfulness’, and ‘usefulness’ of the specific inferences researchers make based on the collected data” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:235).

Conversely, reliability is about “whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result” (Rubin & Babbie, 2011:194). Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008:2277) suggest that reliability is used to; “1) evaluate measurement stabilities administered to the same individuals at different times, or through the same standard; and, 2) the equivalence of sets of items from the same test or of different observers scoring a behaviour using the same instrument”. It provides confidence that repeating the process would ensure consistency – an instrument is considered reliable if it consistently gives the same results (Melville & Goddard, 1996). McMillan and Schumacher (1997) suggest that reliability refers to the consistency of the research and the extent to which the findings can be replicated. Cohen and Briggs (2002:37) define reliability as “relating to the probability that repeating a research procedure or method would produce identical or similar results”.

The definitions of reliability and validity suggest two things: firstly, with regards to validity, it refers to the accuracy of the measurement, and the extent to which the test accurately measures what it is intended to. Secondly, reliability refers to the measurements’ consistency, and whether the repeated measurement yields consistent results when administered under the same conditions. Validity and reliability are used in research to address “the double hurdle of being both theoretically and methodologically rigorous, while at the same time embracing the world of practice and being of practical relevance” (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:8).

To ensure validity and reliability in this study, a web-based survey was designed for respondents to address statements that were derived from the literature review study conducted in a natural setting. Moreover, a pilot test was conducted with ten individuals who are experienced in both internal communication and employee engagement. The purpose of conducting the pilot study was to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the survey and question format, possible ambiguity with respect to formulation of questions, as well as unclear choices. Additionally, the use of statistical analysis will enhance the reliability and validity of the study's data as well as interpretation of the findings.

5.9.1 Validity and reliability of the web-based survey

The validity and reliability of the web-based survey are discussed in the following section.

5.9.1.1 Validity

For this study's purpose, six types of validity are identified:

- **Construct validity** measures what a research study claims to investigate (Gibbert, Ruigrok & Wicki, 2008). In this study, construct validity will be used for testing whether the web-based survey and face-to-face interview questions measured what they were intended to.
- **Criterion validity** establishes whether an instrument "accurately differentiates between groups that differ in respect to the variable being measured" (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). A test has criterion-related validity if it is successful in predicting an individual's behaviour in a specific situation (Benson, 1998).
- **Face validity** determines whether a test appears to measure what it is intended to measure (Johnson, 2013). To ensure face validity of the survey, the survey questionnaire was shared with a senior internal communications manager from one of South Africa's "big four" banks for their feedback/suggestions. Additionally,

the web-based survey was pilot tested with ten individuals who are experienced in both internal communication and employee engagement.

- **Content validity** measures whether the test measures a representative sample of the units under study (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). The content validity of the web-based survey was ensured from the responses gained from the pilot study conducted with senior internal communications employees who are considered experts in their field. It is worth mentioning that the questionnaire was developed based on a thorough search of the literature review and based on the feedback received from the pilot test (Mackison, Wrieden & Anderson, 2010; Rattray & Jones, 2007).
- **Internal validity** refers to whether the study's research instruments measure what they are intended to measure (Given, 2008). To achieve internal validity of the questionnaire, the web-based survey was pilot tested with ten individuals gained through convenience sampling. The purpose of conducting the pilot study was to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the survey and question format, possible ambiguity with respect to formulation of questions, as well as unclear choices.
- **External validity** is the likelihood of a study's findings being generalised to larger populations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003). Due to the small sample size, the findings of the study do not represent the population and, therefore, cannot be generalised to South African businesses. However, the study provided insight into internal communication and employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks, thus the findings can only be generalised to these banks.

5.9.1.2 Reliability

The web-based survey's reliability was measured in the following way:

- **Internal consistency** refers to the inter-relatedness of items within a test. It further refers to the extent that all items of a test measure the same concept or construct. It is worth noting that internal consistency was determined prior to ensuring validity. Moreover, Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to test for reliability. According to Starborn (2006:1), “Cronbach alpha’s coefficient is used as a measure of internal consistency as it indicates the degree to which all the items in a test measure the same attribute”. Furthermore, Cronbach’s alpha is an appropriate test for assessing the internal consistency of scales that are computed from Likert items. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient reliability analysis was used to eliminate items with low reliability coefficients ($p < .7$); in so doing, this increased scale reliability.

5.9.2 Trustworthiness of the face-to-face interviews

While the terms reliability and validity are important measures of quality in quantitative studies, this is however not the case in qualitative research. According to Gibbert *et al.*, (2008), Osborne (2008), Fouche and Delport (2002), Janesick (2000), and Lincoln and Guba (1985), qualitative researchers use *credibility*, *neutrality* or *confirmability*, *consistency* or *dependency*, and *applicability* or *transferability* as measures of quality. Moreover, to ensure reliability and validity (generalisability of the results), an examination of trustworthiness is crucial (Seale, 1999). Thus, to determine the trustworthiness of the face-to-face interview results, credibility, confirmability, dependency, and transferability were used – these are discussed below:

- **Credibility** is an essential factor for establishing trustworthiness. Similar to internal validity in quantitative research, credibility ensures that the “study measures or tests what it is intended to” (Shenton, 2004:64). Moreover, credibility is the qualitative term that answers the question, “How congruent are the findings with reality?” (Merriam, 1998). To establish credibility, Lincoln and Guba (1985:314) suggest “member checks – the most important technique for establishing credibility”. In describing this, Creswell and Miller (2000:196) state that “it consists of taking data and interpretations back to the study’s participants so that they can

confirm the credibility and narrative account". For this research, credibility was achieved through conducting the pilot study that aims to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the survey and question format as well as possible ambiguity with respect to the formulation of questions as well as unclear choices. Based on the feedback received, the respondent's comments and suggestions were incorporated prior to data collection.

- **Confirmability** is the qualitative researcher equivalence of construct validity (Riege, 2003). Shenton (2004:72) deems it critical to conduct an 'audit trail' for the researcher to trace the steps of the research through the decisions and described procedures. In the context of this research, a detailed step-by-step process of the data collection and analysis procedure is discussed in *5.8 Data Analysis*. Additionally, the data collected from the face-to-face interviews was through audio recording and transcribed verbatim afterwards. It worth mentioning that the conclusions drawn regarding developing the conceptual framework for employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks were based on the face-to-face interviews and responses from the web-based questionnaire not those of the researcher.
- **Dependency** is an alternative for reliability (De Vos, 2007). In addressing dependability, Shenton (2004) is of the view that the study's processes should be reported in detail, as this will enable future researchers to replicate the work and achieve the same results. Thus, to determine dependency in this study, the survey questionnaire was shared with a senior internal communications employee from one of South Africa's "big four" banks for their feedback/suggestions, and to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the survey and question format, possible ambiguity with respect to formulation of questions, as well as unclear choices.
- **Transferability** focuses on applying the study's findings to other situations, or similar groups of participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Merriam, 1998). According to Campbell (1986), transferability has also been termed generalisability or external validity. As previously discussed, due to the small sample size, the

study's results do not represent the population and, therefore cannot be generalised to South African businesses. However, the study provided insight into internal communication and employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks, thus the findings can only be generalised to these banks.

5.10 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the study's research methodology and further discussed the selected research design, sampling procedure, data collection, and analysis procedures, as well as the data collection instruments, namely web-based survey and face-to-face interviews. Moreover, the measures of quality in research (validity and reliability) were also discussed.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the research methodology of the study, with reference to the rationale for selecting a method, population, sampling process and sample size, the data collection method, and specific measuring instruments. This chapter presents results from the exploratory study on internal communication in the South African banking sector, particularly in the “big four” banks, it further addresses the study’s two research questions; *Which internal communication channels are available in South Africa’s “big four” banks? Which elements of internal communication make up the conceptual framework of employee engagement?*

The perceptions of employees (quantitative data) were collected through a web-based self-administered survey questionnaire hosted on *SurveyMonkey*, an online survey tool, whereas the perceptions of senior internal communications managers (qualitative data) were collected using face-to-face interviews. For the qualitative aspect, themes and patterns were identified using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis while SPSS version 25.0 was used for the quantitative data analysis. The findings from the qualitative interviews and the quantitative survey were triangulated in the analysis and interpretation of the data to give a holistic understanding of the themes in this study. Triangulation is the process of looking at data from different sources to increase the credibility of the research at hand.

The study’s data analysis procedures are discussed in the following section.

6.2 DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents the steps for analysing the data from the face-to-face interviews and the web-based self-administered survey questionnaire. It is worth mentioning that an exploratory sequential design was used to present the data.

6.2.1 Face-to-face interviews

The data analysis process followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phased thematic analysis as presented in Chapter 5. Thus, the researcher began by familiarising herself with the data by transcribing all recorded interview data from the four face-to-face interviews into written text and reading the data repeatedly. The recorded interview data was conducted in the following timeframes: Participant 1 = 57:39, Participant 2 = 41:32, Participant 3 = 44:12 and Participant 4 = 49:21. The written data enabled the researcher to identify new patterns (or themes) such as similar or repeated words and phrases that were related to the study's research questions. This process was followed by generating initial codes that are summaries of basic elements in the data that can be assessed. The coding process involved breaking down data into small parts (codes) prior to categorising it into patterns (themes). The researcher coded for as many potential themes as possible. Next, the researcher generated initial codes and the data extracts with a similar code were then grouped together for ease of analysis when building themes.

While sorting the different codes into themes, the researcher wrote a brief description of each theme. By the end of this stage, the researcher had identified and developed themes and sub-themes from the collected data. The identified themes were later reviewed and refined to ensure that the themes are related to the data set. It was established that some of the identified themes addressed the study's aim and research questions, while other themes were unique. Each theme was further grouped into a category that explains what the theme is about. In this last step of the data analysis process, the researcher produced a written report analysing and discussing the themes (research findings). The themes

were further linked to the literature review to draw attention to the study's importance in addressing the gap in the literature.

The following section presents the characteristics of the interview participants.

6.2.1.1 Characteristics of interview participants

All the respondents were senior internal communications managers in the four South African banks sampled in this study. The names of the four respondents and their banks have been withheld to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Thus, the participants are referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and Participant 4, while the banks are referred to as Bank A, Bank B, Bank C, and Bank D.

Table 6.1: Characteristics of interview participants

| Participant Code | Business Unit/ Department | Job Position |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Participant 1 (Bank A) | Group Marketing and Communications | Senior internal communications manager |
| Participant 2 (Bank B) | Information Technology | Senior internal communications manager |
| Participant 3 (Bank C) | Corporate Affairs | Senior internal communications manager |
| Participant 4 (Bank D) | Branch Operations | Senior internal communications manager |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

Table 6.1 above highlights the characteristics of the four research participants that took part in the face-to-face interviews. Convenience sampling was used to select the participants for this research. This method was selected because it allowed the researcher to conveniently select participants who were available to provide the required

information, quickly and efficiently (Mwape & Mumba, 2012). Furthermore, the main objective of interviewing senior internal communications managers is that they can provide detailed insight and understanding, as they are involved in the internal communication strategy development and implementation, and the day-to-day business requirements of the internal communications team within their respective bank. Excerpts of their interview transcripts, coupled with emergent themes, are presented in the following section.

6.2.1.2 Emergent themes

The purpose of this study was to **develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement**. This section outlines the results following the thematic analysis of the semi-structured face-to-face interviews conducted with the four senior internal communications managers. To achieve the study's objective, a total of six themes were generated using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phased thematic analysis. Quotations from research participant have been added to provide narrative accounts and to illustrate the themes that emerged from the interviews.

6.2.1.2.1 Theme 1: Collaboration/ Cross-Functional Planning

One of the key findings from this thematic analysis was that all the themes were linked to one core theme: Collaboration/ Cross-Functional Planning. As indicated in the study's literature review, previous studies have reported that "employee collaborations have proven to boost overall business performance by 36% and has quickly become the responsibility of internal communication to help lead the collaboration change" (Melcrum, 2013). Collaboration is important for the internal communication function, particularly if employee engagement is the objective. The literature further showed that the most effective way that organisations can increase engagement is through clear and effective internal communication (Welch, 2015; AON Hewitt's, 2014; Gallup, 2012; Ruck & Welch, 2012; Ruck, 2012; Welch, 2011) while the findings suggest that collaboration from an internal communication function is crucial for increasing employee engagement.

The participants mentioned the importance of collaborating cross-departmentally with the external communication team, Marketing teams, and employees that are spread out across different office locations. Participant 1's response detailed the importance of the internal and external communication teams collaborating to establish which external messages should be communicated internally, how and when, and what the objectives of the particular message or channel usage are. Suggesting that, in essence, internal communication should mirror external communication. In support of this statement, Participant 4's views were similar, stating that:

“In collaboration with our Brand, Marketing and PR team, the internal communication managers devise messages for staff to address issues that are happening in the public (externally). However, we endeavour to communicate with our employees before we share anything with the public”.

Participant 2 and Participant 3's responses were not as detailed as those shared by Participant 1 and Participant 4, however, they were of the opinion that, overall, collaboration is important within an organisation as everyone is working to achieve a common goal, which would be the success of the business through engaged employees.

It is clear from the responses cited above that collaboration is a critical requirement for internal communication as the theme emerged from all four participant responses, further suggesting that the four banks collaborate cross-departmentally to achieve the organisation's objectives. Apart from collaborating with the Brand, Marketing and PR team, Participant 2 further expressed that they have monthly communication forums where the different communication managers from each business unit or department share their department's updates so that the central communication team is able to support their initiatives. These responses further support the literature which states that from events planning and producing editorial content to providing strategic counsel and driving dialogue, communities and collaboration, the role of the modern internal communication practitioner is being rapidly redefined. Moreover, a Melcrum (2013) study found that employee collaborations have proven to boost overall business performance

by 36% and has quickly become the responsibility of internal communication to help lead the collaboration change.

Additionally, the collaboration theme is strongly linked to the 'support business units' view. Three participants note that supporting business units and departments across South Africa and Africa is an important role of the internal communication function.

The reviewed literature states that the internal communication function operates in silos, believing that their work excludes what happens externally (from a PR/Marketing perspective) (Holtz, 2017), which is not the case. The responses cited above suggest that internal communication messages should be consistent with the organisation's external messages. Thus, there appears to be a consensus between the four participants that consistency in both internal and external communication messages is a major factor in employee engagement. It is also worth noting that Participant 1 and Participant 2 mention that employees are generally the first to hear about a business announcement or product launch prior to it being shared externally. This supports the literature, which states that messages are shared internally with employees prior to being shared externally with the public (Holtz, 2016). Most importantly, these four responses help to establish or improve employee engagement within the four South African banks and concur with the literature, which also revealed that internal and external communication are inter-connected (Holtz, 2017; Sebastiao, Zulato & Trindade, 2017; Surbhi, 2017; Melcrum, 2013; Kim & Rhee, 2011; Hoover, 2005).

In relation to the above discussion, Von Bertalanffy's (1950) Systems Theory states that organisational success relies on inter-relations and inter-connectedness between subsystems that must work together harmoniously to ensure that the larger system (the organisation) succeeds. As proposed in this section, it is imperative that the internal communication function collaborates with other departments to ensure organisational success. Collaboration between employees and the internal and external communication functions can all be considered vital for the organisation.

6.2.1.2.2 Theme 2: Partner with Human Resources Function

Another noteworthy finding emerging from this research was that the internal communication function should partner with the HR Function. In support of this, the literature review refers to the fact that there are numerous critical and inter-connected features of internal communication that are too often spread out across various functions (most typically with HR or Marketing) (Holtz, 2017). Whereas, an earlier study conducted by Gates (1999) proposed that internal communication and HR practitioners alike are concerned that the split between desk-bound, client-facing, and telecommuting employees is increasingly widening, thus challenging organisations to implement innovative solutions to communicate with all three employee groups. Based on these views, the researcher is of the view that internal communication is, therefore, a critical Human Resources function.

Three of the four participants mention the importance of collaborating with the HR Function. Worth noting is that Participant 2 did not make any reference to partnering with the HR Function which may suggest that they did not think that it was important nor that it made a difference to the business or the role of internal communication in their respective bank. Participant 1's view was somewhat different, stating that, "Being a champion for the bank's employee value proposition and partnering with the HR Function to promote the bank as an employer of choice internally to employees". In addition, Participant 4 described the importance of partnering with the Human Resource function in the following way:

"When employees leave the business, HR conducts exit interviews to understand the cause of their resignation. One of the questions posed in the exit interviews is about the effectiveness of the company's internal processes and information sharing channels".

