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DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND HOSPITALITY

MASTER OF COMMERCE IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

**The impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands
Province, Zimbabwe.**

BY

MUSARANDEGA MICAH (M196817)

SUPERVISOR: DR. J. ZIMUTO (PhD, UP)

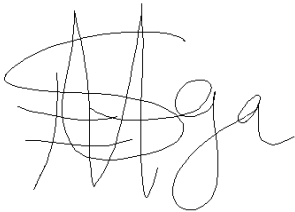
THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE
MASTER OF COMMERCE DEGREE IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT.

NOVEMBER 2023

DECLARATION FORM

I, Micah Musarandega do hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation and research, except to the extent indicated in the Acknowledgements, References, and comments included in the body of the report, and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree to any other university.

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Signature.....

Date...17/11/2023.....

Micah Musarandega (M196817)

APPROVAL FORM

SUPERVISOR`S APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certifies and acknowledges that he has read and recommends to the Great Zimbabwe University for acceptance; a dissertation entitled:

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE BRAND REPUTATION OF URBAN LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN MIDLANDS PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE.

Submitted by: **Micah Musarandega (M196817)** in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Master of Commerce Degree in Strategic Management Degree.

Sincerely

SUPERVISOR

DR. J. ZIMUTO (PhD, UP)

Signature:



Handtekening / Signature

Date...17/11/2023.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to Mr. Machiya, Mayor of Shurugwi Town Council, for his unwavering support and encouragement throughout this program.

ABSTRACT

Maintaining brand reputation is pivotal for the survival and growth of any organization. Still, for Local Authorities the extent is extreme since these nonprofit-making firms thrive on the trust of ratepayers to continue getting revenue for survival. The rapid growth and widespread adoption of social media have revolutionized communication channels, presenting both opportunities and challenges for Urban Local Authorities. Due to the management problem and research gaps, mixed research (concurrent and embedded) examining the specific impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe was carried out. The literature and theoretical framework (Uses and Gratification Theory, and the Social Network Theory) guided the research into concurrent and embedded quantitative and qualitative paradigms. The independent variable was social media with sub-constructs of platforms, usage, and content while the dependent variable was brand reputation. Four research objectives and questions were drawn from the thesis and literature that led to three hypotheses and research questions. Hypotheses were that there is a significant relationship between social media (platforms, usage, and content) and brand reputation. It employed 145 questionnaires and 30 semi-structured interviews to a population sample of 175 that was obtained through stratified sampling (Council Employees, Councilors, Residents, Ministry Officials, And Patrons) followed by convenient sampling for demographics, structured data, and purposive sampling for unstructured data. The percentage response was 100%, where demographics (such as gender, location, and age) had no significant relationship with social media elements. In contrast, education level and strata had some relationship e.g., participants in a certain level of education preferred a certain category of social media like LinkedIn. Structured data (quantitative) was analyzed on SPSS using Pearson's correlation coefficient and Chi-Square test for relationships. The research tested 3 hypotheses (platforms, usage, and content versus brand reputation) where a general outcome was a positive significant relationship between social media (platforms used, usage frequency, content type, and relevancy) and brand reputation. And then from unstructured data (qualitative/interviews) challenges of social media were noted (like cybercrimes, connectivity issues, etc), legal frameworks of social media (like Cyber and Data Protection Act CH 12:07), and recommendations to embrace social media like "active social media presence and usage, platforms and transparent communication, and being mindful of the social media content and pieces of training". Recommendations for future research were to try longitudinal time horizons for this research and to measure the productivity factor of social media and brand reputation.

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My wholehearted gratefulness goes to the Lord God for the opportunity to work and learn. I would also like to thank the Great Zimbabwe Family for granting me the opportunity to pursue my studies. This cannot end without singling out my thesis supervisor Dr J. Zimuto for providing direction and sharing his knowledge and information throughout this research project. His valuable suggestions and guidance were a great motivation for this study.

It will be grossly immoral, and unjust not to acknowledge the intellectual and moral support I received from all the stakeholders who participated as respondents to questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BR – brand reputation

IBM - International Business Machines

LA – Local Authority

SM – Social Media

SNT – Social Network Theory

SPSS – Statistical Package for Social Sciences

UGT – Uses and Gratification Theory

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1.0 : CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This chapter introduces a study of the impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe, covering background, theoretical framework, problem statement, purpose, significance, research questions, objectives, hypotheses, and limitations.

1.1 : Definition of Terms

According to this research, the definitions were made in two ways operational definitions (of how we have used the terms in this research) and according to scholarly review definitions.

1.1.1 : Scholarly Review Definitions

"Social Media" refers to the means of interacting with others online by creating, sharing, and/or exchanging information and ideas (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Platform, usage, and content are the three sub-elements under the operational definitions.

"Brand Reputation" refers to the perception of a brand by customers, employees, and partners, where a strong reputation increases trust and advocacy for the brand (Mazurek, 2019). The operational definition of brand reputation is given in the next section.

1.1.2 : Operational Definitions

These are definitions according to this research, words or phrases are defined according to how they are being used in this research.

"Local Authority" is a nonprofit making institution at the third tier of Government found at the District level and is established under the provisions of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act No. 20 of 2013 Section 274 and the Urban Councils Act (CH 29:15) to provide services and a policy regulatory function to its jurisdiction.

"Municipality" refers to Urban Local Authority according to this write-up.

"Social Media" is an independent variable or the predictor variable that has sub-constructs of social media platforms, usage, and content.

"Social Media Platform" is an element of social media that focuses on a service, site, or method that delivers media to an audience (Ansari, Ghori & Kazi, 2019). It could include popular platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, or any other relevant networking platforms. Thus, the assumption is that the type of platform determines the brand reputation of a firm using it.

"Social Media Usage" is a sub-variable that examines the frequency and intensity of social media use by Urban Local Authorities. It is achieved through viewing, liking, following, and friend requests, comments, posts, sharing, and subscribing among other usages. Thus, the level of usage determines the

brand reputation in terms of one-way or two-way communication, online presence, and electronic business (Lybeck, Koiranen & Koivula, 2023).

“Social Media Content” according to Castillo, Diaz, and Vieweg (2015), is pretty much anything that can be shared on social media, whether it's a text update, a photo, graphic, video, link, etc. as well as the relevance, accuracy, and resonance of the content with the target audience (Castillo, Diaz & Vieweg, 2015). The research therefore seeks to examine the effect of social media Content on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.

“Brand Reputation” is a dependent variable or the outcome variable that refers to the collective perceptions, beliefs, and opinions held by stakeholders about a brand (Erdem & Swait, 2020). This will be seen through consumer perception, stakeholder trust and loyalty, crisis management, and financial performance (Fombrun and Shanley, 2022).

“Researcher” is the author of this write-up or dissertation.

1.2: Background to The Study

Social media has emerged as a powerful communication tool that has transformed the way organizations interact with their stakeholders and manage their brand reputation. Several studies have investigated the impact of social media on brand reputation in various contexts. However, there is a dearth of research focusing specifically on the influence of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe. This literature background provides an overview of relevant studies in the field.

Social media and brand reputation: Social media platforms have become essential channels for organizations to engage with their audiences and shape their brand reputation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Research has shown that social media can significantly impact brand reputation by influencing brand image, customer perceptions, and brand trust (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Kim & Kim, 2010). Positive interactions and engagement on social media platforms can enhance brand reputation, while negative experiences or mismanagement can lead to reputation damage (Wang, Kim, & Lee, 2015).

Brand reputation and brand personality: Dr. Munyaradzi Mutsikiwa studied “The influence of perceived brand personality of social media on users’ attitude, motivation, behavioural intent, and behavior”, (Mutsikiwa, 2018). The scope of his research focused on personalities like attitude, motivation, behavioral intent, and behavior which are more psychological which leaves a research gap between social media platforms and brand reputation the public relations aspect which goes beyond just behavioral traits. Therefore, brand personality feeds into brand reputation.

Brand reputation management in Local Authorities: Local Authorities play a crucial role in delivering public services and maintaining public trust. Effective brand reputation management is essential for Local Authorities to build strong relationships with their communities (Blomgren & Levy, 2014). However, limited research has specifically explored the role of social media in brand reputation management within local authority contexts.

Social media adoption in Local Government: Research has highlighted the growing adoption of social media by local governments worldwide as a means to engage with citizens, share information, and manage their public image (Gibson, Lusoli, & Ward, 2013; Welch, Hinnant, & Moon, 2005). Social media platforms offer opportunities for local authorities to increase transparency, facilitate citizen participation, and enhance their brand reputation (Gibson et al., 2013). However, a management problem constituting challenges related to resource constraints, skills gaps, and organizational culture can hinder effective social media utilization in local government contexts (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2012).

Social media and reputation management in African contexts: Limited studies have explored the impact of social media on brand reputation in the African context, particularly within the public sector. However, research from other African countries has highlighted the potential of social media for citizen engagement and brand reputation management in government organizations (Ntaliani, 2019; Kamau, 2015). These studies emphasize the need for context-specific research to understand the impact of social media on brand reputation within the unique socio-political and cultural environment of Zimbabwe.

In conclusion, while the influence of social media on brand reputation has been widely acknowledged, there is a significant research gap regarding its specific impact on Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe. This research aims to address this gap by examining the relationship between social media (platforms, usage, and content) and brand reputation in the context of Zimbabwean Local Authorities, providing insights to inform effective brand reputation management strategies. It is therefore behind this thrust that the researcher explores the impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in the Midlands Province, Zimbabwe; which includes Gweru, Shurugwi, Zvishavane, Gokwe, Redcliff, and Kwekwe City Councils.

1.3: Theoretical Framework.

The research study utilized a theoretical framework to guide its process, constructing theories to understand phenomena like relationships, events, and behavior. The framework established existing theories, and relationships, investigated them, and developed new hypotheses to be tested (Breslin & Gatrell, 2023).

A theory usually makes generalizations about observations and consists of an interconnected and coherent set of models and ideas (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The theoretical framework consisted of

the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) and the Social Network Theory (SNT). These theories serve as a foundation for understanding the dynamics and mechanisms at play in this area of research. The writer explained observed facts per each theory and predicted outcomes of relationships by exposing the link between the independent variable social media and the Theories as well as the dependent variable brand reputation and the theories.

1.4: Statement of The Problem.

Maintaining brand reputation is pivotal for the survival and growth of any organization. Still, for Local Authorities the extent is extreme since these non-profit-making firms thrive on the trust of ratepayers to continue getting revenue for survival. It then follows that, as the Urban Local Authorities make strategic plans and efforts to provide services, they are facing challenges in ensuring a good brand reputation. The rapid growth and widespread adoption of social media have revolutionized communication channels, presenting both opportunities and challenges for Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe. However, there is a lack of comprehensive research examining the specific impact of social media on the brand reputation of these Local Authorities. Understanding the nature and extent of this impact is crucial for developing effective strategies to leverage social media and enhance brand reputation in the digital age. Therefore, there is a pressing need to investigate the management problem and specific ways in which social media (platforms, usage, and content) influences the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe, and identify key recommendations.

1.5: Research Objectives

1.5.1 : The General Objective

Aim: To investigate the impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe.

1.5.2 : Specific Objectives

- 1.** To assess the significance of social media platforms on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.
- 2.** To establish the impact of social media usage on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.
- 3.** To examine the effect of social media content on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.
- 4.** To determine strategies that can be employed to embrace social media for a good brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.
 - a) To identify the challenges relating to the use of social media in Midlands Local Authorities.

- b) To identify the legal frameworks governing social media in Zimbabwe.
- c) To draft recommendations that can be made on strengthening social media.

1.6: Research Questions

1.6.1: The General Research Question

QSN: What is the impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe?

1.6.2: Specific Research Questions

1. What is the significance of social media platforms on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?
2. What is the impact of social media usage on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?
3. What is the effect of social media content on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?
4. What strategies can be employed to embrace social media for a good brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?
 - a) Are there any challenges relating to the use of social media in Midlands Local Authorities?
 - b) What are the legal frameworks governing social media in Zimbabwe?
 - c) What recommendations can be obtained on strengthening social media in Local Authorities?

1.7: Statement of Hypotheses

- H_0^1 – There is no significant relationship between social media platforms and brand reputation.
- H_1^1 – There is a significant relationship between social media platforms and brand reputation.
- H_0^2 – There is no significant relationship between social media usage and brand reputation.
- H_1^2 – There is a significant relationship between social media usage and brand reputation.
- H_0^3 – There is no significant relationship between social media content and brand reputation.
- H_1^3 – There is a significant relationship between social media content and brand reputation.

The research followed a mixed research paradigm where it is both quantitative and qualitative, but more quantitative in nature. The conceptual framework shows how the dependent variable is related to the independent variable in testing the causal effect relationship. It consists of two sets of variables; the independent variable: social media which is the predictor variable, comprising of sub variables social media platform, usage, and content; and the dependent variable: brand reputation which is the outcome variable.

1.8 : Significance of The Study.

The researcher was motivated to carry out this research on the impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe to unpack the significance of using social media when making the reputation of brands as well as unveiling the challenges posed by social media and recommendations for shaping a positive brand. Thus, the results of the study may be useful to the following stakeholders:

1.8.1 : Researcher.

The study will raise awareness among the practitioners on the impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe. The researcher can also improve academic skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation; and put into practice the theory learned in the discipline of strategic management.

1.8.2 : Urban Local Authorities

Understanding the effects of social media on brand reputation can help the growth of the Urban Local Authorities in a variety of facets in Zimbabwe as it reduces revenue inefficiencies, poor service delivery, and lack of public trust through clearing uncertainties.

1.8.3 : To Great Zimbabwe University.

The research will contribute to the body of knowledge, which is the biggest mandate of a higher and tertiary education institution according to Education 5.0. This research may also be used as a point of reference by other researchers and students at Great Zimbabwe University who have an interest in the same area of study.

1.9 : Purpose of The Study.

The study intended to find the impact of social media platforms, usage, and content on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe to ensure that business efficiency and stakeholder support can be guaranteed.

1.10 : Assumptions of the Study

Assumptions are statements that a researcher believes are true but have not been confirmed (Foss & Hallberg, 2014). This research assumes the accuracy of literature on social media usage in Midlands Urban Local Authorities, the respondents' knowledge and willingness to provide insights, and that participation is voluntary and confidentiality is maintained to ensure truthfulness and honesty. To foster

truthfulness, the researcher ensured that participation was voluntary and participants were constantly assured of confidentiality.

The study assumes that the norms and practices of selected Local Authorities in the Midlands are similar, as they follow the same Urban Councils Act CH 29:15 and policy directives from the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works. Therefore, by specializing in the Midlands during the study, the research was likely to showcase how Urban Local Authorities could leverage social media to enhance effective brand reputation.

1.11 : Delimitations (Scope) of The Study.

Delimitations refer to the researcher's determination of the study's boundaries or scope (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The researcher used questionnaires and interviews with the population sample of Midlands Urban Local Authorities as a case study and the geographical focus was Midlands, Zimbabwe. If not time-constrained, it was also good to widen the geographical area by including other Provinces to have a broader knowledge of understanding the results.

The research follows a mixed research paradigm where both quantitative and qualitative data are gathered and analyzed. Respondents were only drawn from within Urban Local Authority (Workers and Residents) such as from Gweru, Gokwe, Shurugwi, Zvishavane, Redcliff, and Kwekwe Urban Councils.

Key research assumptions hinge on the research hypothesis presented where based on the theoretical framework it was assumed that brand reputation depends on social media elements. Therefore, the research will prove and ascertain the assumptions.

1.12 : Limitations of The Study.

The study faced limitations due to time constraints, a population sample, financial constraints, and confidential information. To ensure reliability, robust sampling techniques and secondary archival data were used. Financial constraints, such as transport, stationery, and internet costs, were addressed through library and archival data. The study also addressed sensitive information to Urban Local Authorities by ensuring confidentiality and anonymity in questionnaires.

1.13 : Dissertation Overview

This research comprises of Chapter 1 to Chapter 5 as follows: -

“Chapter 1” This chapter provides a background, problem statement, justification, limitations, delimitations, and rationale for the research area, focusing on social media knowledge and justifying the study's importance.

“Chapter 2” This chapter reviews the literature on the impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe, providing theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

“Chapter 3” The research methodology was pragmatism, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, using case studies, using questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews, stratified, convenient, purposive sampling, and considering research ethics.

“Chapter 4” This chapter presents and analyzes data from a case study and primary data from questionnaires and interviews. Thematic data presentation is used, with tables, bar charts, pie charts, and histograms used for analysis. The findings will inform the impact and opportunities of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe.

“Chapter 5” The study's findings were summarized, conclusions drawn, practical and theoretical contributions outlined, and recommendations for future studies made.

1.14 : Chapter Summary

The chapter was an introductory to this research and has set a platform for its genesis and looked at the background of the problem, and statement of the problem in line with the impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in the Midlands Province, Zimbabwe. The significance of the study was also discussed together with the research objectives. Among other issues discussed in this chapter, were delimitations, limitations, and definitions of terms which lastly marked the end of the chapter. The chapter that follows looks at the theories and empirical studies derived from the research topic as the literature review, identifying the research gaps.

2.0: CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The dissertation chapter outlined the research literature, defining the field's frontiers through positivism and interpretivism. It assessed if the research proposal exceeded existing work, examined background information, theories, and empirical studies, and identified gaps in past research to be filled by the proposed research.

2.1: Local Authorities Orientation and Thrust

Local Authorities are nonprofit-making institutions that are at the third tier of Government (at the District level) established under the provisions of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act No. 20 of 2013 Section 274 and the Urban Councils Act (CH 29:15) to provide services and a policy regulatory function to its jurisdiction.

Brand reputation is key to the Local Authorities fraternity since they represent a Local Institute of Town Management Board which was entrusted to provide Government services at the local level (Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act No. 20 of 2013 Section 274). These services include water supply, wastewater management, refuse collection, road maintenance, stands provision, and town planning among other services (Urban Councils Act, CH 29:15). Being a non-profit making organization, Local Authorities survive on the revenue levied to residents for service provision.

Therefore, the relationship between Local Authorities and Residents is anchored on trust (Li, Long & Chen, 2018). The good reputation makes the residents to be motivated to pay to Councils and the Councils will also be capacitated to continue providing a reputable service. Due to globalization, social media is seen to be leaving no stone unturned. The researcher was therefore motivated to study the impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe in a bid to increase organizational efficiency.

2.2: Conceptual Framework

The research followed a mixed research paradigm (concurrent and embedded) where it is both quantitative and qualitative, but more quantitative in nature. The conceptual framework shows how the dependent variable is related to the independent variable in testing the causal effect relationship. It consists of two sets of variables; the independent variable: social media which is the predictor variable, comprising of sub variables social media platform, usage, and content; and the dependent variable: brand reputation which is the outcome variable.