These findings are closely related to the study's literature review which revealed that internal communication is a critical HR Function for the retention, engagement,

productivity, and increased performance of employees. Moreover, Von Bertalanffy's (1950) Systems Theory is evident in this theme through the collaborating of the Internal Communication and HR Functions.

6.2.1.2.3 Theme 3: Communication Channels

The findings from the thematic analysis revealed that three of the four South African banks use social media as an internal communication channel. This finding is supported by the literature reviewed. A study conducted by Cooper (2018) states that the internal communications function should value social media and technology as it has changed the way individuals consume information. Thus, internal communication teams should consider this when devising content and should tailor it to be accessible on mobile devices too. Sievert and Scholz (2017) further adds that social media, as an internal communication channel, could play an effective role in supporting employee engagement in general.

It is worth noting that three of the four CEOs and other senior leaders (excluding Participant 4) had an active social media presence on internal social media channels. These channels were described as being similar to Twitter and Facebook, where the leaders were encouraged to interact with staff or post updates in their own personal capacity. Based on the responses provided above, and in relation to the study's literature review, investing in internal social media platforms has increased. However, conversations focus on the technology and its features, rather than productivity and benefits to employees. Many organisations are yet to capitalise on their full potential (Melcrum, 2013).

Participant 3's response supported the literature, which views social media as an invaluable internal communication tool:

“Building a workplace social media site might sound crazy, but internal social tools provide an opportunity for colleagues to communicate instantly about company

updates as opposed to waiting for an email. This network can also house events calendars for the company and streamline communication channels within the office... When you have employees spread out across many different locations and offices, an internal social network also helps connect everyone and provides the opportunity for more collaboration and partnership”.

The above quotation reiterates the importance of social media, not only for the leaders' profile but also as an effective internal communication channel. However, the question then arises, does Participant 4's bank not have internal social media due to it not being seen as an important internal communication channel, or does Participant 4's bank not believe that it is an appropriate tool for building the leaders profile internally? The increasing popularity of new media (social media), in comparison to traditional media, ensures that information is spread at a faster rate, to a wider audience, and is accessible immediately. Thus, new media and technology channels are being incorporated into internal communication, which has proven to be beneficial for organisations, particularly in the competition for employee's attention.

6.2.1.2.4 Theme 4: Two-Way Communication with Leaders

It was mentioned in the literature that leader communication, provided that it is open and effective, plays a significant role in positively influencing the development of employee engagement (Welch 2011; Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011; Bindl & Parker, 2010; Wiley, Kowske & Herman, 2010; Saks, 2006). This reciprocal relationship is consistent with Blau's (1964) Social Exchange Theory that posits that individuals give something with the hope of receiving something valuable in return. This exchange can be financial or socio-economical such as care, respect and loyalty. The latter feelings provoke feelings of obligation, gratitude, and trust, which were mentioned in Chapter 4 as the benefits of engaged employees. Furthermore, Saks (2006:607) believes that “engaged employees are more likely to have trusting and quality relationships with employers, and further display positive attitudes and intentions towards their organisation”. In addition to the

Social Exchange Theory, McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Theory Y posit that happy employees are driven and are willing to put additional effort into their work.

During the coding process, the categories CEO and leaders were merged into one main theme as the interview participants frequently used the two terminologies interchangeably. As previously mentioned in this research, a leader refers to executives, senior managers, and line managers. From the participants' responses mentioned below, it is evident that their leaders use a variety of internal communication channels, ranging from self-managed internal social media accounts, town hall meetings, CEO Roadshows, email communication, and a monthly column in the staff magazine. In addition to this, Participant 2 further mentions that their leaders have an open-door policy where employees are encouraged to approach the relevant executive to chat about business, sport or anything that comes to mind.

Moreover, Participant 4 made an interesting comment:

“If an email was addressed from the organisation's leader, particularly the CEO, it meant that the communication was of business importance – such as changes within the organisation, business performance, business strategy, etc.”.

The above quotations reiterate the importance of CEO or leadership communication. There was a clear consensus among research participants that leader communication is important, not only for the purpose of making the CEO the voice of the organisation but for employee engagement too. For example, Participant 1 and Participant 3 mention that their CEOs are dedicated to communicating monthly. Additionally, Participant 2 mentions that their CEO has an open-door policy that encourages employees to approach the CEO at any time if he is available. Although the frequency was not mentioned, Participant 4 mentions that the CEO travels locally and Africa to engage with employees. This suggests that leader or CEO visibility (through internal communication) is crucial for maintaining employee engagement, in turn influencing business success.

Moreover, in support of this finding, the Media Richness Theory states that face-to-face communication allows for both physical and verbal cues, thus it is the richest and most satisfactory communication channel – ideal for conveying detailed information or resolving conflicts (Daft & Lengel, 1986), and sharing information simultaneously (Lengel & Daft, 1988; Men, 2014).

6.2.1.2.5 Theme 5: Counsel

A significant finding emerging from the thematic analysis was about the role of internal communication practitioners. In the literature reviewed, Melcrum (2013) asserts that from events planning and producing editorial content, to providing strategic counsel and driving dialogue, communities and collaboration, the role of the modern internal communication practitioner is being rapidly redefined. An open-ended question in the interview schedule specifically addressed the responsibilities of the internal communication function. Participants were requested to state the main responsibilities of the internal communication function within their bank (see Appendix C in the interview schedule). It is evident through their responses that respondents view the internal communication function as one of counselling. Key phrases that were used to describe the role of the internal communication function include ‘guide’, ‘advice’ or ‘counsel’.

The responses supporting this theme were simple and straightforward, the participants were of the view that the internal communications team acts as a guide – suggesting what should be done or what simply won’t work. Participant 1’s response was more detailed, detailing that their role was specifically focussed on providing guidance and advising senior leaders or executives on the messages to be communicated, as well as the most appropriate communication channel for sharing specific/certain messages, stating that:

“...Advice senior executives on internal communication and engagement best practice to positively influence communications within the business functions at head office and across the Africa region... Provide guidance and counsel to senior

leaders on the importance of open internal communication and employee engagement...”.

Based on the responses cited above, there was a general consensus among participants that the ‘counsel’ role is important as it can influence communication in the organisation and ultimately establish or improve employee engagement. However, to be able to provide guidance, the internal communication function should be involved in the bank’s initiatives. Von Bertalanffy’s (1950) Systems Theory explains that organisations are viewed as a dynamic process, consisting of several variables that constantly interact with one another and with the external environment.

6.2.1.2.6 Theme 6: Measure Internal Communication Effectiveness

The literature review highlighted that internal communication measures can influence the organisation’s overall performance (Meng & Berger, 2012). Thus, Daft and Lengel’s (1986) Media Richness Theory may be appropriate for this study as it accounts for media choices. Media richness refers to the medium’s ability to successfully convey information to its target audience, while capability refers to the accessibility and time it takes to get feedback from the medium, the use of physical and verbal cues to encourage understanding and focus of the message. The question raised was which processes were in place to ensure internal communication effectiveness, and how internal communication effectiveness was measured in each bank. All four participants’ narratives asserted that measuring internal communication effectiveness was indeed important for employee engagement in South Africa’s “big four” banks. Consequently, measuring internal communication effectiveness has been shown to offer the organisation numerous benefits such as “knowing how many employees we’re reaching” (Participant 1), “has the content changed their behaviours?” (Participant 2), “helps us improve content... is the delivery channel appropriate?” (Participant 3), and “tracking readership so that we can improve it” (Participant 4).

The participants made detailed comments in relation to this theme, suggesting that their banks gather employee feedback on the bank's communication style (and other factors such as the office culture, company, canteen menu, etc.). However, to elicit truthful responses from employees, it is crucial to ensure that responses are provided anonymously as most people fear being victimised. In addition, the use of internal communication channels with tracking tools also gave a good idea of the effectiveness of the particular channels. Some of the tools or processes in place for measuring internal communication include setting target numbers to measure effectiveness through surveys specifically targeted at all employees or specific groups (such as Marketing and Communication, and Human Resource business functions).

Other measures that are in place allow the banks to track whether messages were read (or not), forwarded, how long they were opened for (if at all), or deleted without being opened. The intranet login rates and email link openings also track employee behaviour towards internal communication. In other instances, as highlighted by Participant 4, the bank sets realistic targets and measures this based on adoption or usage rates of channels, and the number of employees who action internal communications. Due to the large employee numbers, we have numerous communication channels to ensure that we reach our large employee audience as not all employees are in the office on a daily basis. Although some are in the building, they are often attending to other business issues – such as meetings – away from their desks.

The above narratives provided detailed information about measuring internal communication effectiveness in the “big four” South African banks. Through the narratives of these individuals, it became clearer that measuring internal communication effectiveness is another important factor helping South African banks improve internal communication and employee engagement. Based on the participants' responses, the researcher is of the view that organisations that do not measure their internal communication effectiveness may struggle to target the right employee groups, elicit the desired action from employees, or ensure that a particular message or channel is effective, thus making it impossible to build or improve employee engagement.

Table 6.2 provides a summary of the themes developed for the conceptual framework, as well as a brief description of each theme.

Table 6.2: Hierarchy of emergent themes

| No. | Themes | Description |
|------------|--|--|
| 1. | Collaboration/ Cross-Functional Planning | Collaboration with other stakeholders, business units and departments is key for internal communication. |
| 2. | Partner with Human Resources Function | The internal communication functions' partnering with the Human Resources Function is crucial for employee engagement. |
| 3. | Communication Channels | Internal social media as a form of internal communication can play an effective role to support employee engagement. |
| 4. | Two-Way Communication with Leaders | Leaders, senior managers, and the CEO should communicate internally to gain trust from employees, and to create a positive image of an organisation. |
| 5. | Counsel | The role of the internal communication practitioner is to counsel (guide or advice) leaders, business units and departments on what to communicate, including how, when and why. |
| 6. | Measure Internal Communication Effectiveness | Measuring internal communication effectiveness can help the organisation improve its communication, frequency and channel choices. |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

This section presented the results following the completion of the thematic analysis of the face-to-face interviews conducted with the four senior internal communications managers. Quotations from research participants were added to provide narrative accounts and to illustrate the themes that emerged from the face-to-face interviews.

The following section presents the study's quantitative results.

6.2.2 Web-based survey questionnaire

The purpose of this study was to **develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks**. Thus, the survey questionnaire was shared with employees of South Africa's "big four" banks. SPSS version 25.0 was used to analyse the quantitative data. The data was first imported from Microsoft Excel and cleaned to correct inconsistencies. Some of the inconsistencies included wrong spellings for captured data. The missing data was excluded from the analysis. Moreover, the survey was developed on a seven-point Likert scale to determine the degree to which respondents agree or disagree with a question or statement. Likert scale questions produce ordinal data. Thus, to analyse ordinal data, the researcher used non-parametric tests that did not require stringent assumptions such as normal distributions. For this study, three non-parametric tests were selected to analyse the data and address the research questions raised in the previous section. The three non-parametric tests used were Chi-square, Kendall's tau-b, and Gamma tests. These three tests are briefly described below:

6.2.2.1 Chi-Square

The Chi-square test determines whether a relationship exists between two given categorical variables. The null hypothesis in a Chi-square test suggests that a relationship does not exist between two given variables. To reject a null hypothesis, we need a P-value that is less than 0.05 (at 95% confidence). This means that when the *P* is less than 0.05 (i.e. $p < 0.05$), we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a

statistically significant relationship or association between the two variables being assessed.

6.2.2.2 Kendall's tau-b

Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient is a non-parametric measure of the strength and direction of association that exists between two variables measured on at least an ordinal scale. The two variables should be categorised in the same direction, i.e. either from low to high or negative to positive. In this study, all the engagement and internal communication questions were categorised on a similar seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Kendall's tau-b values range from -1 to 1. Negative tau-b value shows an inverse relationship. This means that the two variables grow and change in opposite directions. However, a value closer to 1 shows a strong relationship between the two variables. Kendall's tau-b is recommended for square tables i.e., comparison of variables with the same number of categories.

6.2.2.3 Goodman and Kruskal's Gamma

Like Kendall's tau-b, Goodman and Kruskal's Gamma is a non-parametric test used to "measure the strength and direction of association that exists between two" ordinal scale variables. Gamma values range from -1 to 1. Negative Gamma value shows an inverse relationship, whereas a value closer to 1 shows a strong relationship between two variables. Gamma is recommended when there are a large number of ties in the data.

For this study, data was analysed in two stages:

- First stage: In this stage, findings were analysed and presented using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics describe the sample of the study and measure the degree to which respondents agree or disagree with the statements relating to internal communication and employee engagement. The results of the descriptive statistics presented in bar graphs, pie charts, and frequency tables.

- Second stage: This stage included the analysis and assessment of the relationships that existed between the responses given for each employee engagement and internal communication questions. Due to the nature of the questions used, non-parametric tests were the most appropriate test to use to assess the association and/or independence between variable responses. The tests of association were conducted in SPSS version 25.0.

In summation, the findings of this research were presented using descriptive and inferential statistics in the form of non-parametric tests such as the Chi-square, Kendall's tau-b, and Gamma tests. Additionally, frequency tables, pie charts, and bar graphs were used to summarise and visualise the results. Likert scale options were there were no responses are included in the analysis but not shown in the tables. Moreover, while descriptive statistics were used to summarise data from the results, inferential statistics made conclusions about the wider population (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The study provided insight into internal communication and employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks, thus the findings can only be generalised to these banks.

6.2.3 Findings

The purpose of this study was **to develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks**. This section presents the findings from the survey questionnaire administered to employees in South Africa's "big four" banks. These banks are Bank A, Bank B, Bank C, and Bank D. Although the original sample size of the quantitative component was 300 employees, a total of 97 employees responded to the survey, however, only 84 respondents completed all the questions in the survey. It was important to uphold the study's research ethics that stated that participation in the study is voluntary. Moreover, participants had the option to withdraw from the study if they so wished. From the 97 employees, the majority (45%) of respondents were employed by Bank B (45%), followed by Bank A (30%), Bank D (14%) and Bank C (11%).

The first part of the results focuses on the test for reliability of the survey questionnaire used, whereas the second part presents the descriptive analysis and the last part tests for association between engagement and internal communication.

6.2.3.1 Test for reliability

The web-based survey's reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. 32 questions from the survey measuring employee engagement were used to test for the reliability of the questionnaire. Only Likert scale questions were used in this test. Cronbach's alpha test was done using SPSS software. Cronbach's alpha statistic assumes that the scale being measured is unidimensional, i.e. it only measures one concept. This survey measured employee engagement and internal communication. Questions assessing each of the two components were individually analysed for reliability.

6.2.3.2 Employee engagement

The study's reliability was measured through ten questions that focussed on employee engagement. Cronbach's alpha score of 0.881 indicates a high level of internal consistency for the survey questions used to measure employee engagement. This suggests that the questionnaire was well developed to measure issues related to employee engagement.

Table 6.3: Employee Engagement Reliability Statistics

| Employee Engagement Reliability Statistics | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items | Number of questions |
| 0.876 | 0.838 | 8 |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

6.2.3.3 Internal communication

For internal communication, 32 questions focusing on internal communication in South Africa's "big four" banks were presented. The Cronbach's alpha score of 0.943 indicates a high level of internal consistency for the survey questions used to measure internal communication. This suggests that the questionnaire was well developed to measure issues related to internal communication.