The diagram below illustrates the conceptual framework;

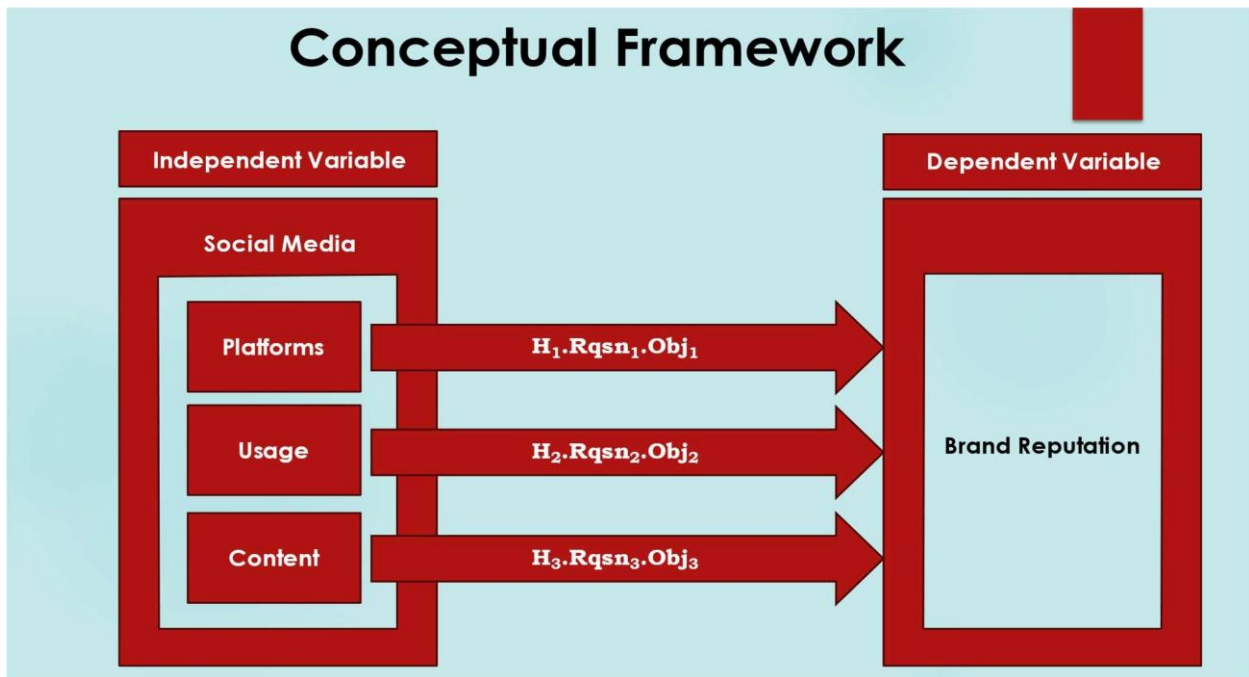


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

2.3: Social Media (SM) Literature: Independent Variable

Social media is commonly defined as internet-based platforms that allow users to create, share, and interact with content and engage in social networking (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) go ahead to say that social media are a group of Internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of content creator and user-generated content.

2.3.1 : Sub Variables of Social Media

- a) **Platforms:** A social media platform is a service, site, or method that delivers media to an audience. Ansari, Sinoka, Ghishwa, Ghorri, Muhammad, Kazi, and Ghafoor (2019) define it as an aspect of social media that focuses on the particular social media tools and programs that enable social interaction. Its functions are to deliver, but also sometimes to allow for feedback, discussion, or sharing. Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp, network TV, etc., are media platform outlets (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). There are various categories of platforms which include Messaging Apps (e.g., WhatsApp, Talkchat), Social Sites (e.g., Facebook), Video Sharing (e.g., YouTube, TikTok, Instagram), Microblogging Platforms (e.g., Twitter, Tumblr), and Professional Networking (e.g., LinkedIn) (Li, Larimo & Leonidou, 2021). According to Farzin, Ghaffari, and Fattahi (2022), the choice of social media platform that people use to build social networks or

social relationships depends on whether they share similar personal or career content, interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. The research seeks to assess the significance of social media platforms on brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.

- b) **Usage:** It refers to users when they actively create and share content, viewing, liking, subscribing, commenting, posting, and fostering user participation and engagement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The usage depends on frequency, productivity, and the aim of use. For example, for communication, advertising, electronic business, video streaming, or news bulleting. While usage has numerous benefits, usage can bring several negative effects that cannot be ignored (Valenzuela, Halpern, Katz & Miranda, 2019). These negative effects include cyberbullying, the spread of misinformation, addiction, the decline in face-to-face communication, self-esteem issues, social isolation, polarization, and echo chambers, cyberstalking and harassment, a decrease in privacy, and comparison and envy (Valenzuela, Halpern, Katz & Miranda, 2019). Therefore, the research seeks to establish the impact of social media usage on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.
- c) **Content:** According to Castillo, Diaz, and Vieweg (2015), social media content is pretty much anything that can be shared on social media, whether it's a text update, a photo, graphic, video, link, etc. Can also be user-generated content or socialite conic content. Social media platforms rely heavily on user-generated content, where users contribute and share their own content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Content is measured through type and relevance. Through viral effects and user-generated content, social media can amplify both positive and negative brand-related content due to its viral nature. According to Gkikas, Tzafilkou, Theodoridis, Garmpis, and Gkikas (2022), studies indicate that positive user-generated content on social media platforms can enhance brand reputation, whereas negative content can quickly spread and damage brand perception. Therefore, the research seeks to examine the effect of social media content on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.

2.3.2 : Types of social media Platforms:

- **Messaging Apps:** These are platforms for instant messaging for example WhatsApp, and Talk-Chat (Li, Larimo & Leonidou, 2021).
- **Social Networking Sites (SNS):** Platforms such as Facebook where users create profiles, connect with others, and share content (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).
- **Content-Sharing Platforms:** Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, where users can share various types of media content, such as videos, photos, and images (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

- **Microblogging Platforms:** Examples include Twitter and Tumblr, where users can share short and concise updates or posts (Java et al., 2007).
- **Professional Platforms:** Platforms like LinkedIn and Classifieds where users can publish and share their curriculum vitae (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

2.3.3 : Impacts of Social Media:

- **Communication and Information Sharing:** social media platforms have transformed the way people communicate and share information, allowing for rapid and widespread dissemination of news and content (Boyd, 2011).
- **Relationship Building:** social media platforms facilitate the formation and maintenance of social connections, enabling individuals to build and strengthen relationships (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).
- **Influence and Opinion Formation:** social media platforms have become influential spaces for sharing opinions, shaping public discourse, and influencing attitudes and behaviors (Boyd, 2011).
- **Branding and Marketing:** social media platforms provide opportunities for brands to engage with their audience, build brand awareness, and implement marketing campaigns (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media content is influenced by the communicators, the receivers, and the context (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Customers' social media experiences can be leveraged as market intelligence to boost traffic and sales (Rui, Liu & Whinston, 2013) due to the use of social media in promotions, advertisements, branding, and customer relationship management. Customers' decisions to shop and eat out are influenced by reviews posted on social media (Nazlan, Tanford & Montgomery, 2018; Yoo, Sanders & Moon, 2013). Positive messages or comments are linked to better sales whereas negative messages or comments are linked to lower sales. As far as the writer is aware, no paper in the literature demonstrates how social media affects brand reputation in Zimbabwean Local Authorities. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate how social media (platforms, usage, and content) affects the reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Zimbabwe's Midlands Province.

2.4 : Brand Reputation (BR) Literature: Dependent Variable

Brand reputation refers to the collective perceptions, beliefs, and opinions held by stakeholders about a brand (Fombrun, 1996). Reputation is the overall estimation in which an organization is held by its internal and external stakeholders based on its past actions and the probability of its future behaviors (Fombrun, 1996). Consumer behavior has changed as a result of the rise of social media, as people can now share knowledge and experiences, learn about brands from a variety of sources, and base purchases

on this knowledge without the companies having any say in the matter (Schau & Gilly, 2003; Bunting & Lipski, 2000). Following their adoption of social media, businesses should, according to several authors and researchers (Tuten, 2008; Bunting & Lipski, 2000; Weber, 2008), forgo the conventional top-down communication models in favor of developing open, qualitative, and reliable dialogues with stakeholders online. This will help them better understand how consumers feel about them. According to Kanthiah alias Deepak et al. (2013), CRM has given businesses a new weapon to compete in the market and has become how businesses indirectly promote their brands.

2.4.1 : Components of Brand Reputation:

- **Perceived Quality:** The perception of a brand's product or service quality, including its reliability, performance, and value (Erdem & Swait, 2020).
- **Trustworthiness:** Stakeholders' confidence and belief in a brand's reliability, credibility, and ethical conduct (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2022).
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** A brand's commitment to social and environmental responsibilities, including ethical business practices and community engagement (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001).
- **Brand Identity:** The unique set of associations, values, and attributes that distinguish a brand from its competitors (Keller, 1993).
- **Brand Personality:** The study conducted by Dr. Munyaradzi Mutsikiwa examined the impact of social media users' perceived brand personality on their attitude, motivation, behavioral intent, and behavior (Mutsikiwa, 2018). His research was mostly psychological in nature, focusing on personality factors such as motivation, attitude, and behavior. This leaves a research deficit in the area of social media platforms and brand reputation, which are aspects of public relations that go beyond personality attributes. This implies that brand personality feeds into brand reputation.

This research measured whether the brand reputation was positive or not as a result of social media.

2.4:2: Factors Influencing Brand Reputation:

- **Communication and brand Messaging:** Effective and two-way communication of brand values, promises, and differentiation helps shape brand reputation (Balmer & Gray, 2003). This is where social media plays a role.
- **Product and Service Quality:** Consistently delivering high-quality products and services positively impacts brand reputation (Keller, 1993).
- **Corporate Behaviour:** Ethical conduct, transparency, and responsible business practices influence brand reputation (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001).

This research focused on the communication and brand messaging factor and see how social media as a communication and messaging utility has affected brand reputation.

2.4.3 : Research Questions and Dictates of Brand Reputation:

- **Consumer Perception and brand reputation:** Research concluded that a positive brand reputation enhances consumers' perceptions and influences their purchase decisions (Erdem & Swait, 2020).
- **Stakeholder Trust and Loyalty:** As concluded by Bhattacharya and Sen (2022) a strong brand reputation fosters trust and loyalty among stakeholders, including customers, employees, and investors (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2022).

Questionnaire Likert Scale Question: My Local Authority has a positive brand reputation. Answered from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

- **Crisis Management:** As discovered by Coombs in 2017 a good brand reputation helps companies effectively manage and recover from crises and negative events (Coombs, 2017).
- **Financial Performance:** Research by Fombrun and Shanley (2022) concluded that a positive brand reputation is associated with increased sales, market share, and revenue growth (Fombrun and Shanley, 2022).