Table 6.4: Internal Communication Reliability Statistics

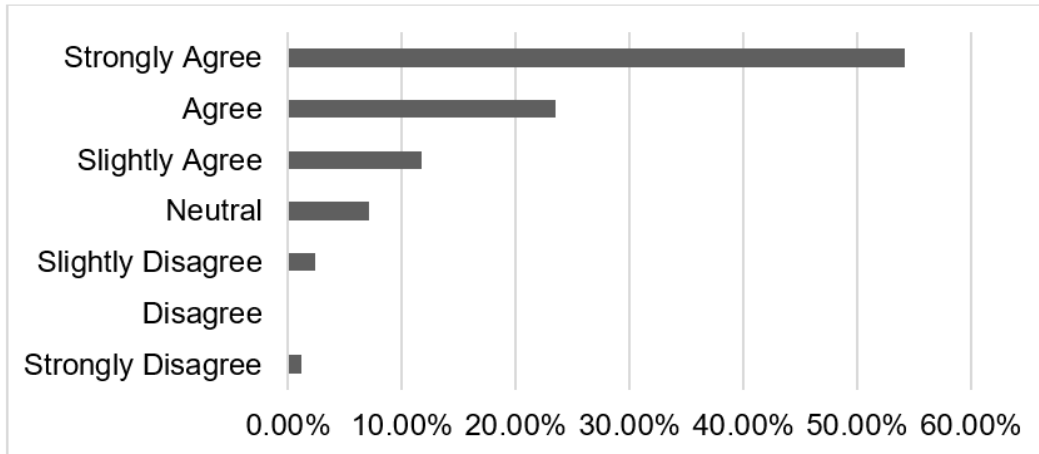
| Internal Communication Reliability Statistics | | |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items | Number of questions |
| 0.942 | 0.943 | 32 |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

Overall, the alpha values obtained in the table above indicate that the survey questionnaire was well developed and can be relied on to measure employee engagement and internal communication.

6.2.3.1 Internal communication function

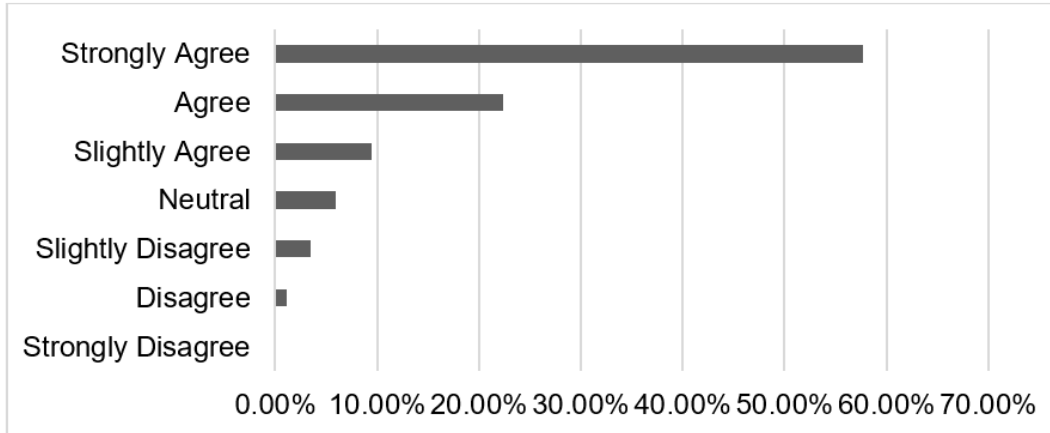
This section presents the findings of the internal communication function based on Section E of the study's web-based survey. In so doing, this also helped address research question 2 (*What role does internal communication play in the banking sector?*).



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.1: Build employee engagement

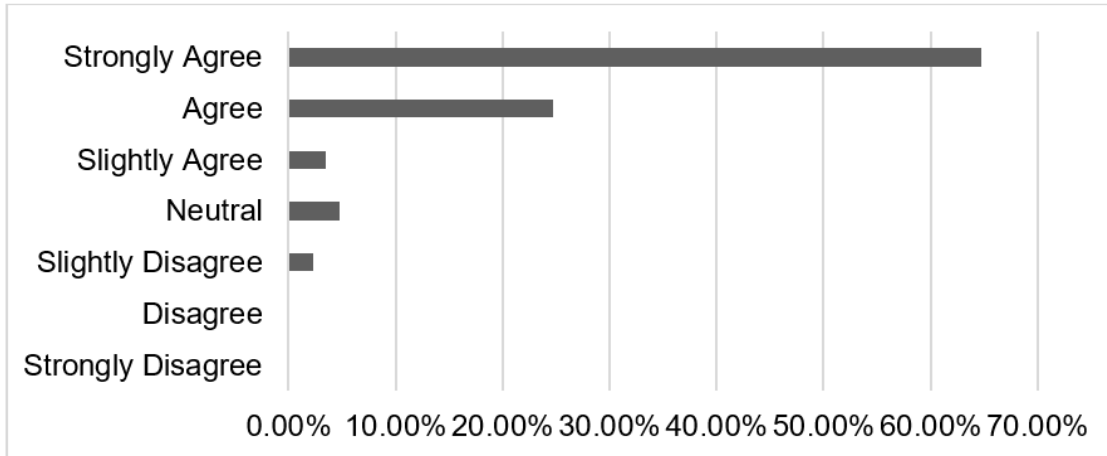
Figure 6.1 suggests that the majority (54.12%) of respondents strongly agree that their bank uses internal communication to build employee engagement, followed by those who agree (23.53%), slightly agree (11.76%), and those who were neutral (7.06%). However, 2.35% slightly disagree, and 1.18% strongly disagree. This reveals that the majority of banks use internal communication to build employee engagement.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.2: Promote commitment and a sense of belonging in the organisation

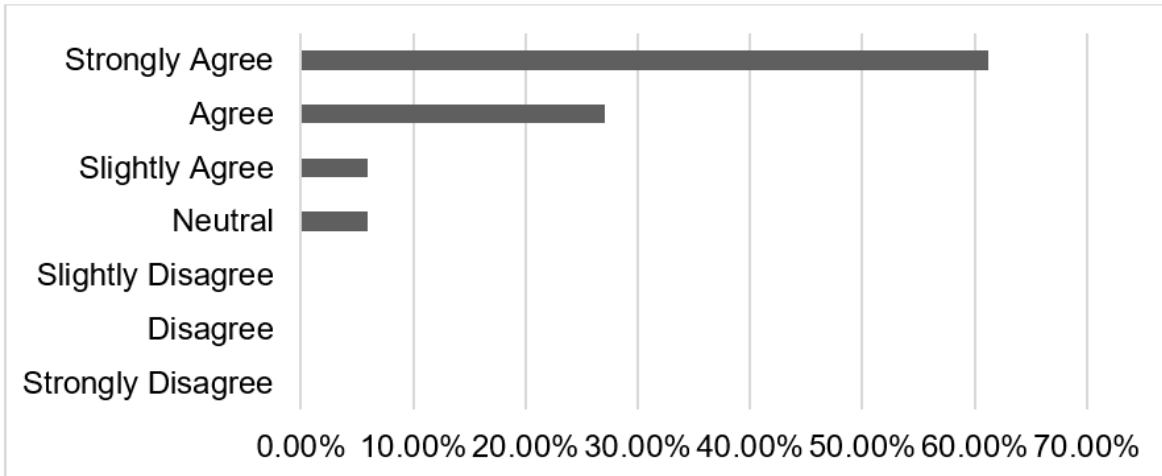
Figure 6.2 suggests that the majority (57.65%) of respondents strongly agree that their bank uses internal communication to promote commitment and a sense of belonging in the organisation, followed by those who agree (22.35%), slightly agree (9.41%), and those who were neutral (5.88%). However, 3.53% slightly disagree and 1.18% disagree. This suggests that the majority of banks use internal communication to promote commitment and a sense of belonging in the organisation.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.3: Create awareness of changes in the organisation

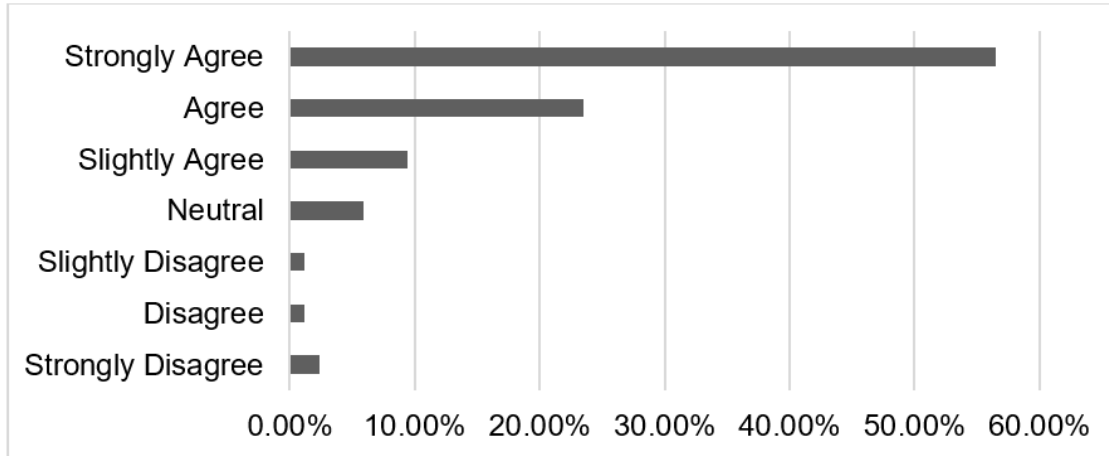
Figure 6.3 suggests that the majority (64.71%) of respondents strongly agree that their bank uses internal communication to create awareness of changes in the organisation, followed by those who agree (24.71%), slightly agree (3.53%), and those who were neutral (4.71%). However, 2.35% slightly disagree. This suggests that the majority of banks use internal communication to create awareness of changes in the organisation.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.4: Create understanding of organisational goals

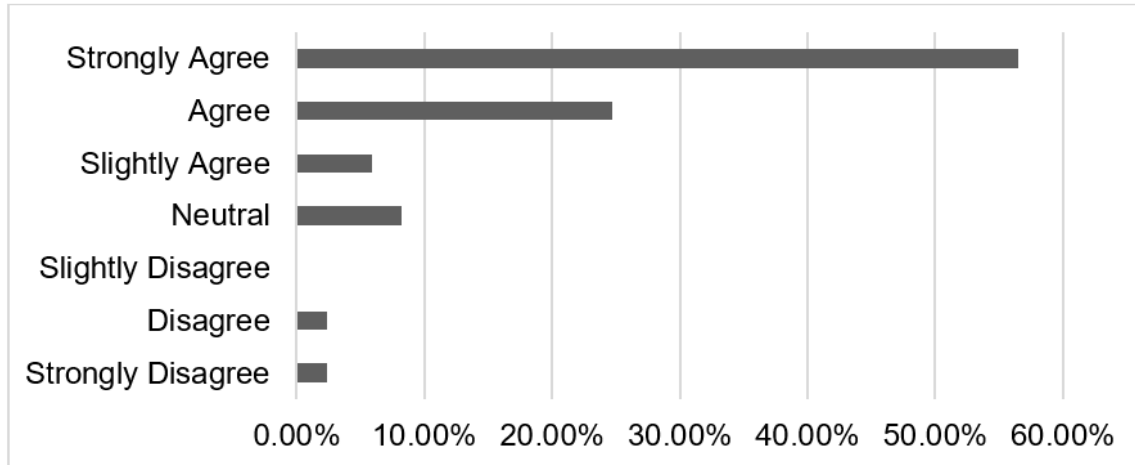
Figure 6.4 suggests that the majority (61.18%) of respondents strongly agree that their bank uses internal communication to create an understanding of organisational goals, followed by those who agree (27.06%), slightly agree (5.88%), and those who were neutral (5.88%). Although in varying degrees, this suggests that all the banks use internal communication to create an understanding of organisational goals.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.5: Motivate employees

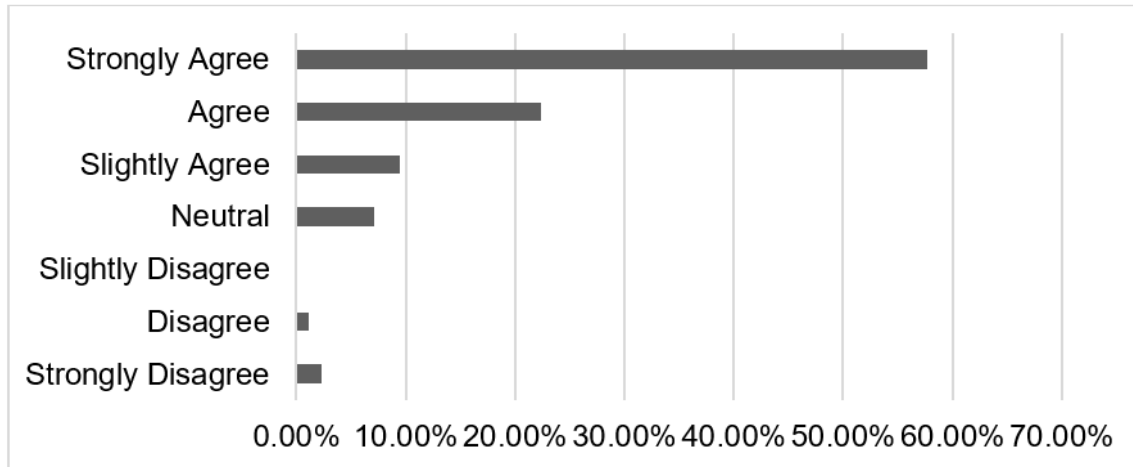
Figure 6.5 suggests that the majority (56.47%) of respondents strongly agree that their bank uses internal communication to motivate employees, followed by those who agree (23.53%), slightly agree (9.41%), and those who were neutral (5.88%). However, 1.18% slightly disagree, 1.18% disagree and 2.35% strongly disagree. Although in varying degrees, this suggests that the majority of banks use internal communication to motivate employees.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.6: Increase employee well-being

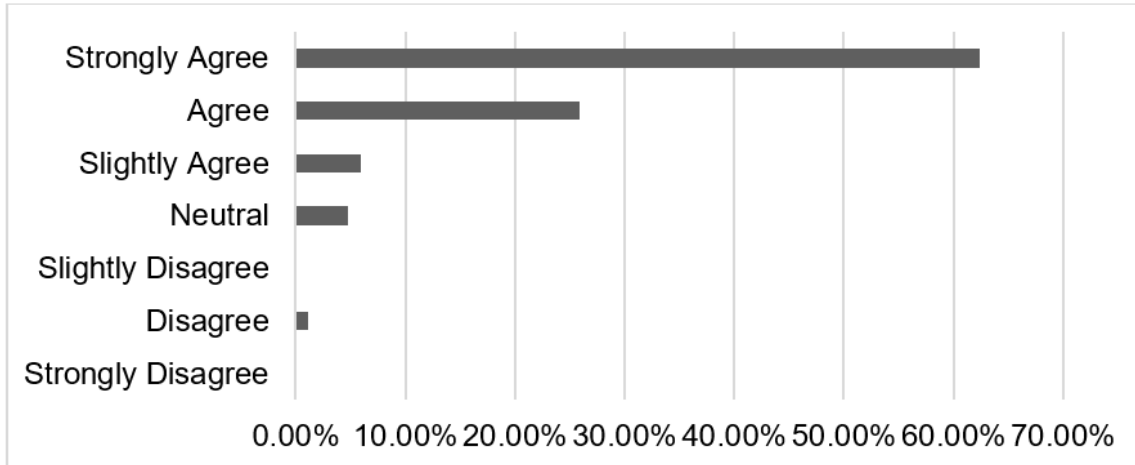
Figure 6.6 suggests that the majority (56.47%) of respondents strongly agree that their bank uses internal communication to increase employee well-being, followed by those who agree (24.71%), slightly agree (5.88%), and those who were neutral (8.24%). However, 2.35% disagree and 2.35% strongly disagree. This reveals that the majority of banks use internal communication to increase employee well-being.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.7: Increase employee productivity and performance

Figure 6.7 suggests that the majority (57.65%) of respondents strongly agree that their bank uses internal communication to increase employee productivity and performance, followed by those who agree (22.35%), slightly agree (9.41%), and those who were neutral (7.06%). However, 1.18% disagree and 2.35% strongly disagree. This reveals that the majority of banks use internal communication to increase employee productivity and performance.