Questionnaire Likert Scale Question: The brand perception of my Local Authority is shaped using social media. Answered from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Higher Local Authority branding in particular can be utilized to make a strong statement to stakeholders and potential customers about the caliber and reliability of the institution (Thomson, 2002). The appeal of the Local Authority can then be determined by potential customers using these cues (Utley, 2002). To this aim, strong Local Authority brands likely have a lot of appeal for potential investors who might want to build and invest in the neighborhoods of Local Authorities with strong brands. It is therefore behind the thirst of aspiring a reputable brand that the researcher studies the impact of trending social media (platforms, usage, and content) on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe.

2.5 : Theoretical Literature: Relationship of Sub Independent and Dependent Variables

The theoretical literature review helps to establish the theories that already exist in the area under study, the relationships between them, to what degree the existing theories have been investigated, and to develop new hypotheses to be tested (Breslin & Gatrell, 2023). Theoretical literature also indicates the variables and relationships, which are relevant to the proposed study. Theories have three key functions: (1) to explain observed facts, (2) to predict outcomes of relationships, and (3) to summarize knowledge.

A theory usually makes generalizations about observations and consists of an interconnected and coherent set of models and ideas.

The theoretical framework consisted of the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) and the Social Network Theory (SNT). These theories serve as a foundation for understanding the dynamics and mechanisms at play in this area of research which makes it more of a quantitative research paradigm (Xie, & Lee, 2015). The writer explained observed facts per each theory and predicted outcomes of relationships by exposing the link between the independent variable social media and the Theories as well as the dependent variable brand reputation and the theories.

2.5.1 : Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratifications Theory is a communication theory that explains why people actively seek out and use media, including social media platforms (Blumler & Katz, 1974). Developed in 1974, the theory suggests that individuals have specific needs and motivations that drive their media consumption choices. According to this theory, people use media to fulfill their psychological and social needs, and they actively select and engage with media that provides gratification in line with those needs. Blumler and Katz propounded the Uses and Gratification Theory in 1974.

It's important to note that the exact motivations and needs can vary among individuals, and people may have multiple motivations for using social media simultaneously (Whiting & Williams, 2013). The Uses and Gratifications Theory helps to understand the active role individuals play in selecting and using social media platforms based on their specific needs and the gratifications they seek to fulfill.

2.4.1.1 : Relationship of SM Platform and Brand Reputation Based on UGT

The Uses and Gratifications Theory provides insights into the relationship between social media platforms and brand reputation by examining the motivations and gratifications that users seek from their social media platforms. Below are some key points to prove that.

- Firms and Users often engage with social media platforms to seek information about brands and their reputations. They rely on social media as a source of information to make informed decisions and evaluate brand reputation (LaRose, Mastro & Eastin, 2001).
- Social media platforms offer users and organizations the opportunity to access real-time updates, reviews, and user-generated content, which can influence brand reputation by providing transparent and authentic information (Lipsman, Mudd, Rich & Bruich 2012).

- Users seek entertainment and enjoyable experiences on social media, and brands that deliver entertaining content can benefit from increased engagement, positive sentiment, and improved brand reputation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).
- Social media platforms facilitate social interaction and engagement, allowing users to connect with brands and share their experiences. Positive interactions with brands on social media can enhance brand reputation through positive word-of-mouth and user-generated content (Hajli, Sims, Zadeh & Richard, 2014).
- Users seek to enhance their self-image and personal brand through their association with reputable brands on social media, which can indirectly contribute to the perceived reputation of those brands (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

It is therefore behind this understanding to note that the Uses and Gratifications Theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding the motivations behind social media platforms.

2.4.1.2 : Relationship of SM Usage and Brand Reputation Based on UGT

The Uses and Gratification Theory explores the relationship between social media usage and brand reputation by focusing on the motivations and gratifications individuals seek from their social media interactions. Here are some key points to prove that:

- Social media usage serves as a source of information for users, enabling them to seek and acquire information about brands and their reputations. Users actively engage with social media to gather information and make informed decisions, which can influence brand reputation (Ruggiero, 2000).
- Social media usage provides opportunities for users to interact and engage with brands and other users. Users seek social interactions, such as engaging in discussions, sharing experiences, and seeking social validation, which can impact brand reputation (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).
- Positive social interactions between users and brands on social media platforms can foster a sense of community, trust, and positive brand associations, contributing to enhanced brand reputation (Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

This concludes that the Uses and Gratification Theory focuses on the motivations and gratifications of individuals using social media.

2.4.1.3 : Relationship of SM Content and Brand Reputation Based on UGT

The Uses and Gratification Theory examines the relationship between social media content and brand reputation by focusing on the motivations and gratifications that users seek from their social media interactions. Here are some key points to prove that:

- Social media users actively seek information on brands and products through social media content. High-quality and informative content provided by brands can positively influence brand reputation (Chung & Cho, 2017).
- Brands that consistently share relevant and reliable information through social media channels can establish themselves as trustworthy sources, contributing to a positive brand reputation (Hajli, Sims, Zadeh & Richard, 2014).
- Social media users often use platforms to present and shape their online identities. Brands that align with users' self-presentation goals and values can enhance their reputation by being seen as compatible with users' desired self-images (Lee & Watkins, 2016).
- Brands that enable users to express their identities and values through social media interactions, such as through branded content that resonates with users' self-concepts, can positively influence brand reputation (Kim and Johnson, 2016).

In summary, it's important to note that the Uses and Gratification Theory focuses on users' motivations and gratification of social media content.

2.5.2 : Social Network Theory (SNT)

Social Network Theory examines the structure, patterns, and dynamics of social relationships between individuals or organizations (Brandes & Hildenbrand, 2014). It emphasizes the influence of these social connections on behavior, information flow, and resource exchange. Social Network Theory does not have a single propounder, as it has emerged from the works of multiple scholars from various fields (Kim, Newth & Christen, 2013). However, several key figures have significantly contributed to the development and popularization of Social Network Theory.

By applying Social Network Theory, researchers and practitioners can gain insights into how social relationships and connections influence various aspects of individuals' or organizations' behavior, information flow, and resource exchange (Molinero & Riquelme, 2021). In the context of business, understanding social networks can help organizations leverage relationships and social capital to achieve their goals, enhance collaboration, and tap into the power of social influence.

2.4.2.1 : Relationship of SM Platform and Brand Reputation Based on SNT

The Social Network Theory provides insights into the relationship between social media platforms and brand reputation by examining the structure and dynamics of social networks formed through these platforms. Here are some key points to prove that:

- Social media platforms facilitate the formation of online social networks where users connect and interact with each other. Positive interactions and engagement within these networks can

contribute to the spread of positive brand-related information and enhance brand reputation (Wang, Yu & Wei, 2012).

- Network effects on social media platforms enable the amplification of brand messages and the dissemination of positive brand-related content, which can positively impact brand reputation through increased visibility and word-of-mouth (Wu, Wang & Cheng, 2011).
- Opinion leaders and influential users on social media platforms can impact brand reputation through their ability to spread positive or negative information, as their opinions are often trusted and followed by others within their network (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki & Wilner, 2010).
- The structure and connectivity of social networks formed on social media platforms can impact brand reputation. Brands that are well-connected within networks and have strong ties with influential users can benefit from positive associations and enhanced reputation (Hajli et al., 2014).
- Social media platforms enable brands to identify and engage with key network actors, such as opinion leaders and brand advocates, to leverage their influence and strengthen brand reputation within the network (Chung & Koo, 2015).

It's important to note that the Social Network Theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding the influence of social networks on brand reputation.

2.4.2.2 : Relationship of SM Usage and Brand Reputation Based on SNT

Social Network Theory examines the relationship between social media usage and brand reputation by focusing on the structure and dynamics of social networks. Here are some key points as stated below:

- Social media usage creates networks of interconnected users. The structure of these networks, including the size, density, and centrality of connections, can influence brand reputation (Wang et al., 2012).
- Brands that have a strong presence within social networks, with a large number of connections and interactions, are more likely to be perceived positively and have a higher reputation among users (Hajli et al., 2014).
- Social media networks facilitate the rapid spread of information and opinions. Positive or negative brand-related content shared within these networks can significantly impact brand reputation (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004).
- Social media usage contributes to the accumulation of social capital, characterized by the resources and relationships individuals possess within their networks. The social capital built through social media interactions can positively affect brand reputation (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007).

- Brands that foster social capital within their social media networks, such as by encouraging user participation and facilitating social connections, can benefit from increased brand reputation and loyalty (Hsu and Lin, 2008).

The writer also mentions that Social Network Theory focuses on the structure and dynamics of social networks.

2.4.2.3 : Relationship of SM Content and Brand Reputation Based on SNT

Social Network Theory explores the relationship between social media content and brand reputation by examining the network structure, interactions, and influence within social media platforms. Here are some key points to note:

- Co-created content generated by customers on social media platforms, such as user-generated reviews, testimonials, and creative campaigns, can positively influence brand reputation as they reflect authentic and unbiased customer perspectives (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler 2004).
- Social media content has the potential to spread rapidly within networks. Positive and informative content shared by brands can be disseminated widely, leading to increased brand visibility and a positive reputation (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004).
- The speed and reach of information diffusion within social networks can amplify the impact of brand content, contributing to reputation-building effects (Bampo, Ewing, Mather, Stewart & Wallace 2008).
- Social media platforms provide opportunities for users to express their opinions and influence others. User-generated content, such as reviews and recommendations, can shape brand reputation as they are shared and discussed within social networks (Cheung & Lee, 2010).
- Social media platforms offer entertainment value to users through various forms of content, such as videos, memes, and games. Brands that create entertaining and engaging content on social media can attract and retain users' attention, positively influencing brand reputation (Westermann, Spies, Stahl & Hesse, 2016).
- Entertaining content shared by users on social media platforms can go viral, reaching a wider audience and increasing brand visibility, which can have a positive impact on brand reputation (Dellarocas, 2003).