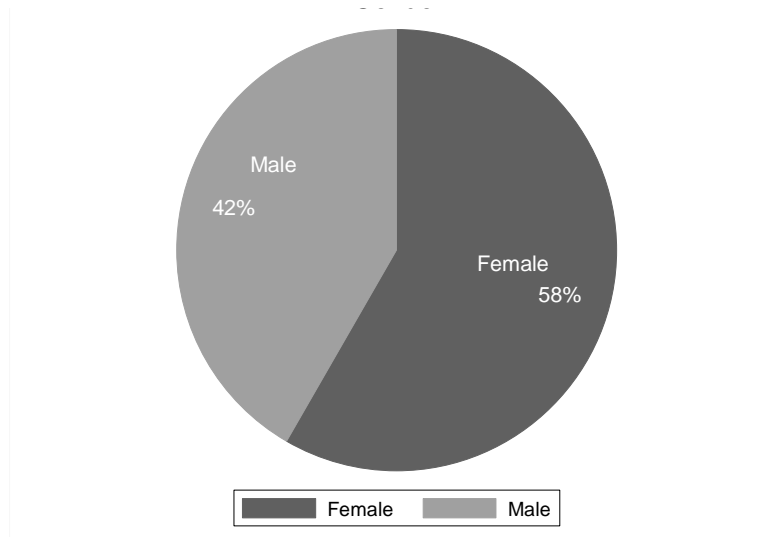
Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.8: Create transparency within the organisation

Figure 6.8 suggests that the majority (62.35%) of respondents strongly agree that their bank uses internal communication to create transparency within the organisation, followed by those who agree (25.88%), slightly agree (5.88%), and those who were neutral (4.71%). However, 1.18% disagree. This reveals that the majority of banks use internal communication to create transparency within the organisation.

6.2.3.4 Descriptive analysis

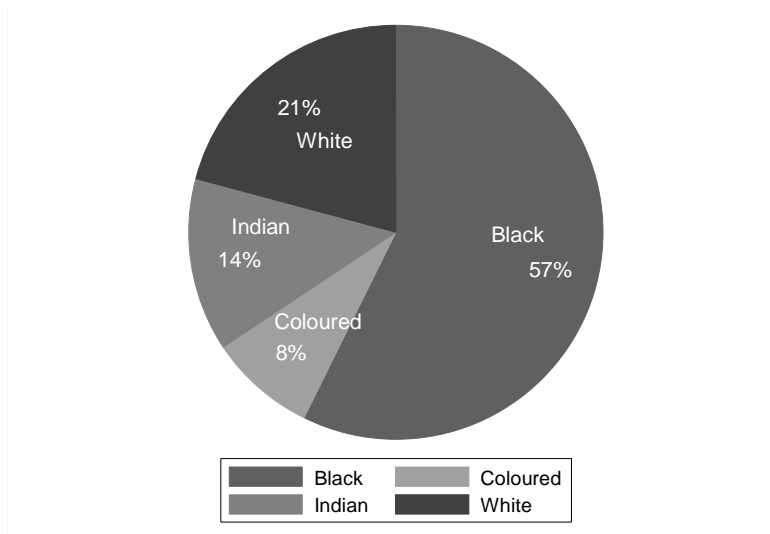
This section presents a descriptive analysis of the sample used in this study.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.9: Gender

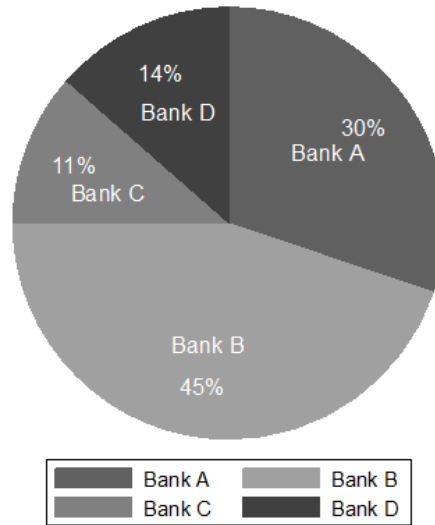
Figure 6.9 suggests that the majority (58%) of respondents were female, whereas 42% were male. This reveals that more females than males that took part in the study.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.10: Race

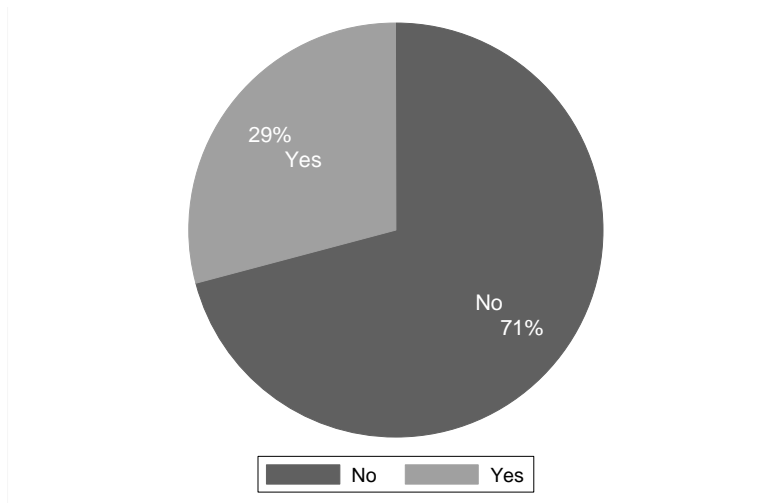
Figure 6.10 suggests that the survey questionnaire was completed by the majority of Black respondents (57%), followed by White respondents (21%), Indian respondents (14%), and Coloured respondents (8%). Due to the small sample size, this is not an indication of the racial groups employed in the four banks that took part in the study.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.11: Distribution of respondents by bank

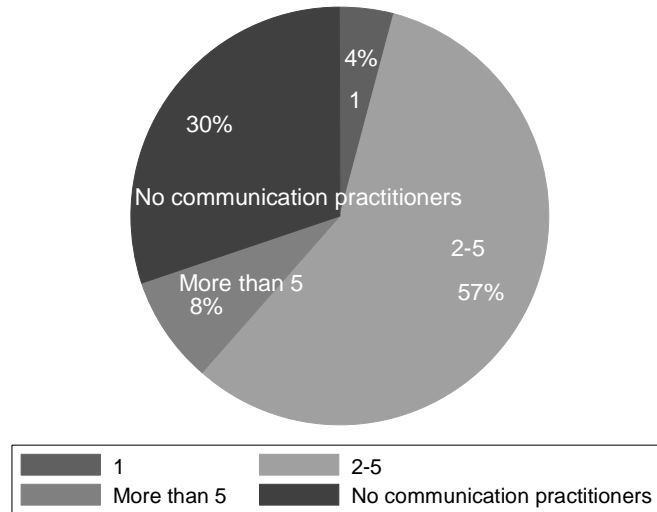
Figure 6.11 suggests that the majority (45%) of respondents are employed by Bank B, followed by Bank A (30%), Bank D (14%) and Bank C (11%).



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.12: Previous employment by other "big four" banks

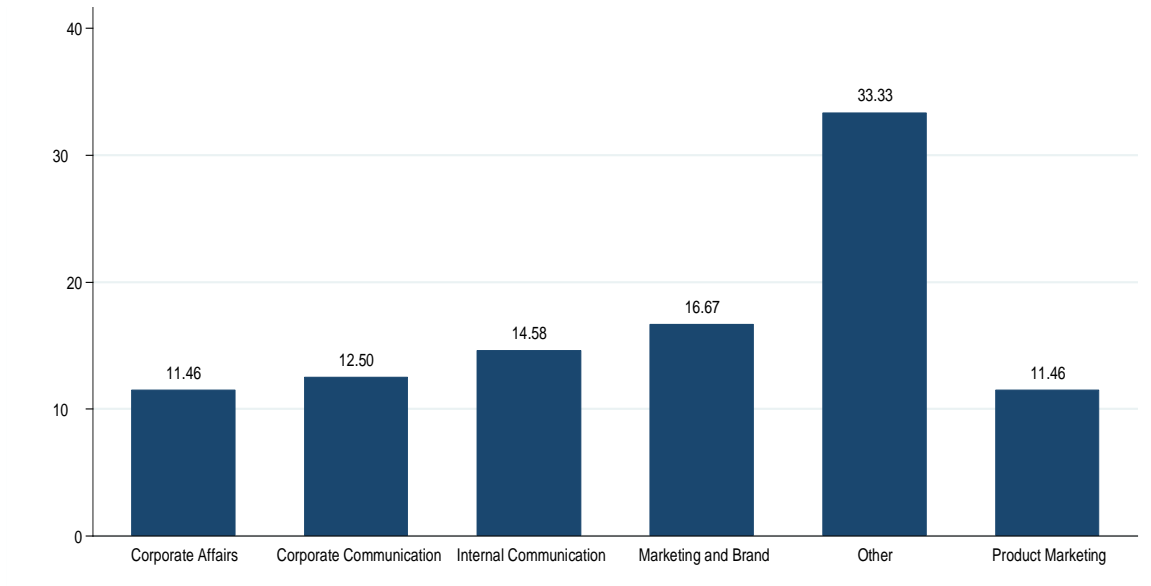
Figure 6.12 suggests that the majority (71%) of respondents had not previously been employed by any of the other "big four" South African banks, whereas 29% had. This suggests that the respondent's experience in internal communication and employee engagement was limited to the bank that they had only worked for.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.13: Communication practitioners in department

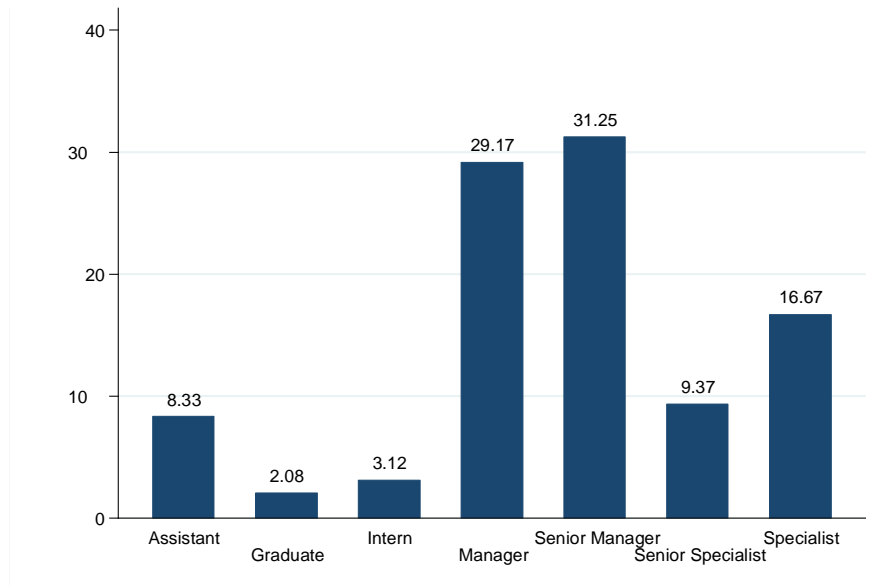
Figure 6.13 suggests that the majority (57%) of respondents worked in departments with up of 2-5 communication practitioners, followed by those with more than five communication practitioners (8%), and those with one communication practitioner (4%). However, 30% state that there were no communication practitioners in their department. The latter results suggest that the respondents may have been from other departments such as, for example, Sales, Legal, Accounting and Finance, and Research and Development.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.14: Department respondent works in

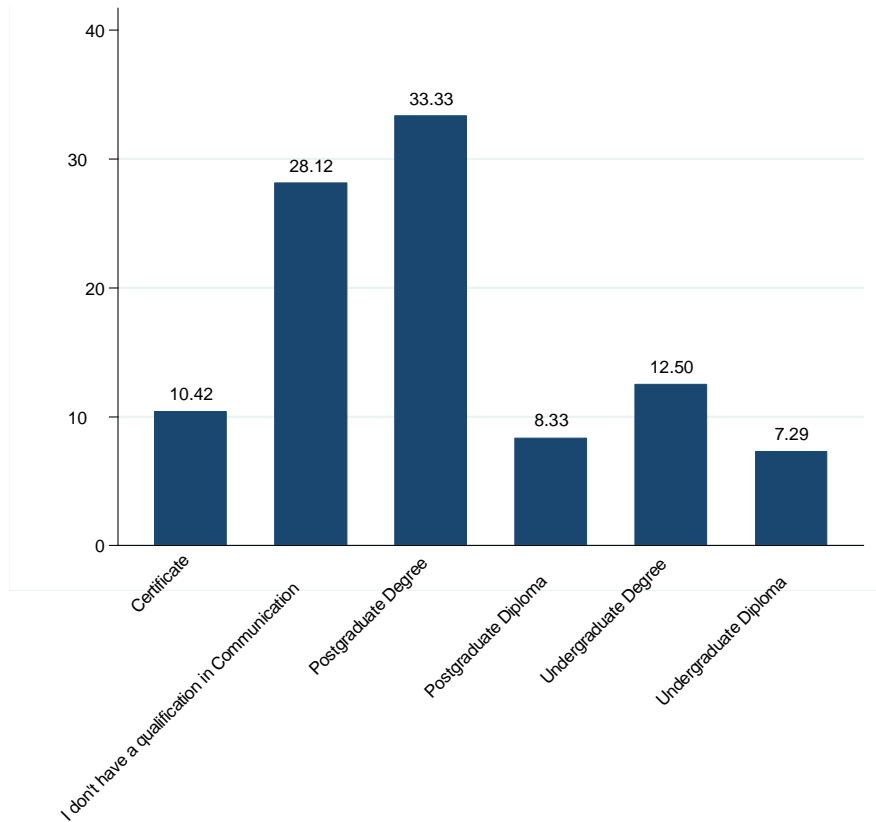
Figure 6.14 suggests that the majority (33%) of respondents work in other departments, followed by Marketing and Brand (16.67%), Internal Communication (14.58%), Corporate Communication (12.50%), whereas Corporate Affairs, and Product Marketing had equal employee numbers (11.46%). This reveals that the majority of respondents were in departments that added value to the research and thus made a significant contribution to the study.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.15: Position level within organisation

Figure 6.15 suggests that the majority (31.25%) of respondents were Senior Managers, followed by Managers (29.17%), Specialists (16.67%), Senior Specialists (9.37%), Assistants (8.33%), Interns (3.12%), and Graduates (2.08%). Based on the information contained in the graph, it is clear that the majority of survey respondents occupied senior positions.



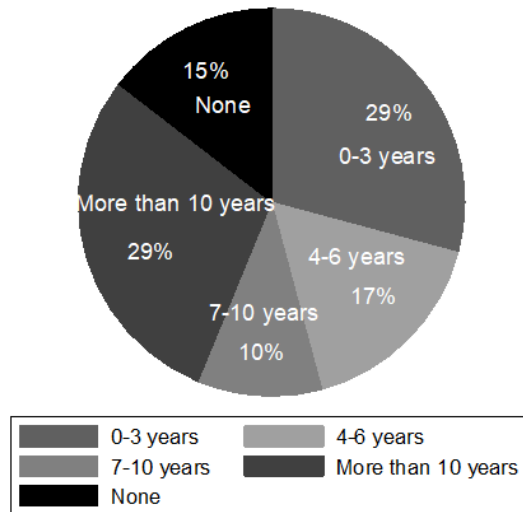
Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.16: Highest communication qualification

From figure 6.16 we can deduce that the majority (33.33%) of respondents held postgraduate degrees, followed by respondents who did not have a Communication qualification (28.12%), respondents with undergraduate degrees (12.50%), respondents with certificates (10.42%), respondents with postgraduate diplomas (8.33%), and respondents with undergraduate diplomas (7.29%).

These results suggest two things:

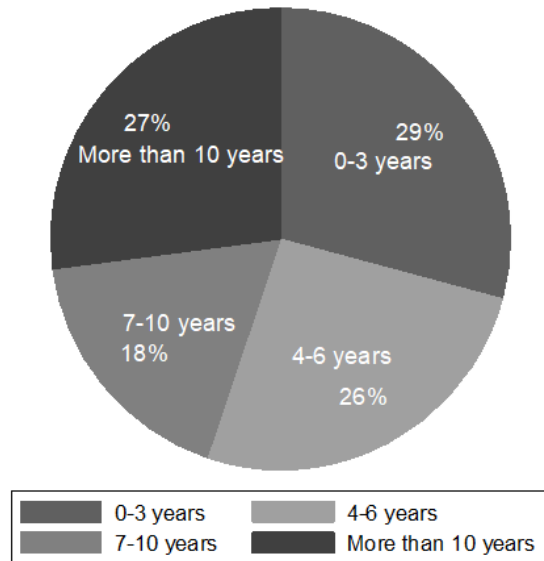
- The majority (71.87%) of respondents had Communication qualifications.
- The four sampled South African banks hire qualified candidates as this may assist the banks to achieve their objectives.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.17: Experience in internal communication

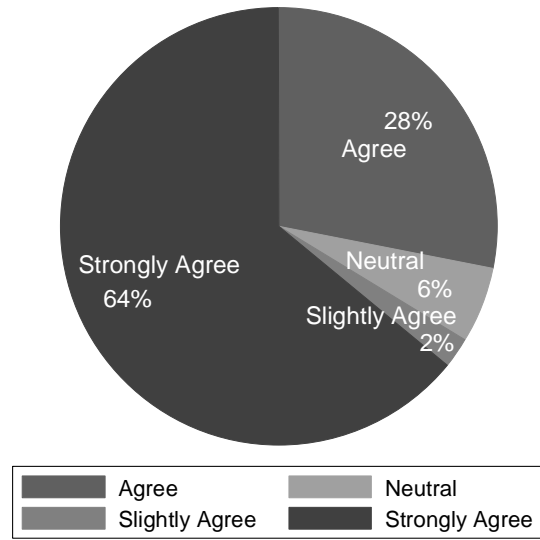
Figure 6.17 suggests that the majority (29%) of respondents were split between respondents with more than 10 years' internal communication experience and 0-3 years' internal communication experience (29%), respondents with 4-6 years' internal communication experience (17%), respondents with no internal communication experience (15%), and respondents with 7-10 years internal communication experience (10%). These results reveal that the majority (85%) of respondents had internal communication experience.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.18: Job tenure at current bank

Figure 6.18 suggests that the majority (29%) of respondents had only been employed by their current bank for a period of 0-3 years, followed by those with more than 10 years (27%), and respondents with 4-6 years (26%). Respondents who had the least tenure had been employed by their current bank for 7-10 years (18%).



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.19: Communication behaviour is a result of employee engagement

Figure 6.19 suggests that the majority (64%) of respondents strongly agree that positive communication behaviour is a result of employee engagement, followed by those who agree (28%), neutral (6%), and those who slightly agreed (2%). These results reveal that the majority of respondents (92%) believe that positive communication behaviour is indeed a result of employee engagement. The 92% was obtained by adding the proportion of respondents who either Strongly Agreed or Agreed with the statement that positive communication behaviour is a result of employee engagement.

6.2.3.5 Tests of association

This section presents the results of the tests of association between employee engagement, internal communication, and different variables of interest. Data obtained from the survey was ordinal in nature as a result, non-parametric tests, namely Chi-square, Kendall's tau-b, and Gamma tests were used to test the association of different opinions expressed in the study.

6.2.3.5.1 The relationship between internal communication and employee engagement

To assess the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement, the researcher tested the relationship between the statement; "Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication" with other statements describing the different ways that the four banks communicate internally. This means that the researcher assessed whether those who agree with the statement; "Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication" also agree with any other given statement on engagement or internal communication. The three non-parametric tests previously described will be used to test this relationship.

The tables in this section show an analysis of all the participants and a split by position and department.

Table 6.5: Information sharing and employee engagement

| Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | My bank shares information with employees to build engagement | | | | |
|--|---|-------|----------------|---------|-------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Total |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Strongly Agree | 83.67 | 21.88 | 0 | 0 | 55.17 |
| Agree | 10.2 | 43.75 | 20 | 0 | 22.99 |
| Slightly Agree | 2.04 | 21.88 | 40 | 0 | 11.49 |
| Neutral | 4.08 | 6.25 | 0 | 100 | 5.75 |
| Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 40 | 0 | 2.3 |
| Disagree | 0 | 6.25 | 0 | 0 | 2.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Pearson chi (15) = 89.4, P = 0.01; Gamma=0.8232; Kendall's tau-b = 0.6162

Source: Researchers' own compilation

The table above tests the relationship between the statements; “Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication” and “My bank shares information with employees to build engagement”. The results show that those who strongly agreed with the first statement also strongly agreed with the second statement. This suggests that there is a relationship between these two opinions. The Chi-square test gives a P-value less than 0.05 ($p=0.00$) which reveals that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two statements. Furthermore, the Gamma test value (0.8232) and Kendall’s tau-b (0.6162) are both closer to 1, signifying a strong positive relationship between the two statements. Overall, this shows that most respondents believe that employee engagement is influenced by internal communication and that their banks are making an effort to achieve employee engagement by sharing information with employees.

Table 6.6: Information sharing and employee engagement by position

| My bank shares information with employees to build engagement | | | | | | |
|---|--|---------|-------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| Indicate your position level within your organisation | Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | Neutral | Agree | Slightly Agree | Strongly Agree | Total |
| | | % | % | % | % | % |
| Intern | Strongly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2.27 |
| | Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1.14 |
| Intern Total | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 3.41 |
| Assistant | Strongly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 7.95 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 3.13 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Assistant Total | | 0 | 3.13 | 0 | 14 | 9.09 |
| Graduate | Strongly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1.14 |
| Graduate Total | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1.14 |
| Manager | Strongly Agree | 0 | 6.25 | 0 | 16 | 11.36 |
| | Agree | 0 | 21.88 | 20 | 6 | 12.50 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 3.13 | 20 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 3.13 | 0 | 2 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Manager Total | | 0 | 34.38 | 60 | 24 | 29.55 |
| Senior Manager | Strongly Agree | 0 | 3.13 | 0 | 36 | 21.59 |
| | Agree | 0 | 9.38 | 0 | 2 | 4.55 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-------|
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 9.38 | 0 | 2 | 4.55 |
| | Neutral | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 6.25 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| Senior Manager Total | | 100 | 28.13 | 0 | 40 | 34.09 |
| Specialist | Strongly Agree | 0 | 3.13 | 0 | 6 | 4.55 |
| | Agree | 0 | 12.50 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 3.13 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 3.13 | 0 | 2 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Specialist Total | | 0 | 21.88 | 20 | 8 | 13.64 |
| Senior Specialist | Strongly Agree | 0 | 9.38 | 0 | 6 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 3.13 | 20 | 0 | 2.27 |
| Senior Specialist Total | | 0 | 12.50 | 20 | 6 | 9.09 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

The table above shows that there was no major difference in opinion among respondents in different positions.

Table 6.7: Information sharing and employee engagement by department

| My bank shares information with employees to build engagement | | | | | | |
|---|--|-------|---------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| Indicate the department that you work in | Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | Agree | Neutral | Slightly Agree | Strongly Agree | Total |
| | | % | % | % | % | % |
| Corporate Affairs | Strongly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 9.09 |
| | Agree | 3.13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 20 | 2 | 2.27 |
| Corporate Affairs Total | | 3.13 | 0 | 20 | 18 | 12.50 |
| Corporate Communication | Strongly Agree | 9.38 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 7.95 |
| | Agree | 6.25 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 3.41 |
| | Slightly Agree | 3.13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Neutral | 3.13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Corporate Communication Total | | 21.88 | 0 | 20 | 8 | 13.64 |
| Internal Communication | Strongly Agree | 3.13 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 10.23 |
| | Agree | 6.25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Agree | 3.13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Internal Communication Total | | 12.50 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 13.64 |
| Marketing and Brand | Strongly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 4.55 |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | Agree | 15.63 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 9.38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Marketing and Brand Total | | 25 | 0 | 20 | 10 | 15.91 |
| Other | Strongly Agree | 9.38 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 15.91 |
| | Agree | 12.50 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 3.13 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Neutral | 3.13 | 100 | 0 | 4 | 4.55 |
| | Disagree | 3.13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Other Total | | 31.25 | 100 | 40 | 30 | 31.82 |
| Product Marketing | Strongly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 7.95 |
| | Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Agree | 3.13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Disagree | 3.13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Product Marketing Total | | 6.25 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 12.50 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

The table above shows that respondents (employees) working in product marketing were the only ones who indicated that although their bank shares information with employees to build engagement, they do not agree that employee engagement in their bank is influenced by internal communication.

Table 6.8: Communication during a crisis and employee engagement

| Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | My bank communicates during a crisis to keep employees engaged | | | | | |
|--|--|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Total |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Strongly Agree | 75 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 55.17 |
| Agree | 10.71 | 58.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 22.99 |
| Slightly Agree | 7.14 | 4.17 | 75 | 50 | 100 | 11.49 |
| Neutral | 7.14 | 0 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 5.75 |
| Slightly Disagree | 0 | 4.17 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 2.3 |
| Disagree | 0 | 8.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Pearson chi (15) = 89.4, P = 0.00; Gamma=0.6846; Kendall's tau-b = 0.4952

Source: Researchers' own compilation

The table above tests the relationship between the statements; “Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication” and “My bank communicates during a crisis to keep employees engaged”. The results show that those who strongly agreed with the first statement also strongly agreed with the second statement. This suggests that there is a relationship between these two opinions. The Chi-square test gives a P-value less than 0.05 ($p=0.00$) which reveals that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two statements. Furthermore, the Gamma test value (0.6846) and Kendall’s tau-b (0.4952) are both closer to 1, signifying a strong positive relationship between the two statements. Overall, this shows that most respondents agree that employee engagement is influenced by internal communication and that their banks communicate during a crisis to keep employees engaged.

The two tables below show how the above results fare across respondents with different positions and departments in the banks assessed.

Table 6.9: Communication during a crisis and employee engagement by position

| My bank communicates during a crisis to keep employees engaged | | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| Indicate your position level within your organisation | Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Total |
| | | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Intern | Strongly Agree | 3.51 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Agree | 1.75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Intern Total | | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| Assistant | Strongly Agree | 12.28 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Slightly Agree | 1.75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Assistant Total | | 14.04 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 |
| Graduate | Strongly Agree | 1.75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Graduate Total | | 1.75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Manager | Strongly Agree | 14.04 | 8.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11.36 |
| | Agree | 5.26 | 33.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12.50 |
| | Slightly Agree | 1.75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 2.27 |
| | Neutral | 3.51 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 4.17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Manager Total | | 24.56 | 45.83 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 29.55 |
| Senior Manager | Strongly Agree | 29.82 | 8.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21.59 |
| | Agree | 3.51 | 8.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | Slightly Agree | 3.51 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 0 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 8.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| Senior Manager Total | | 36.84 | 25 | 75 | 0 | 0 | 34.09 |
| Specialist | Strongly Agree | 7.02 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Agree | 0 | 16.67 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 4.17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Neutral | 3.51 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Specialist Total | | 10.53 | 20.83 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 13.64 |
| Senior Specialist | Strongly Agree | 7.02 | 8.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 25 | 50 | 0 | 2.27 |
| Senior Specialist Total | | 7.02 | 8.33 | 25 | 50 | 0 | 9.09 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

Table 6.10: Communication during a crisis and employee engagement by department

| My bank communicates during a crisis to keep employees engaged | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Total |
| | | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Corporate Affairs | Strongly Agree | 12.28 | 4.17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 |
| | Agree | 1.75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Slightly Agree | 1.75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 2.27 |
| Corporate Affairs Total | | 15.79 | 4.17 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 12.50 |
| Corporate Communication | Strongly Agree | 8.77 | 8.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Agree | 1.75 | 8.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Neutral | 1.75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Corporate Communication Total | | 12.28 | 16.67 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 13.64 |
| Internal Communication | Strongly Agree | 14.04 | 4.17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10.23 |
| | Agree | 0 | 8.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Agree | 1.75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Internal Communication Total | | 15.79 | 12.50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13.64 |
| Marketing and Brand | Strongly Agree | 7.02 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | Agree | 1.75 | 20.83 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 1.75 | 4.17 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 3.41 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 4.17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Marketing and Brand Total | | 10.53 | 29.17 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 15.91 |
| Other | Strongly Agree | 21.05 | 8.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15.91 |
| | Agree | 3.51 | 16.67 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Neutral | 5.26 | 0 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 4.17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Other Total | | 29.82 | 29.17 | 75 | 50 | 0 | 31.82 |
| Product Marketing | Strongly Agree | 12.28 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Agree | 1.75 | 4.17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Agree | 1.75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 4.17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Product Marketing Total | | 15.79 | 8.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12.50 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

Table 6.11: Internal and external communication consistency and employee engagement

| Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | My bank's internal and external communication is aligned to ensure consistency in messages | | | | | | |
|--|--|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Disagree | Total |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Strongly Agree | 79.07 | 45.83 | 27.27 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 55.17 |
| Agree | 18.6 | 20.83 | 36.36 | 20 | 50 | 50 | 22.99 |
| Slightly Agree | 0 | 25 | 27.27 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 11.49 |
| Neutral | 0 | 8.33 | 9.09 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 5.75 |
| Slightly Disagree | 2.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 2.3 |
| Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 50 | 0 | 2.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Pearson chi (25) = 88.4, P = 0.01; Gamma=0.6894; Kendall's tau-b = 0.5116

Source: Researchers' own compilation

The table above tests the relationship between the statements; “Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication” and “My bank’s internal and external communication is aligned to ensure consistency in messages”. The results show that most of the respondents who strongly agreed with the first statement also strongly agreed with the second statement. This suggests that there is a relationship between these two opinions. The Chi-square test gives a P-value less than 0.05 ($p=0.00$) which reveals that there is a statistically significant relationship between the responses to the two statements. Furthermore, the Gamma test value (0.6894) and Kendall’s tau-b (0.5116) are both closer to 1, signifying a strong positive relationship between the two statements. Overall, this shows that most respondents believe that employee engagement is influenced by internal communication and that their bank’s internal and external communication is aligned to ensure consistency in messages.

The two tables below show how the above results fare across respondents with different positions and departments in the banks assessed.

Table 6.12: Internal and external communication consistency and employee engagement by position

| My bank's internal and external communication is aligned to ensure consistency in messages | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------|----------------|-------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------|
| Indicate your position level within your organisation | Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | Strongly Agree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Disagree | Total |
| | | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Intern | Strongly Agree | 4.65 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Agree | 2.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Intern Total | | 6.98 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| Assistant | Strongly Agree | 13.95 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 9.09 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Assistant Total | | 13.95 | 9.09 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 |
| Graduate | Strongly Agree | 2.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Graduate Total | | 2.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Manager | Strongly Agree | 13.95 | 9.09 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11.36 |
| | Agree | 11.63 | 27.27 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12.50 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 9.09 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 2.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Manager Total | | 27.91 | 45.45 | 32 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 29.55 |
| Senior Manager | Strongly Agree | 30.23 | 0 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21.59 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | Agree | 4.65 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 9.09 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 50 | 0 | 2.27 |
| Senior Manager Total | | 34.88 | 9.09 | 44 | 40 | 50 | 0 | 34.09 |
| Specialist | Strongly Agree | 6.98 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Agree | 0 | 9.09 | 0 | 20 | 50 | 50 | 4.55 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 1.14 |
| Specialist Total | | 6.98 | 9.09 | 12 | 40 | 50 | 100 | 13.64 |
| Senior Specialist | Strongly Agree | 6.98 | 18.18 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 9.09 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| Senior Specialist Total | | 6.98 | 27.27 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

Table 6.13: Internal and external communication consistency and employee engagement by department

| My bank's internal and external communication is aligned to ensure consistency in messages | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| Indicate the department that you work in | Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | Slightly Agree | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Total |
| | | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Corporate Affairs | Strongly Agree | 0 | 16.28 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 |
| | Agree | 0 | 2.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| Corporate Affairs Total | | 0 | 18.60 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12.50 |
| Corporate Communication | Strongly Agree | 18.18 | 6.98 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Agree | 0 | 4.65 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Neutral | 9.09 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Corporate Communication Total | | 27.27 | 11.63 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13.64 |
| Internal Communication | Strongly Agree | 0 | 16.28 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10.23 |
| | Agree | 9.09 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Internal Communication Total | | 9.09 | 16.28 | 12 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 13.64 |
| Marketing and Brand | Strongly Agree | 0 | 6.98 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | Agree | 9.09 | 4.65 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 8 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 2.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Marketing and Brand Total | | 9.09 | 13.95 | 20 | 20 | 0 | 50 | 15.91 |
| Other | Strongly Agree | 9.09 | 18.60 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15.91 |
| | Agree | 18.18 | 2.33 | 8 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 18.18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 0 | 8 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Other Total | | 45.45 | 20.93 | 36 | 80 | 50 | 0 | 31.82 |
| Product Marketing | Strongly Agree | 0 | 13.95 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Agree | 0 | 4.65 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Agree | 9.09 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 1.14 |
| Product Marketing Total | | 9.09 | 18.60 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 12.50 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

Table 6.14: Employee levels of vigour and employee engagement

| Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | My bank's internal communication influences employee levels of vigour (physical energy) which builds engagement | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Disagree | Total |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Strongly Agree | 88.89 | 33.33 | 54.55 | 26.67 | 0 | 0 | 55.17 |
| Agree | 11.11 | 44.44 | 18.18 | 26.67 | 40 | 0 | 22.99 |
| Slightly Agree | 0 | 5.56 | 27.27 | 26.67 | 20 | 50 | 11.49 |
| Neutral | 0 | 16.67 | 0 | 13.33 | 0 | 0 | 5.75 |
| Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 50 | 2.3 |
| Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6.67 | 20 | 0 | 2.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Pearson chi (25) = 81.5; P = 0.00; Gamma=0.6938; Kendall's tau-b = 0.5401

Source: Researchers' own compilation

The table above tests the relationship between the statements; “Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication” and “My bank’s internal communication influences employee levels of vigour (physical energy) which builds engagement”. The results show that those who strongly agreed with the first statement also strongly agreed with the second statement. This suggests that there is a relationship between these two opinions. The Chi-square test gives a P-value less than 0.05 ($p=0.00$) which reveals that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two statements. Furthermore, the Gamma test value (0.6938) and Kendall’s tau-b (0.5401) are both closer to 1, signifying a strong positive relationship between the two statements. Overall, this shows that most respondents believe that employee engagement is influenced by internal communication and that their bank’s internal communication influences employee levels of vigour (physical energy) which builds engagement.