Please note that Social Network Theory focuses on the network structure, influence, and interactions within social media content.

2.6: Empirical Literature: Relationship of Sub Independent and Dependent Variables

An empirical literature review, also known as a systematic literature review, analyzes previous empirical studies to provide an answer to a specific research topic (Kaliisa, Rienties, Mørch & Kluge, 2022). Rather than drawing information from theories or beliefs, empirical research relies on observations and measurements to arrive at conclusions. Several brands have been recognized for effectively managing their reputation on social media.

2.6.1 : Relationship of SM Platform and Brand Reputation Based on Literature

Some insights into the relationship between social media platforms and brand reputation based on literature are as follows;

- Research by Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, and Pihlström (2022) highlighted the significance of selecting the most appropriate social media platforms based on their characteristics and user demographics to enhance a positive brand reputation.

Questionnaire Question Task: To gather demographic details from respondents.

- A study by Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2021) highlighted the distinct features of different social media platforms and their impact on brand reputation. The authors emphasized the need for brands to align their communication strategies with platform-specific characteristics.
- Research by Mangold and Faulds (2019) indicated that social media platforms with interactive features and user engagement capabilities positively influenced brand reputation by fostering brand-consumer relationships.

Questionnaire Question: Which type of social media platforms does your Local Authority actively use the most?

- A study by Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman (2015) suggested that certain social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, had a stronger impact on brand reputation due to their widespread user base and content-sharing capabilities.
- A study by Jahn and Kunz (2022) explored the impact of social media platform selection on brand reputation and found that the choice of platform should align with the target audience and brand objectives.

Questionnaire Likert Scale Question: social media platform types significantly affect the brand reputation of my Local Authority. Responses are based on the Likert Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

2.6.2 : Relationship of SM Usage and Brand Reputation Based on Literature

Some insights into the relationship between social media usage and brand reputation based on literature are as follows;

- Research by Austin and Pinkleton (2015) explored the role of social media during crises and highlighted the importance of timely and transparent communication in maintaining brand reputation.
- A study by Wirtz and Chew (2022) found that higher levels of consumer engagement on social media positively influenced brand reputation by fostering brand loyalty and advocacy.
- A study by Bijmolt et al. (2020) demonstrated that social media usage provided consumers with a platform to share feedback and opinions, which influenced brand reputation. Brands that actively engaged with customer feedback on social media platforms were more likely to maintain a positive reputation.

Questionnaire Likert Scale Question: My Local Authority frequently uses social media for public engagement. Responses are based on the Likert Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

- Research by Zhang and Daugherty (2021) suggested that social media usage facilitated real-time customer feedback, allowing brands to address concerns promptly and positively impact brand reputation.
- A study by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of brand communication on social media platforms in shaping brand reputation. Brands that effectively communicated their values and engaged with consumers on social media were more likely to have a favorable reputation.
- Research by Liang and Wei (2017) highlighted the positive association between social media usage and consumer engagement, which, in turn, enhanced brand reputation.

Questionnaire Likert Scale Question: social media usage positively impacts the brand reputation of my Local Authority. Responses are based on the Likert Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

2.6.3 : Relationship of SM Content and Brand Reputation Based on Literature

Some insights into the relationship between social media content and brand reputation based on literature are as follows;

- Research by Luo, Xu, and Lu (2019) revealed that engaging in informative content types on social media positively affected brand reputation, leading to increased consumer trust and loyalty.

Questionnaire Question: Which type of social media content does your Local Authority actively use the most?

- A study by Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) emphasized the importance of authentic and relevant content in maintaining a favorable brand reputation on social media platforms.

Questionnaire Likert Scale Question: My Local Authority shares authentic and relevant content on social media. Responses are based on the Likert Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

- Liu, Huang, Zhang, and Zhang (2016) conducted research demonstrating that user-generated content, particularly positive reviews and recommendations, played a crucial role in enhancing brand reputation on social media platforms.
- A study by Kwon and Sung (2019) found that positive social media content significantly influenced brand reputation, while negative content had a detrimental effect.

Questionnaire Likert Scale Question: social media content relevance significantly affects the brand reputation of my Local Authority. Responses are based on the Likert Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

2.6.4 : Impact of SM on the Brand Reputation: HARARE City Council Case

According to the Herald (2020), the HARARE City Council adopted the e-Agenda to enable active stakeholder participation and achieve the mid-term goal of reaching 75 percent customer satisfaction by the year-end of 2021. The e-Agenda is a social media Platform that is designed to help create, approve, and track meeting items and agendas online.

Speaking to stakeholders at the Town House, Acting Mayor Councillor Happymore Gotora said the council was engaging residents through social media platforms. “We have adopted the e-Agenda,” he said. “We are engaging our stakeholders through our social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and our website. Those who have been engaging can testify that this initiative has helped in solving certain issues.” Clr Gotora said social media platforms also served as noticeboards that give stakeholders information about activities being carried out by the council (Herald, 2020).

Below are some of the posts that the writer extracted on social media that affect brand reputation.

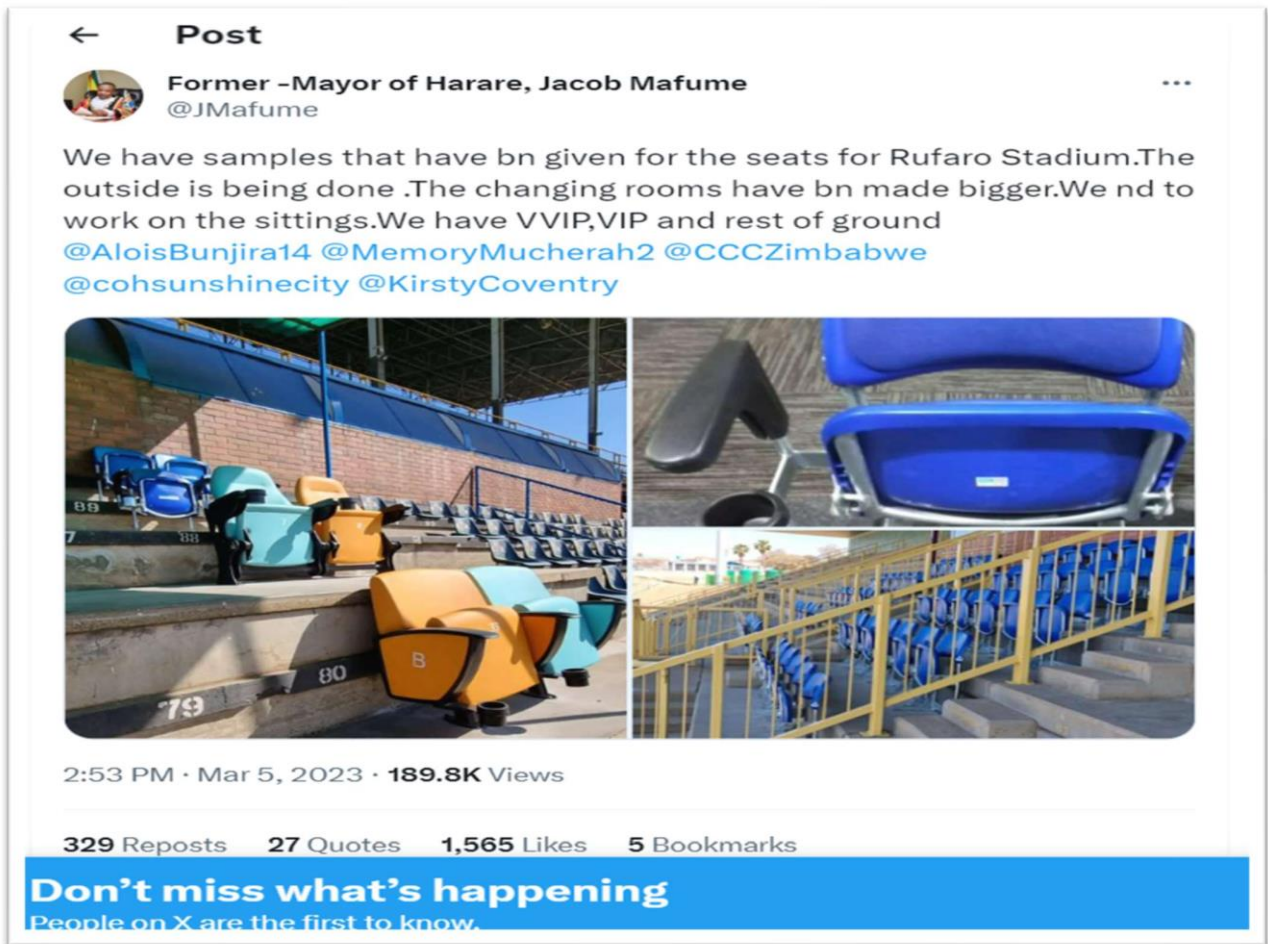


Figure 2.2: Rufaro Stadium Tweets (Twitter, 2023)

After that post, social media fumed regarding the quality of the renovations.