The two tables below show how the above results fare across respondents with different positions and departments in the banks assessed.

Table 6.15: Employee levels of vigour and employee engagement by position

| My bank's internal communication influences employee levels of vigour (physical energy) which builds engagement | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|----------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| Indicate your position level within your organisation | Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | Strongly Agree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Total |
| | | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Intern | Strongly Agree | 5.56 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Agree | 0 | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Intern Total | | 5.56 | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| Assistant | Strongly Agree | 13.89 | 0 | 5.26 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 9.09 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Assistant Total | | 13.89 | 9.09 | 5.26 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 |
| Graduate | Strongly Agree | 2.78 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Graduate Total | | 2.78 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Manager | Strongly Agree | 11.11 | 27.27 | 5.26 | 13.33 | 0 | 0 | 11.36 |
| | Agree | 8.33 | 18.18 | 15.79 | 13.33 | 0 | 20 | 12.50 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 5.26 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 0 | 10.53 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 1.14 |
| Manager Total | | 19.44 | 45.45 | 36.84 | 33.33 | 0 | 40 | 29.55 |
| Senior Manager | Strongly Agree | 36.11 | 18.18 | 21.05 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21.59 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-------|
| | Agree | 2.78 | 0 | 15.79 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 9.09 | 0 | 13.33 | 50 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6.67 | 0 | 20 | 2.27 |
| Senior Manager Total | | 38.89 | 27.27 | 36.84 | 26.67 | 50 | 20 | 34.09 |
| Specialist | Strongly Agree | 8.33 | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Agree | 0 | 0 | 5.26 | 13.33 | 0 | 20 | 4.55 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 0 | 5.26 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Specialist Total | | 8.33 | 0 | 15.79 | 26.67 | 50 | 20 | 13.64 |
| Senior Specialist | Strongly Agree | 11.11 | 9.09 | 0 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 9.09 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 2.27 |
| Senior Specialist Total | | 11.11 | 18.18 | 0 | 6.67 | 0 | 20 | 9.09 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 6.16: Employee levels of vigour and employee engagement by department

| My bank's internal communication influences employee levels of vigour (physical energy) which builds engagement | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|----------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| Indicate the department that you work in | Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | Strongly Agree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Total |
| | | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Corporate Affairs | Strongly Agree | 19.44 | 9.09 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 |
| | Agree | 0 | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13.33 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| Corporate Affairs Total | | 19.44 | 9.09 | 5.26 | 13.33 | 0 | 0 | 12.50 |
| Corporate Communication | Strongly Agree | 11.11 | 9.09 | 5.26 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Agree | 2.78 | 0 | 5.26 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Corporate Communication Total | | 13.89 | 9.09 | 15.79 | 13.33 | 50 | 0 | 13.64 |
| Internal Communication | Strongly Agree | 16.67 | 9.09 | 10.53 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10.23 |
| | Agree | 0 | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Internal Communication Total | | 16.67 | 9.09 | 15.79 | 6.67 | 0 | 20 | 13.64 |
| Marketing and Brand | Strongly Agree | 8.33 | 0 | 0 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-------|
| | Agree | 5.56 | 9.09 | 5.26 | 6.67 | 0 | 20 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 9.09 | 5.26 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 1.14 |
| Marketing and Brand Total | | 13.89 | 18.18 | 10.53 | 20 | 0 | 40 | 15.91 |
| Other | Strongly Agree | 19.44 | 18.18 | 15.79 | 13.33 | 0 | 0 | 15.91 |
| | Agree | 0 | 9.09 | 15.79 | 13.33 | 0 | 0 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 9.09 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 2.27 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 0 | 10.53 | 13.33 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 1.14 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Other Total | | 19.44 | 36.36 | 42.11 | 40 | 50 | 40 | 31.82 |
| Product Marketing | Strongly Agree | 13.89 | 9.09 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Agree | 2.78 | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 9.09 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Product Marketing Total | | 16.67 | 18.18 | 10.53 | 6.67 | 0 | 0 | 12.50 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 6.17: Employee levels of dedication and engagement

| Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | My bank's internal communication influences employee levels of dedication (emotional aspect) which builds engagement | | | | | |
|--|--|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Total |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Strongly Agree | 77.5 | 55 | 26.32 | 14.29 | 0 | 55.17 |
| Agree | 15 | 30 | 31.58 | 14.29 | 100 | 22.99 |
| Slightly Agree | 5 | 10 | 21.05 | 28.57 | 0 | 11.49 |
| Neutral | 0 | 5 | 15.79 | 14.29 | 0 | 5.75 |
| Slightly Disagree | 2.5 | 0 | 0 | 14.29 | 0 | 2.3 |
| Disagree | 0 | 0 | 5.26 | 14.29 | 0 | 2.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Pearson chi (20) = 37.4, P = 0.01; Gamma=0.6237; Kendall's tau-b = 0.4522

Source: Researchers' own compilation

The table above tests the relationship between the statements; “Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication” and “My bank’s internal communication influences employee levels of dedication (emotional aspect) which builds engagement”. The results show that those who strongly agreed with the first statement also strongly agreed with the second statement. This suggests that there is a relationship between these two opinions. The Chi-square test gives a P-value less than 0.05 ($p=0.01$) which reveals that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two statements. Furthermore, the Gamma test value (0.6237) and Kendall’s tau-b (0.4522) are both closer to 1, signifying a strong positive relationship between the two statements. Overall, this shows that most respondents believe that employee engagement is influenced by internal communication and that their bank’s internal communication influences employee levels of dedication (emotional aspect) which builds engagement.

The two tables below show how the above results fare across respondents with different positions and departments in the banks assessed.

Table 6.18: Employee levels of dedication and engagement by position

| My bank's internal communication influences employee levels of dedication (emotional aspect) which builds engagement | | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------|----------------|-------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| Indicate your position level within your organisation | Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | Strongly Agree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Total |
| | | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Intern | Strongly Agree | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Agree | 0 | 0 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Intern Total | | 5 | 0 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| Assistant | Strongly Agree | 12.50 | 0 | 9.52 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Assistant Total | | 12.50 | 5.26 | 9.52 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 |
| Graduate | Strongly Agree | 2.50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Graduate Total | | 2.50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Manager | Strongly Agree | 7.50 | 10.53 | 23.81 | 0 | 0 | 11.36 |
| | Agree | 10 | 15.79 | 14.29 | 14.29 | 0 | 12.50 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 14.29 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 5.26 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 2.50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Manager Total | | 20 | 36.84 | 42.86 | 28.57 | 0 | 29.55 |
| Senior Manager | Strongly Agree | 37.50 | 5.26 | 14.29 | 0 | 0 | 21.59 |
| | Agree | 5 | 0 | 9.52 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| | Slightly Agree | 5 | 5.26 | 0 | 14.29 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14.29 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 14.29 | 0 | 2.27 |
| Senior Manager Total | | 47.50 | 15.79 | 23.81 | 42.86 | 0 | 34.09 |
| Specialist | Strongly Agree | 7.50 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Agree | 0 | 15.79 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 4.55 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 10.53 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14.29 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Specialist Total | | 7.50 | 31.58 | 4.76 | 14.29 | 100 | 13.64 |
| Senior Specialist | Strongly Agree | 5 | 5.26 | 9.52 | 14.29 | 0 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 5.26 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| Senior Specialist Total | | 5 | 10.53 | 14.29 | 14.29 | 0 | 9.09 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

Table 6.19: Employee levels of dedication and engagement by department

| My bank's internal communication influences employee levels of dedication (emotional aspect) which builds engagement | | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------|----------------|-------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| Indicate the department that you work in | Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | Strongly Agree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Total |
| | | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Corporate Affairs | Strongly Agree | 17.50 | 0 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 |
| | Agree | 0 | 0 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Slightly Agree | 2.50 | 0 | 0 | 14.29 | 0 | 2.27 |
| Corporate Affairs Total | | 20 | 0 | 9.52 | 14.29 | 0 | 12.50 |
| Corporate Communication | Strongly Agree | 7.50 | 0 | 14.29 | 14.29 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Agree | 2.50 | 5.26 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| | Slightly Agree | 2.50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Corporate Communication Total | | 12.50 | 10.53 | 19.05 | 14.29 | 0 | 13.64 |
| Internal Communication | Strongly Agree | 17.50 | 5.26 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 | 10.23 |
| | Agree | 0 | 10.53 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14.29 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Internal Communication Total | | 17.50 | 15.79 | 4.76 | 14.29 | 0 | 13.64 |
| Marketing and Brand | Strongly Agree | 7.50 | 0 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| | Agree | 5 | 0 | 9.52 | 14.29 | 100 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 5.26 | 9.52 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 2.50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Marketing and Brand Total | | 15 | 5.26 | 23.81 | 14.29 | 100 | 15.91 |
| Other | Strongly Agree | 12.50 | 15.79 | 28.57 | 0 | 0 | 15.91 |
| | Agree | 2.50 | 15.79 | 9.52 | 0 | 0 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 10.53 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 10.53 | 4.76 | 14.29 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14.29 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Other Total | | 15 | 57.89 | 42.86 | 28.57 | 0 | 31.82 |
| Product Marketing | Strongly Agree | 15 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Agree | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14.29 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Product Marketing Total | | 20 | 10.53 | 0 | 14.29 | 0 | 12.50 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

Table 6.20: Levels of absorption (cognitive aspect) and employee engagement

| Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | My bank's internal communication influences employee levels of absorption (cognitive aspect) which builds engagement | | | | | |
|--|--|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Total |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Strongly Agree | 83.78 | 45.45 | 36.84 | 0 | 0 | 55.17 |
| Agree | 10.81 | 40.91 | 26.32 | 20 | 25 | 22.99 |
| Slightly Agree | 2.7 | 9.09 | 21.05 | 40 | 25 | 11.49 |
| Neutral | 0 | 4.55 | 15.79 | 20 | 0 | 5.75 |
| Slightly Disagree | 2.7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 2.3 |
| Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 25 | 2.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Pearson chi (20) = 61.0, P = 0.00; Gamma=0.6908; Kendall's tau-b = 0.5169

Source: Researchers' own compilation

The table above tests the relationship between the statements; “Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication” and “My bank’s internal communication influences employee levels of absorption (cognitive aspect) which builds engagement”. The results show that the majority of those who strongly agreed with the first statement also strongly agreed with the second statement. This suggests that there is a relationship between these two opinions. The Chi-square test gives a P-value less than 0.05 ($p=0.00$) which reveals that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two statements. Furthermore, the Gamma test value (0.6908) and Kendall’s tau-b (0.5169) are both closer to 1, signifying a strong positive relationship between the two statements. Overall, this shows that most respondents believe that employee engagement is influenced by internal communication and that their bank’s internal communication influences employee levels of absorption (cognitive aspect) which builds engagement.

The two tables below show how the above results fare across respondents with different positions and departments in the banks assessed.

Table 6.21: Levels of absorption (cognitive aspect) and employee engagement by position

| My bank's internal communication influences employee levels of absorption (cognitive aspect) which builds engagement | | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| Indicate your position level within your organisation | Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Total |
| | | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Intern | Strongly Agree | 5.41 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Agree | 0 | 4.35 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Intern Total | | 5.41 | 4.35 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| Assistant | Strongly Agree | 13.51 | 4.35 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Assistant Total | | 13.51 | 4.35 | 10.53 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 |
| Graduate | Strongly Agree | 2.70 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Graduate Total | | 2.70 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Manager | Strongly Agree | 8.11 | 17.39 | 15.79 | 0 | 0 | 11.36 |
| | Agree | 8.11 | 17.39 | 15.79 | 20 | 0 | 12.50 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 4.35 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 0 | 10.53 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 2.70 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Manager Total | | 18.92 | 39.13 | 47.37 | 20 | 0 | 29.55 |
| Senior Manager | Strongly Agree | 43.24 | 8.70 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 21.59 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-------|
| | Agree | 2.70 | 13.04 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Slightly Agree | 2.70 | 4.35 | 5.26 | 20 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 25 | 2.27 |
| Senior Manager Total | | 48.65 | 26.09 | 10.53 | 60 | 25 | 34.09 |
| Specialist | Strongly Agree | 8.11 | 4.35 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Agree | 0 | 4.35 | 10.53 | 0 | 25 | 4.55 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 4.35 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 1.14 |
| Specialist Total | | 8.11 | 13.04 | 15.79 | 20 | 50 | 13.64 |
| Senior Specialist | Strongly Agree | 2.70 | 13.04 | 10.53 | 0 | 0 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 25 | 2.27 |
| Senior Specialist Total | | 2.70 | 13.04 | 15.79 | 0 | 25 | 9.09 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

Table 6.22: Levels of absorption (cognitive aspect) and employee engagement by department

| My bank's internal communication influences employee levels of absorption (cognitive aspect) which builds engagement | | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------|----------------|-------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| Indicate the department that you work in | Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | Strongly Agree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Total |
| | | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Corporate Affairs | Strongly Agree | 21.62 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9.09 |
| | Agree | 0 | 0 | 4.35 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Slightly Agree | 2.70 | 0 | 4.35 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| Corporate Affairs Total | | 24.32 | 0 | 8.70 | 0 | 0 | 12.50 |
| Corporate Communication | Strongly Agree | 10.81 | 5.26 | 8.70 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Agree | 2.70 | 5.26 | 4.35 | 0 | 0 | 3.41 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 4.35 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Corporate Communication Total | | 13.51 | 15.79 | 17.39 | 0 | 0 | 13.64 |
| Internal Communication | Strongly Agree | 21.62 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10.23 |
| | Agree | 0 | 5.26 | 4.35 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Internal Communication Total | | 21.62 | 10.53 | 4.35 | 20 | 0 | 13.64 |
| Marketing and Brand | Strongly Agree | 8.11 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-------|
| | Agree | 2.70 | 5.26 | 13.04 | 20 | 0 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 10.53 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 3.41 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 2.70 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Marketing and Brand Total | | 13.51 | 21.05 | 13.04 | 40 | 0 | 15.91 |
| Other | Strongly Agree | 10.81 | 15.79 | 30.43 | 0 | 0 | 15.91 |
| | Agree | 0 | 10.53 | 13.04 | 0 | 25 | 6.82 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 2.27 |
| | Neutral | 0 | 10.53 | 4.35 | 20 | 0 | 4.55 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 1.14 |
| | Slightly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 1.14 |
| Other Total | | 10.81 | 42.11 | 47.83 | 20 | 100 | 31.82 |
| Product Marketing | Strongly Agree | 10.81 | 5.26 | 8.70 | 0 | 0 | 7.95 |
| | Agree | 5.41 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.27 |
| | Slightly Agree | 0 | 5.26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.14 |
| | Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 1.14 |
| Product Marketing Total | | 16.22 | 10.53 | 8.70 | 20 | 0 | 12.50 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Researchers' own compilation

Table 6.23: Traditional internal communication channels and employee engagement

| Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | My bank uses traditional internal communication channels | | | | | | |
|--|--|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Disagree | Total |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Strongly Agree | 76.09 | 23.81 | 54.55 | 50 | 33.33 | 0 | 55.81 |
| Agree | 13.04 | 47.62 | 18.18 | 0 | 0 | 33.33 | 22.09 |
| Slightly Agree | 8.7 | 14.29 | 18.18 | 0 | 33.33 | 0 | 11.63 |
| Neutral | 0 | 9.52 | 9.09 | 50 | 0 | 33.33 | 5.81 |
| Slightly Disagree | 0 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 33.33 | 2.33 |
| Disagree | 2.17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 33.33 | 0 | 2.33 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Pearson chi (25) = 62.9, P = 0.00; Gamma=0.5249; Kendall's tau-b = 0.3805

Source: Researchers' own compilation

The table above tests the relationship between the statements; “Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication” and “My bank uses traditional internal communication channels”. The results show that those who strongly agreed or agreed with the first statement also agreed with the second statement. This suggests that there is a relationship between these two opinions. The Chi-square test gives a P-value less than 0.05 ($p=0.00$) which reveals that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two statements. Furthermore, the Gamma test value (0.5249) is closer to 1, signifying a strong positive relationship between the two statements. However, the value of Kendall’s tau-b is positive but lower, further away from 1. This suggests a positive but weak relationship between the responses in the two statements. Overall, this shows that most respondents agree that employee engagement is influenced by internal communication and that their banks use traditional channels for internal communication.