These are the comments the post got after being posted;

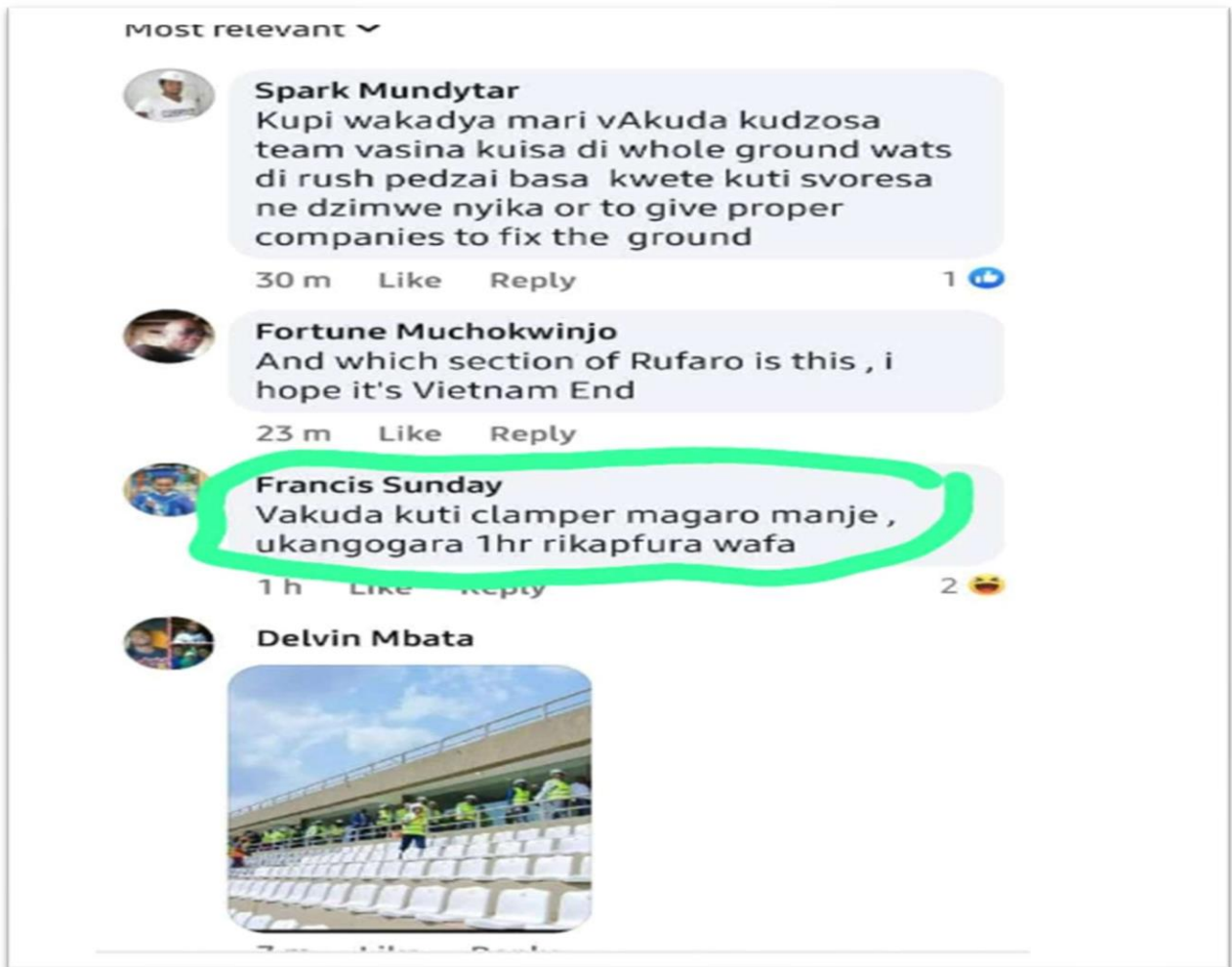


Figure 2.3: Rufaro Stadium Tweeter Comments (Twitter, 2023)

The comment from Fortune Muchokwinjo reads “They are rushing through because they misused funds, they should take their time and give us standard outputs” while Francis Sunday reads that “they now violating ergonomics of our seating comfort by putting small chairs”.

The General social media streets run as below regarding this matter;

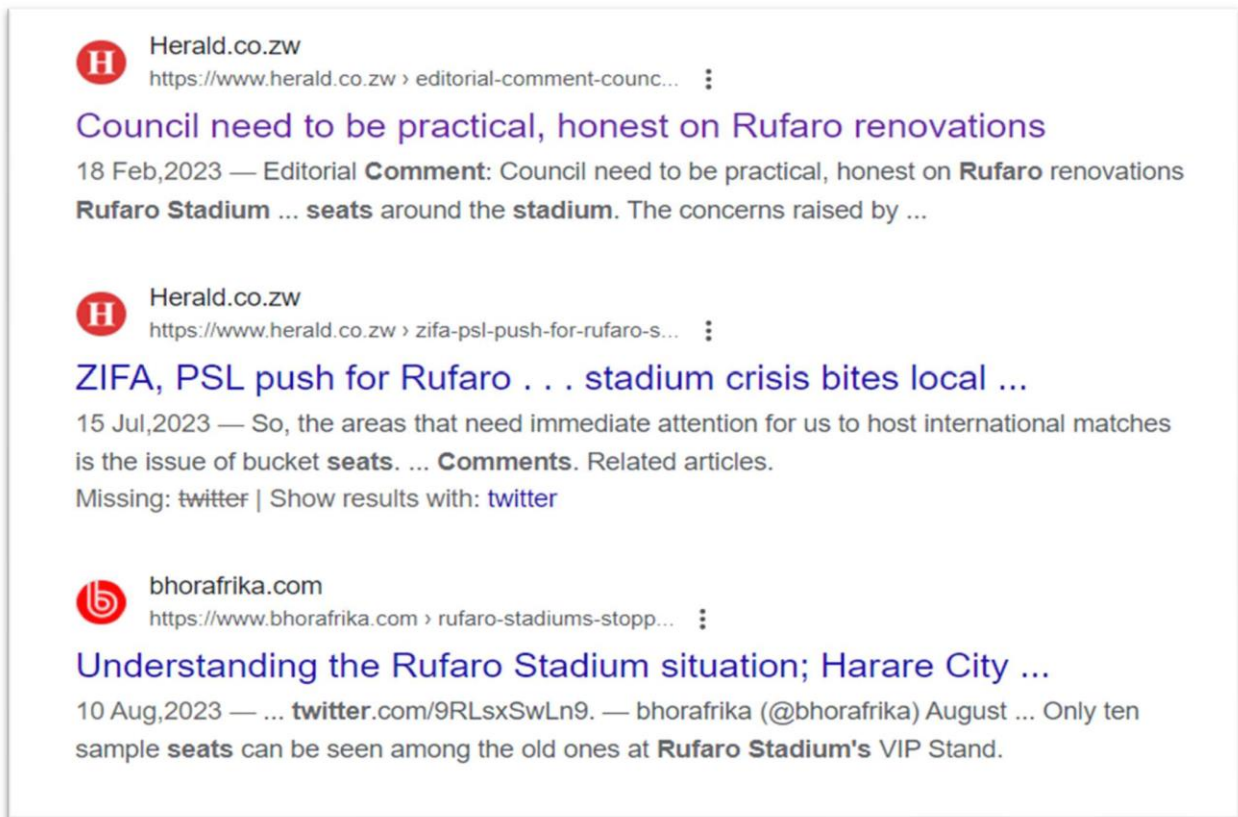


Figure 2.4: Rufaro Stadium Posts (Google, 2023)

These examples demonstrate how brands can effectively manage their reputation on social media by actively engaging with their audiences, addressing concerns, showcasing brand values, and leveraging user-generated content. The impact of social media on brand reputation in Zimbabwean municipalities is an interesting and underexplored area. While there may not be a substantial body of literature specifically focused on this topic, we can consider some general insights from social media and brand reputation research, as well as the unique context of Zimbabwean municipalities. Successful reputation management on social media involves being responsive, authentic, and transparent in communication while aligning with the brand's overall marketing and communication strategies.

2.7: Research Gaps, Hypothesis and Research Questions.

Given the limited literature specific to social media brand reputation in Zimbabwean municipalities and the divergent views on the impact of social media, the schools of thought on the issue are split between those who are optimistic about the role and efforts of social media promoting a good brand reputation and those who are skeptical of its weakness and side effects on the ground (Vrontis, Makrides, Christofi

& Thrassou, 2021). There`s therefore a lot of speculation on the role of social media and its impact on promoting a good brand reputation in Local Authorities.

Conducting empirical research, such as surveys, interviews, or social media content analysis, would be valuable in gaining insights into the dynamics of this context. Additionally, case studies of specific municipalities and their experiences with social media reputation management can offer practical insights and best practices. Overall, while further research is needed, examining the impact of social media on the brand reputation of Zimbabwean municipalities can provide valuable insights into how these entities navigate the digital landscape, engage with citizens, and manage their reputation in the online sphere. These therefore constitute the problem confronting this research to determine the impact of social media (platforms, usage, and content) on brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in the Midlands Province.

2.7.1 : Literature and Hypotheses Link

The research gap creates **objectives one to three** of the research and is partially catered for by a quantitative chunk of the research that is based on the theories and literature reviewed where an assumption that ‘Brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities depends on social media, there is a significant relationship’ is made. The writer draws the following hypotheses from the questionnaire questions;

- **H₀¹** – There is no significant relationship between social media platforms and brand reputation.
- **H₁¹** – There is a significant relationship between social media platforms and brand reputation.
- **H₀²** – There is no significant relationship between social media usage and brand reputation.
- **H₁²** – There is a significant relationship between social media usage and brand reputation.
- **H₀³** – There is no significant relationship between social media content and brand reputation.
- **H₁³** – There is a significant relationship between social media content and brand reputation.

2.7.2 : Literature and Research Question Link

The research gaps are drawn from the questions in the empirical literature explored above. A qualitative part of this research is fulfilled by **objective four** through socially constructing the reality by asking questions to obtain feelings and perceptions of individuals around ‘an analysis of the impact of social media on brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities’. The social construction of meanings is obtained through semi-structured interviews to ask questions about the following;

R.QN: According to the research by Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014), a research question was drawn, “What strategies can be employed to embrace social media for a good brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?”

- a) Are there any challenges relating to the use of social media in Midlands Local Authorities? Drawn from research by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010).
- b) What are the legal frameworks governing social media in Zimbabwe? Drawn from research by Mugari, Ishmael (2020).
- c) What recommendations can be obtained on strengthening social media in Local Authorities? Drawn from research by Ndawana (2023).