Table 6.24: Innovative internal communication channels and employee engagement

| Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | My bank uses innovative internal communication channels | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Disagree | Total |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Strongly Agree | 69.81 | 40 | 25 | 20 | 33.33 | 0 | 55.81 |
| Agree | 13.21 | 35 | 25 | 60 | 0 | 100 | 22.09 |
| Slightly Agree | 11.32 | 10 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11.63 |
| Neutral | 3.77 | 5 | 0 | 20 | 33.33 | 0 | 5.81 |
| Slightly Disagree | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 33.33 | 0 | 2.33 |
| Disagree | 1.89 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.33 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Pearson chi (25) = 72.4, P = 0.00; Gamma=0.5618; Kendall's tau-b = 0.3998

Source: Researchers' own compilation

The table above tests the relationship between the statements; “Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication” and “My bank uses innovative internal communication channels”. The results show that those who strongly agreed with the first statement also strongly agreed with the second statement. This suggests that there is a relationship between these two opinions. The Chi-square test gives a P-value less than 0.05 ($p=0.01$) which reveals that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two statements. Furthermore, the Gamma test value (0.4636), and Kendall’s tau-b (0.3123) are both positive but not too close to 1, signifying a weak positive relationship between the responses from the two statements. Overall, this shows that most respondents believe that employee engagement is influenced by internal communication and that this is linked to their banks’ use of innovative internal communication channels and methods.

Table 6.25: Two-way communication between employees and leaders, and employee engagement

| Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication | My bank's internal communication channels allow for two-way communication between employees and leaders | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Disagree | Total |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Strongly Agree | 74 | 28.57 | 44.44 | 0 | 33.33 | 0 | 55.81 |
| Agree | 14 | 47.62 | 11.11 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 22.09 |
| Slightly Agree | 6 | 23.81 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 100 | 11.63 |
| Neutral | 4 | 0 | 22.22 | 0 | 33.33 | 0 | 5.81 |
| Slightly Disagree | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 33.33 | 0 | 2.33 |
| Disagree | 0 | 0 | 22.22 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.33 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Pearson chi (25) = 72.4, P = 0.00; Gamma=0.5618; Kendall's tau-b = 0.3998

Source: Researchers' own compilation

The table above tests the relationship between the statements; “Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication” and “My bank’s internal communication channels allow for two-way communication between employees and leaders”. The results show that those who strongly agreed with the first statement also strongly agreed with the second statement. This suggests that there is a relationship between these two opinions. The Chi-square test gives a P-value less than 0.05 ($p=0.00$) which reveals that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two statements. Furthermore, the Gamma test value (0.5618) and Kendall’s tau-b (0.3998) are both not too close to 1, signifying a weak positive relationship between the two statements. Overall, this shows that most respondents agree that employee engagement is influenced by internal communication and that this is linked to the fact that their banks allow for two-way communication between leaders and employees.

The table below shows a summary of the Gamma and Kendall’s tau-b statistics used in this section. As stated under section 6.2.2.2, the Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient was used to measure the strength and direction of association that exists between two variables, namely internal communication and employee engagement. Within the same context, the Gamma was used to also test the strength and direction of association that exists between two ordinal scale variables.

Table 6.26: Summary table for Gamma and Kendall’s tau-b

| Employee engagement issue | Gamma | Kendall’s tau-b |
|---|--------|-----------------|
| Information sharing and employee engagement | 0.8232 | 0.6162 |
| Communication during a crisis and employee engagement | 0.6846 | 0.4952 |
| Internal and external communication | 0.6894 | 0.5116 |

| | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| consistency and employee engagement | | |
| Employee levels of vigor and employee engagement | 0.6938 | 0.5401 |
| Employee levels of dedication and engagement | 0.6237 | 0.4522 |
| Levels of absorption (cognitive aspect) and employee engagement | 0.6908 | 0.5169 |

6.3 PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

As the purpose of this study was to **develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement in South Africa’s “big four” banks**, this section discusses the six internal communication elements derived from the findings of the study. It is worth noting that the proposed conceptual framework is informed by both the literature review and the empirical evidence from the study’s findings and conclusions based on the study’s face-to-face interviews with the senior internal communications managers and web-based survey completed by employees.

An extensive search on the Nexus Database System of the NRF (2016) revealed that although previous studies on internal communication and employee engagement had been conducted. However, research on internal communication and employee engagement in the South African banking sector, particularly in the “big four” banks, had not been conducted. To develop the conceptual framework for employee engagement, this study posed four research questions to explore internal communication in the South African banking sector, particularly in the “big four” banks. The research questions were

derived from a review of literature in the internal communication and employee engagement fields (Chapters 3 and 4). Thus, the following internal communication elements are proposed for the conceptual framework:

1) Collaboration/ Cross-Functional Planning

In relation to collaboration, the participants mentioned the importance of collaborating cross-departmentally with the external communication team, the Brand, Marketing and PR team, and with employees that are spread out across different office locations. This element is further supported by findings from the web-based survey where the majority (90%) of respondents indicated that internal communication is linked with external messages to ensure consistency in messaging, suggesting that the majority of banks link their external communication with internal messages.

2) Partner with Human Resources Function

The participants mentioned the importance of the internal communication and HR functions partnering. Although this element did not come up from the web-based survey responses, words such as commitment, motivation, employee well-being, productivity, performance, turnover, satisfaction, trust, and transparency were prevalent in both the web-based survey and face-to-face interviews, thus suggesting the significant link between internal communication and employee engagement. Moreover, employee engagement is an important concept in both the Communication and HR fields.

3) Communication Channels

Three of the four CEOs (and other senior leaders) had an active presence on internal social media channels. These channels were described as being similar to Twitter and Facebook, where the leaders were encouraged to interact with staff or post updates in their own personal capacity. The web-based survey respondents indicated that their banks use both traditional and innovative internal communication channels to communicate with desk-bound, client-facing, and telecommuting employees. Moreover, various internal communication channels are available to ensure effective employee

targeting as their organisation's internal communication channels include digital communication, which is often aligned with other communication channels to reinforce key messages.

4) Two-Way Communication with Leaders

Based on the participants' responses, it is evident that their leaders engage in communication through a variety of internal communication channels, ranging from; self-managed internal social media accounts, town hall meetings, CEO Roadshows, CEO breakfasts for top-performing staff, email communication, as well as a monthly column in the staff magazine. As suggested by the responses from the web-based survey, these communication efforts create engaged employees who in turn trust the organisation's leaders. Furthermore, the majority (93%) of web-based survey respondents stated that their organisation's internal communication channels allow for two-way communication between employees and leaders, thereby supporting the notion that open, two-way communication between employees and leaders impacts employee engagement.

5) Counsel

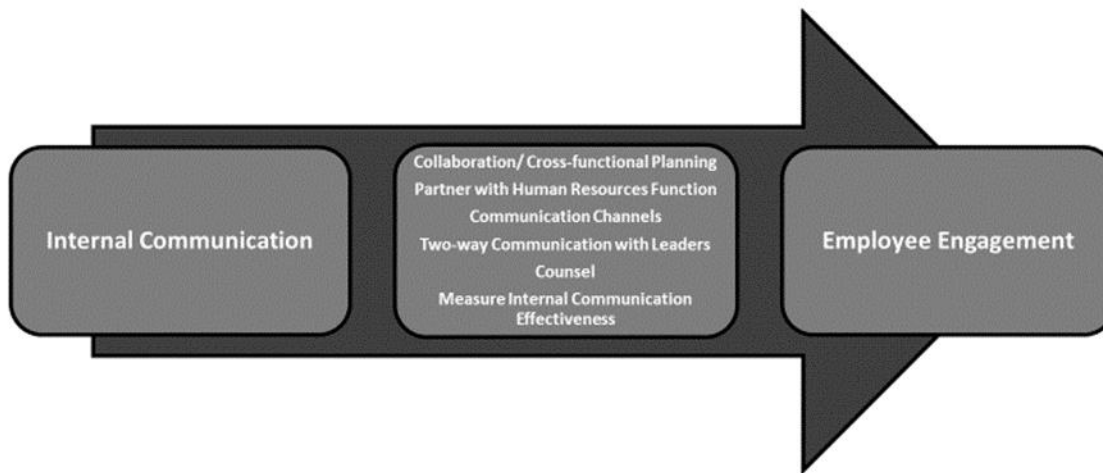
The participants used phrases such as 'guide', 'advice' or 'counsel' to describe the role of the internal communication function include. As suggested by the web-based survey responses, through counselling, the role of the internal communication function is to build employee engagement, promote commitment and a sense of belonging in the organisation, create awareness of changes in the organisation, create understanding of organisational goals, motivate employees, increase employee well-being, increase employee productivity and performance, and create transparency within the organisation.

6) Measure Internal Communication Effectiveness

All the participants' narratives asserted that measuring internal communication effectiveness was important for employee engagement in the South African banking sector. In agreement with this view, the majority (78%) of web-based survey respondents

indicated that internal communication channel success in their bank is regularly measured to ensure effectiveness.

Although the proposed elements address the role of the internal communication function, namely collaboration is an important aspect of the internal communication function (*Collaboration/ Cross-Functional Planning*), the internal communication function's partnering with the Human Resource Function is crucial for the internal communications team in ensuring that the organisation's objectives are met (*Partner with Human Resources Function*). Selecting the most appropriate communication channel provides the organisation with benefits – the literature review Chapters indicate that internal social media as a form of internal communication can play an effective role in supporting employee engagement in general (*Communication Channels*), whereas leaders, senior managers and the CEO should regularly communicate internally to gain trust from employees and to create a positive image about the organisation (*Two-Way Communication with Leaders*). Additionally, the role of the internal communication practitioner is to counsel (guide or advice) leaders, business units and departments on what to communicate, including how, when and why (*Counsel*). Finally, measuring the organisation's communication could assist the organisation with improving its communication, frequency and channel usage, as this would share employee feedback (*Measure Internal Communication Effectiveness*). These elements of the conceptual framework are summarised in Figure 6.20 below.



Source: Researchers' own compilation

Figure 6.20: Proposed conceptual framework for employee engagement

In this proposed conceptual framework shown in Figure 6.20 above, the six internal communication elements (*Collaboration/ Cross-Functional Planning, Partner with the Human Resources Function, Communication Channels, Two-Way Communication with Leaders, Counsel, and Measure Internal Communication Effectiveness*) are shown as factors that boost (or positively impact) employee engagement in the bank. Worth noting further is that employees of South African banks that adopt this proposed conceptual framework for employee engagement may display positive engagement behaviours highlighted in Chapter 4, namely advocacy, ambassadorship, commitment, competitive advantage, decreased turnover, innovation, satisfaction, and trust. In essence, these proposed elements are the responsibility of the internal communication function who are not only responsible for creating awareness in the organisation but who should ultimately aim to engage employees. Organisations with engaged employees experience greater levels of these elements, further suggesting an even greater performing organisation.

The proposed elements of the framework address the study's research problem. Firstly, they explore the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks; secondly, they explore the role played by internal

communication in the banking sector; thirdly, they explore the internal communication channels that are available in South Africa's "big four" banks; and lastly, the conceptual framework for employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks was developed. Section 7.2 (*Summary of the Conclusions*) provides a detailed discussion regarding whether the study addressed the research problem and research questions identified in the study's Chapter 1. The following section addresses the conceptual frameworks' justification and implication for theory, policy, and practice.

6.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK JUSTIFICATION AND IMPLICATION FOR THEORY, POLICY AND PRACTICE

This study presents a conceptual framework of employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks, demonstrating the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement as identified by the four senior internal communications managers and employees from South Africa's "big four" banks. In keeping up with technological advancements in the ways of work, the current study demonstrated that internal communication practice in the "big four" South African banks uses traditional communication channels and has over the years adopted new and innovative communication channels and methods for communicating to their key stakeholder group – employees. These 'new and innovative' ways of communication must be explored if the main objective of internal communication is to achieve employee engagement. Thus, the conceptual framework's proposed elements are, therefore, critical as they propose ways for improving internal communication in South Africa's "big four" banks.

This conceptual framework explains how the study will fill the gap in the literature on internal communication and employee engagement in the South African banking sector, specifically in the "big four" banks. From a practical perspective, South Africa's "big four" banks can achieve employee engagement by adopting the six internal communication elements proposed in the conceptual framework. Thus, this study's conceptual framework is significant as it can help foster employee engagement. From an academic perspective, hypotheses can be developed and tested by academics and researchers alike. Lastly, the

empirical results can be used to prepare a robust framework that internal communication practitioners can use to foster employee engagement in other business sectors.

6.5 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings and interpretations of the study pertaining to internal communication and employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks. An inductive thematic analysis led to the development of the six emergent themes from the qualitative data from the face-to-face interviews with the four senior internal communications managers. The main themes that emerged were; (1) Collaboration/ Cross-Functional Planning, (2) Partner with Human Resources Function, (3) Communication Channels, (4) Two-Way Communication with Leaders, (5) Counsel; and, (6) Measure Internal Communication Effectiveness. Examining these themes led to the development of the conceptual framework for employee engagement discussed in Chapter 7. From a quantitative perspective, the findings of this research were presented using descriptive and inferential statistics in the form of non-parametric tests such as the Chi-square, Kendall's tau-b, and Gamma tests. Additionally, frequency tables, pie charts, and bar graphs were used to summarise and visualise the results. While descriptive statistics summarised data from the results, inferential statistics made conclusions about the wider population. To analyse ordinal data, the researcher used non-parametric tests that did not require stringent assumptions such as normal distributions.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter interpreted and presented the results of the study. This chapter discusses the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The study aimed to **develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement in the South African banking sector**. Thus, the study was exploratory as it explored an unknown area of research. The research problem and sub-research questions of the study, as provided in Chapter 1, are restated below.

1. Research problem:

To develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks.

2. Sub-research questions of the study:

The following sub-research problems were extracted from the study's research problem:

- **Sub-research problem 1:** To explore the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks.
- **Sub-research problem 2:** To explore the role played by internal communication in the banking sector.
- **Sub-research problem 3:** To explore the internal communication channels that are available in South Africa's "big four" banks.
- **Sub-research problem 4:** To develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks.

The following section presents a summary of the main conclusions.

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the study was to **develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement in South Africa’s “big four” banks**. This conceptual framework, which is customised for the South African banking sector, consists of six internal communication elements listed below:

- Collaboration/Cross-Functional Planning
- Partner with Human Resources Function
- Communication Channels
- Two-Way Communication with Leaders
- Counsel
- Measure Internal Communication Effectiveness

To develop an internal communication conceptual framework that contributes to employee engagement, this research explored the contribution made by internal communication in achieving employee engagement within South Africa’s “big four” banks. The study integrated perspectives of Systems Theory, Social Exchange Theory, McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y, and Media Richness Theory, as discussed in Chapter 1. Based on the findings of the study and the reviewed literature, it is reasonable to suggest that internal communication enables employee engagement. Thus, internal communication is critical for effective employee engagement.