2.8: Chapter Summary

This chapter looked at the Local Authorities' orientation and the importance of brand reputation for their success. The writer then provided an analysis of the empirical literature versus the variables and theoretical literature. The research looked at theories relating being the Uses and Gratification Theory and the Social Network Theory. Lastly, the literature review looked into the gaps thereby justifying the need for mixed research. The chapter that followed looked into the methodology of carrying out the study.

3.0: CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1: Chapter Introduction

Kothari (2009) defines research methodology as a method for advancing a thesis, such as examining the impact of social media on brand reputation in Zimbabwe. This chapter details the research methodology, including philosophy, approach, design, population and sampling, instruments, data collection, analysis, validity, reliability, and ethical considerations.

3.2: Methodological Framework

The writer will make use of the research onion to illustrate the research methodology.

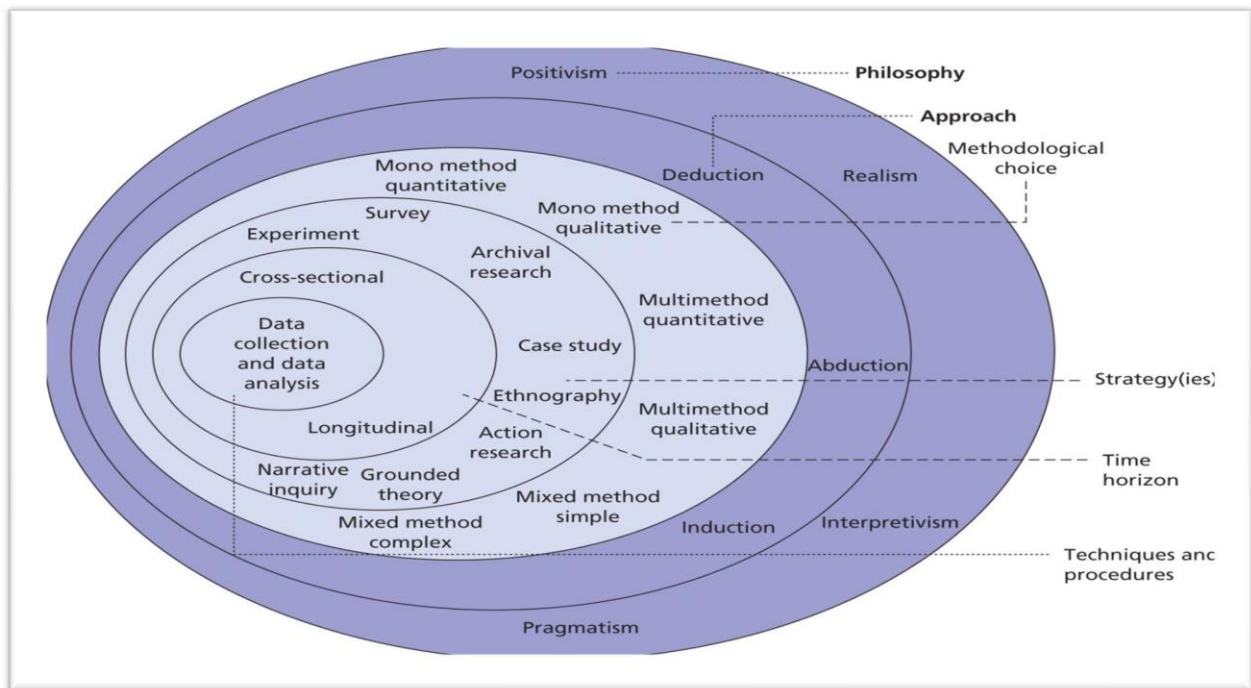


Figure 3.5: Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007)

Working from the outside of the onion inwards, one will encounter a variety of options ranging from high-level and philosophical to tactical and practical. This also follows the methodology chapter's general format. While Saunders et al., (2007) research onion might appear to differ from the ideal reality, it is a useful tool for thinking about the research approach holistically. At the very least, it aids in comprehending the decisions that must be made in terms of research design.

Therefore, the writer presents the research methodology conceptual framework making use of the research onion analog as illustrated below.

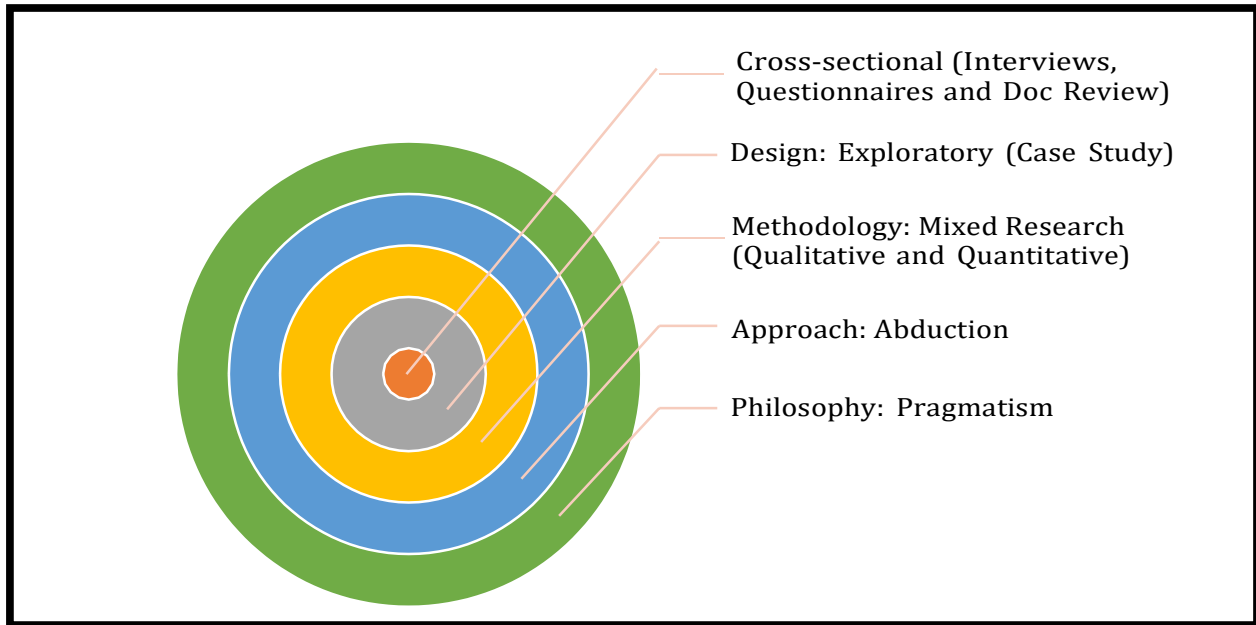


Figure 3.6: Research Methodological Framework

3.3: Research Philosophy (Pragmatic)

A research philosophy is a belief about how data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analyzed, and used (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill & Bristow, 2015). This study adopted the **pragmatic philosophy**, which focuses on addressing real-world problems and generating actionable knowledge. It bridges the gap between theory and practice, providing practical solutions and insights. Collaboration with practitioners ensures the relevance and usefulness of findings. Pragmatic research is often conducted collaboratively with practitioners or stakeholders to ensure that the research findings are relevant, useful, and applicable (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

In the context of this research, both positivism and interpretivism were adopted at the same time for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. social media and brand reputation in Zimbabwean municipalities, pragmatic research can involve conducting studies that directly engage with municipal officials, employees, or community members to understand their experiences, challenges, and perspectives related to social media and reputation management. This type of research may involve various methods such as surveys, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, or participatory workshops (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The study was driven by the need to verify if the use of social media affects brand reputation.

3.3.1 : Research Ontology

According to Ahmed (2008), research ontology refers to the philosophical assumptions and beliefs about the nature of reality and existence that underlie a research study. It pertains to how researchers perceive and understand the fundamental nature of the world they are investigating and the entities or phenomena within it. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), ontological assumptions are those that answer the questions "What is there that can be known?" and "What is the nature of reality?"

The mixed research paradigm combines objectivism and subjectivism to analyze brand reputation objectively and subjectively, providing statistical analysis and individual perspectives for generalizability.