It is therefore important to determine whether the study addressed the research questions posed in Chapter 1. This discussion is presented in the following sub-sections:

7.2.1 Research question 1: What is the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement in South Africa's "big four" banks?

This research question was addressed in Chapter 4 and it confirmed the link between internal communication and employee engagement. Chapter 4 illustrates that internal communication facilitates the distribution, support, and communication of variables that contribute to the promotion of employee engagement. Some of the identified variables, according to Chandani, Mehta, Mall and Khokhar (2016:2-5) include career development, talent management and recognition, leadership, familiarity with organisation values, employee treatment, personality factors, policies and practices, organisation standards of ethical behaviours, empowerment, performance review, salary, benefits and compensation, health and safety, satisfaction, family appreciation, communication, job requirements, office politics, emotions, and productivity. Additionally, this research question addressed Section C of the web-based survey questionnaire that posed statements regarding the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. To assess the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement, the study tested the relationship between the statement; "Employee engagement in my bank is influenced by internal communication" with other statements that describe the various ways the bank communicates internally. Overall, the results of the statistical analysis confirmed that the majority of respondents concurred that employee engagement is influenced by internal communication.

Based on the above, it can be postulated that the study addressed this research question. It was illustrated that there is a strong and critical link between internal communication and employee engagement. Additionally, internal communication, which influences employee engagement, has been shown to provide numerous benefits to organisations, namely advocacy, ambassadorship, commitment, competitive advantage, decreased turnover, innovation, satisfaction, and trust. The study further supports research conducted by Karanges, Beatson, Johnston and Lings (2014) and Welch (2011), that states that internal communication is a key driver of employee engagement.

7.2.2 Research question 2: What role does internal communication play in the banking sector?

This research question was addressed in Chapter 4. The chapter specifically focussed on literature pertaining to the role of internal communication in the banking sector, the relationship between employee engagement and internal communication, employee engagement dimensions, the role played by leaders' in building employee engagement, employee engagement in the banking sector, and the benefits of an engaged workforce. Chapter 6 further presents the findings pertaining to the internal communication function based on Section E of the study's web-based survey. In so doing, this helped address research question 2 (*What role does internal communication play in the banking sector?*). Based on these findings, it is reasonable to suggest that South Africa's "big four" banks use internal communication to:

- Build employee engagement
- Promote commitment and a sense of belonging in the organisation
- Create awareness of changes in the organisation
- Create understanding of organisational goals
- Motivate employees
- Increase employee well-being
- Increase employee productivity and performance
- Create transparency within the organisation

The findings cited above adequately describe the role that internal communication plays in the banking sector. Most importantly, these findings confirm that internal communication is essential for achieving employee engagement. Thus, internal communication is an important determinant of employee engagement in the South African banking sector. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that this study successfully addressed this research question as the role of internal communication in the South African banking sector was discussed in detail.

7.2.3 Research question 3: Which internal communication channels are available in South Africa's "big four" banks?

This research question was addressed in Chapter 6, which presents the findings and interpretations of the study. Although some of the findings are similar to those shared under research question 3 (*Which internal communication channels are available in South Africa's "big four" banks?*), there were several new/innovative internal communication channels identified. The senior internal communications managers shared that their banks use the following internal communication channels:

Bank A:

Traditional: displays and banners, team meetings, All-hands meetings, notice boards, newsletters, email, monthly printed magazine.

Innovative: podcasts, videos, CEO blog, instant messaging, Skype meetings and Skype phone calls, canteen digital screens, intranet, social media, monthly digital magazine.

Bank B:

Traditional: email, department and group-wide intranet, print and electronic newsletters, notice boards, posters, pamphlets/leaflets, pull up banners, CEO town hall.

Innovative: internal communication App, digital magazine, digital newsletters, reception foyer screens, lift screens, video, social media, desktop screensavers, pop-up alerts.

Bank C:

Traditional: emails, quarterly print magazine, newsletters, CEO and leader town hall sessions.

Innovative: SMSes, social media, personalised phone call from the CEO, digital screens in reception areas, canteen and throughout buildings.

Bank D:

Traditional: pull up banners, EXCO, CEO and team meetings, emails, newsletters, regional town halls, intranet.

Innovative: videos, CEO podcasts, quarterly digital and print magazines, SMSes, screensavers, social media, pop up alerts, Skype for business communication package.

Although most of the traditional and innovative internal communication channels are similar in some of the banks, it is worth noting that certain banks have invested a lot more in their internal communication channels – this is evident in the wide array of internal communication channels that are available. This further suggests that these particular banks prioritise issues such as employee engagement and thus have higher employee engagement levels. From a group-wide internal communication perspective, a further suggestion is that this wide array of channels makes it easier for the banks to target all employees, regardless of their office location, job level, or whether they are working remotely or not, in turn using internal communication to achieve the bank's business objectives.

7.2.4 Research question 4: Which elements of internal communication make up the conceptual framework of employee engagement?

The conceptual framework is based on the perceptions of employees collected through a web-based self-administered survey questionnaire hosted on *SurveyMonkey* (quantitative data), and the perceptions of senior internal communications managers collected through face-to-face interviews (qualitative data). The internal communication elements of the conceptual framework, which are presented in Chapter 6 of this study, are; Collaboration/Cross-Functional Planning, Partner with Human Resources Function, Communication Channels, Two-Way Communication with Leaders, Counsel, and Measure Internal Communication Effectiveness. It is argued that the proposed conceptual framework adequately addresses the role of internal communication and its key elements/

within an organisation. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that this study successfully addressed this research question as the internal communication elements that make up the conceptual framework for employee engagement were proposed.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following recommendations pertaining to internal communication and employee engagement in the South African banking sector have been put forward:

7.3.1 Conduct research in the “big five” South African banks

Although efforts were made to include all five banks in the study, future studies should ensure that internal communication and employee engagement are measured from a broader perspective that considers all the major banks.

7.3.2 Conduct research in the smaller South African banks

Future studies should be conducted in the smaller South African banks to determine whether banks of a smaller nature prioritise internal communication and employee engagement issues.

7.3.3 Communication Executives should form part of qualitative sample

The face-to-face interviews were limited to the four senior internal communications managers. Future studies should interview Communication Executives who are likely to make informed contributions to the research based on their job level and expertise in the field.

7.3.4 Limit respondents to employees in the Communication and Marketing departments

Due to the limited responses from employees in the Communication and Marketing departments, the survey was extended to all employees of the four banks. Future studies should only seek opinions of employees in the Communication and Marketing departments who may make a significant contribution to the study and field as their tasks and responsibilities focus on internal communication and employee engagement.

7.3.5 Research should be conducted from a Human Resources perspective

As internal communication can be considered an HR Function, future studies should consider researching this topic from an HR approach, as opposed to limiting it to a Communication and/or Marketing focus. It is further recommended that future studies should also interview the HR Executive, as employee engagement is also a critical responsibility of the HR Function.

7.3.6 Internal and external communication impact on employee engagement

Future studies should research the importance of internal and external communication on employee engagement. Moreover, such studies should also measure how both departments should work collaboratively to ensure employee engagement and overall business success.

7.3.7 Social media and CEOs

As social media has been identified as an effective internal communication channel, it is recommended that CEOs of all banks should have active internal and external social media accounts to ensure regular communication with employees and customers alike.

Thus, studies should be conducted to measure how CEOs with active social media accounts influence employee engagement and business success.

7.3.8 Extend research to other South African business industries

Studies of this nature should also be conducted in other South African businesses, as internal communication and employee engagement are both critical for organisations of all sizes and types.

7.3.9 Exclude neutral response options

Finally, the researcher recommends that future studies should exclude neutral response options in the questionnaire. Eliminating this response option will force respondents to give an answer to the posed question or statement and thus provide the research with precise answers that will benefit the study.

7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study had the following limitations:

- The study explored internal communication in South Africa's "big four" banks. Studying all the South African banks or including additional financial industry organisations would have been taxing in terms of financial implications and time constraints. This implies that the study's findings cannot be generalised beyond the four banks.
- The study's sample size was relatively small; thus, the results of this study do not represent the entire population and thus cannot be generalised to other South African banks or businesses. In addition, the small sample size limited the statistical analysis techniques that could be performed.

- Respondents of the web-based survey were selected using the convenience sampling method that allowed the researcher to conveniently select employees who were available to provide the required information, quickly and efficiently. Thus, responses shared in the web-based survey may not necessarily represent the bank's internal communication efforts or effectively target employees with experience or knowledge of both internal communication and employee engagement.

7.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study made a meaningful contribution to the communication discipline, more specifically internal communication, in that it proposed new knowledge by the development of the employee engagement conceptual framework. Furthermore, no research has been conducted on the study's research topic, thus the study makes an important contribution to the existing literature on internal communication and employee engagement in the South African banking sector. Academically, the study added to the current body of knowledge in the field of communication. The findings of this study can be used by South African banks or other businesses as a guide to conduct their internal communication in order to achieve or increase employee engagement in their organisations.

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APPENDIX A: WEB-BASED SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EMPLOYEES

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this survey questionnaire is to measure internal communication from employees within the Corporate Communication divisions, business units and departments of South Africa's "big four" banks. Based on the sample's experience and specialisation in the communication divisions, these individuals are more inclined to draw from their experiences and as such may provide informed responses that will assist the study in achieving its objectives.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data collected will be treated confidentially and will only be used for academic research purposes only. Participation in the study is voluntary and all responses will be analysed and reported in groups.

QUESTIONNAIRE SECTIONS

The web-based survey questionnaire consists of four sections derived from the study's literature review chapters. An additional section for biographical data has been included.

The survey will only take 15 minutes to complete.

Section A: Biographical data

Please give information about yourself by selecting the most appropriate option. Kindly respond to all questions.

1. Gender

Male

Female

2. Race

- Black
- White
- Coloured
- Indian

3. Which bank are you employed by?

- FirstRand Bank (First National Bank)
- Standard Bank
- Nedbank
- Absa

4. How long have you been employed by your current bank?

- 0-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-10 years
- More than 10 years

5. How many years' experience in internal communication do you have?

- 0-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-10 years
- More than 10 years

6. What is your highest Communication qualification?

- Certificate
- Diploma
- Postgraduate Diploma
- Undergraduate degree
- Postgraduate Degree
- I do not have a qualification in Communication
- Other (specify)

7. Indicate your position level within your organisation

- Intern
- Graduate
- Assistant
- Specialist
- Senior Specialist
- Manager
- Senior Manager
- Other (specify)

8. Indicate the department that you work in

- Internal Communication
- Corporate Communication
- Corporate Affairs
- Marketing and Brand
- Product Marketing
- Other (specify)

9. How many Communication Practitioners make up your division?

- 1
- 2-5
- There are no Communication Practitioners in my department
- Other (specify)

10. Have you previously been employed by any of the other “big four” South African banks?

- Yes
- No

The questions in the following sections relate to your organisation. Please share your views on what is important to you regarding each statement by selecting the response that closely resembles your views and/or experience.

Section B: Employee engagement

| Statement | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----------|--|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. | Engaged employees engage in positive communication behaviours as compared to disengaged employees | | | | | | | |
| 2. | Engaged employees feel an emotional connection to the brand and voluntarily act as brand ambassadors | | | | | | | |
| 3. | Engaged employees are committed to their job and organisation | | | | | | | |
| 4. | Engaged employees are an organisation's greatest competitive asset | | | | | | | |
| 5. | Engaged employees significantly reduce employee turnover | | | | | | | |
| 6. | Engaged employees are important for innovation within the organisation | | | | | | | |
| 7. | Engaged employees are satisfied with their jobs | | | | | | | |
| 8. | Engaged employees trust the organisation's leaders | | | | | | | |

Section C: The relationship between internal communication and employee engagement

| Statement | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----------|--|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. | The role of internal communication is to engage employees | | | | | | | |
| 2. | Employee engagement is influenced by internal communication | | | | | | | |
| 3. | Sharing information with employees encourages engagement | | | | | | | |
| 4. | Communicating during a crisis keeps employees engaged | | | | | | | |
| 5. | Internal communication is linked with external messages to ensure consistency in messaging | | | | | | | |
| 6. | Internal communication influences employee levels of vigour (physical energy) which encourages engagement | | | | | | | |
| 7. | Internal communication influences employee levels of dedication (emotional aspect) which encourages engagement | | | | | | | |
| 8. | Internal communication influences employee levels of absorption (cognitive aspect) which encourages engagement | | | | | | | |

Section D: Internal communication channels

| Statement | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----------|---|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. | Your organisation uses both traditional and innovative internal communication channels | | | | | | | |
| 2. | Your organisation has implemented internal communication innovations to communicate with desk-bound, client-facing, and telecommuting employees | | | | | | | |
| 3. | Some employees do not have access to the most immediate forms of communication channels such as email and intranet | | | | | | | |
| 4. | Various internal communication channels are available to ensure effective employee targeting | | | | | | | |
| 5. | Your organisation's internal communication channels allow for two-way communication between employees and leaders | | | | | | | |
| 6. | Your organisation's internal communication channels include print publications, digital communication, telecommunication and face-to-face communication | | | | | | | |
| 7. | Your organisation aligns digital communication with verbal, print, or with other communication channels to reinforce key messages | | | | | | | |
| 8. | Internal communication channel success is regularly measured to ensure effectiveness | | | | | | | |

Section E: Internal communication function

| Statement | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Slightly Agree | Neutral | Slightly Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----------|--|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. | To build employee engagement | | | | | | | |
| 2. | To promote commitment and a sense of belonging in the organisation | | | | | | | |
| 3. | To create awareness of changes in the organisation | | | | | | | |
| 4. | To create an understanding of organisational goals | | | | | | | |
| 5. | To motivate employees | | | | | | | |
| 6. | To increase employee well-being | | | | | | | |
| 7. | To increase employee productivity and performance | | | | | | | |
| 8. | To create transparency within the organisation | | | | | | | |

Thank you for your time!

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SENIOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS MANAGERS

This is the interview schedule for senior internal communications managers. Additional questions, and probing further, were asked in response to the answers received.

| Section A: General questions | Notes |
|--|-------|
| Can you please provide me with a brief background about <i>Name of Bank</i> , its history, products, and the number of employees? | |
| What role do you play as the Head of Internal Communication? | |
| How does internal communication play a role in <i>Name of Bank</i> ? | |
| Within which division does the internal communication function sit within <i>Name of Bank</i> ? | |
| Section B: Employee engagement | Notes |
| What is the role of internal communication in the banking sector? | |
| Which elements of internal communication influence employee engagement? | |
| How are internal messages aligned with external messages? | |
| What are some of <i>Name of Bank's</i> initiatives for increasing employee engagement? | |
| Which of the three communication types does the leader of <i>Name of Bank</i> use for engaging employees: top-down, bottom-up or horizontal? | |
| Section C: The relationship between internal communication and employee engagement | Notes |

| | |
|--|--------------|
| What is the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement? | |
| How do internal communication delays impact employee engagement? | |
| What are some of the formal and informal internal communication activities used by <i>Name of Bank</i> to enhance employee engagement? | |
| Which characteristics are associated with an engaged employee? | |
| Has internal communication improved or increased employee engagement at <i>Name of Bank</i> ? | |
| Section D: Internal communication channels used in <i>Name of Bank</i> | Notes |
| Which traditional internal communication channels does <i>Name of Bank</i> use? | |
| Which innovative internal communication channels does <i>Name of Bank</i> use? | |
| Do all employees have access to all internal communication channels, if not, how are they targeted? | |
| Which communication channel is preferred by <i>Name of Bank's</i> internal communication practitioners? | |
| In your opinion, which internal communication channels are most effective and which ones aren't? | |
| Section E: Internal communication function in <i>Name of Bank</i> | Notes |
| What are the main responsibilities of the internal communication function within <i>Name of Bank</i> ? | |
| Which processes are in place to ensure internal communication effectiveness? | |

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|---|--|
| How is internal communication success/effectiveness measured in <i>Name of Bank</i> ? | |
| Do the senior leaders in <i>Name of Bank</i> actively engage with employees? | |
| What are the consequences of not prioritising internal communication? | |