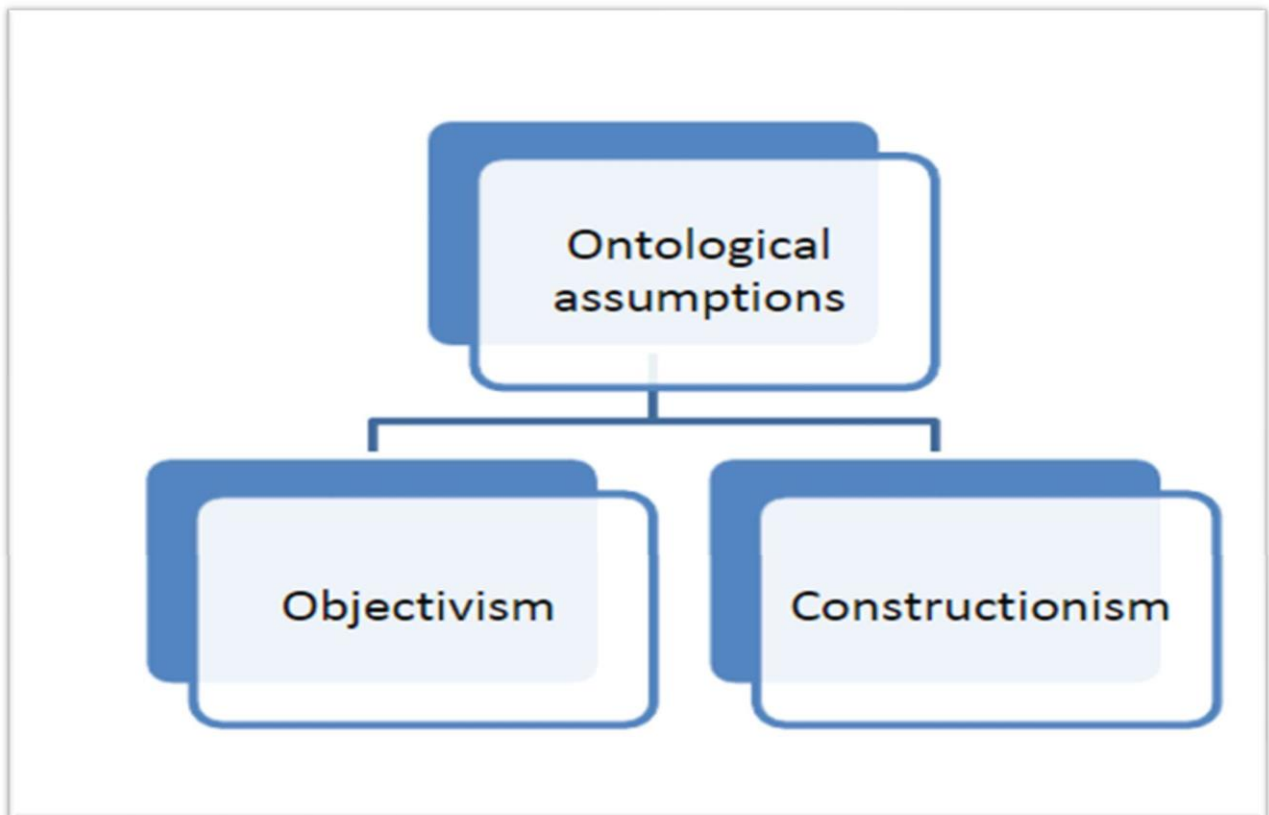


Figure 3.7: Ontological Assumption (Ahmed, 2008)

The researcher integrated these ontological perspectives by using appropriate methods for each component, collecting and analyzing data separately, and then integrating the findings to gain a more comprehensive understanding of brand reputation. The integration occurred through complementarity, where the quantitative and qualitative findings provide different but complementary insights into the research topic. The research utilized an ontology to explore the social world of meanings, employing interpretative methods like interviews and questionnaires. The case study focused on participants'

opinions, feelings, experiences, and inner thoughts about social media usage in the Midlands Urban Local Authorities.

3.3.2 : Research Epistemology

In general, epistemology refers to the assumptions we make about the nature of knowledge (Richards, 2003) and how we might learn about the world (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Epistemology, according to Crotty (1998), is a means of looking at the world and making sense of it. The combination of positivism and interpretivism in a mixed research paradigm allows researchers to explore both objective patterns and subjective interpretations. The quantitative component provides statistical analysis and numerical data, offering generalizability and identifying patterns or correlations. The qualitative component allows for in-depth exploration, capturing the richness and complexity of individual experiences, and uncovering the underlying meanings and social constructions related to brand reputation.

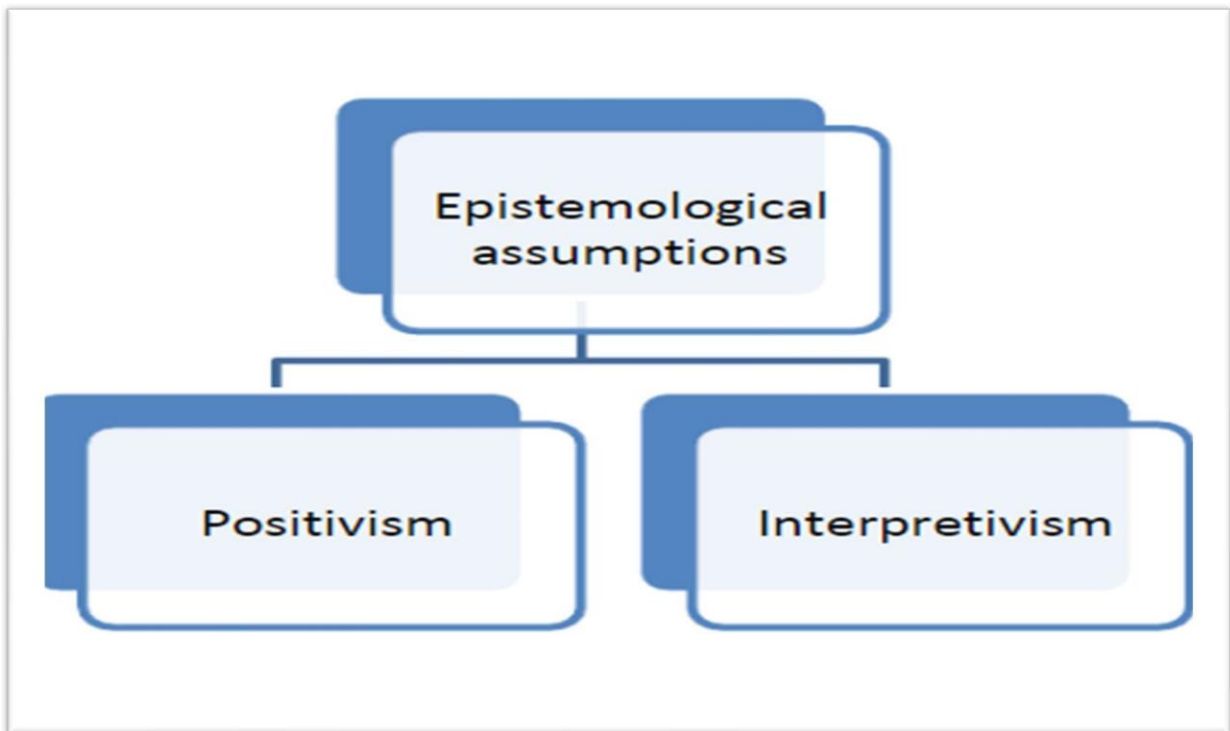


Figure 3.8: Epistemological Assumption (Crotty, 1998)

The researcher integrated these two epistemological perspectives by using appropriate methods for each component, analyzing the data separately, and then integrating the findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of brand reputation. The integration occurred concurrently, where the quantitative and qualitative findings were embedded and synthesized to provide a more holistic understanding of the research topic.

3.4: Research Approach/Logic

In a thesis that follows a mixed research paradigm, **abduction logic** refers to the reasoning process used to generate plausible explanations or hypotheses based on the integration of quantitative and qualitative data (Gill and Johnson, 2010). Abduction, also known as inference to the best explanation, is a form of logical reasoning that seeks to provide the most plausible explanation for a given phenomenon. According to Gill and Johnson (2010), abduction has both deduction and induction. Deduction, which is the opposite of induction, is about the development of a conceptual and theoretical structure before it is tested through empirical research methods, the process starts with an abstract conceptualization, testing through the application of theory to create new experiences and observations (Carson et al., 2001).

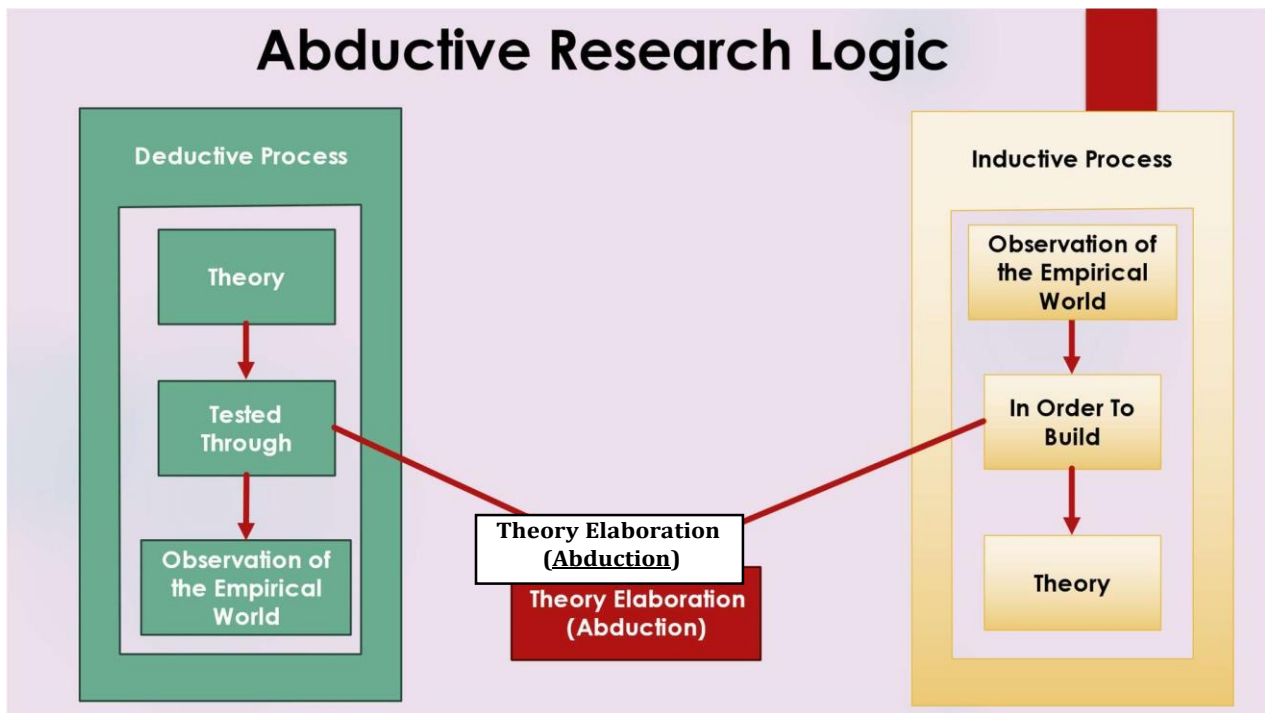


Figure 3.9: Deduction and induction processes (Gill & Johnson, 2010)

Deduction and induction processes as related to mixed research of quantitative and qualitative research paradigms are presented above.

3.5: Research Paradigm/Methodological Choice

Mixed research (Concurrent and Embedded) was used in the research project, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Questionnaires were used for data on social media metrics, while interviews were used for feelings and perceptions about brand reputation. This paradigm was preferred because in Concurrent Mixed Research there is a one-phase design of interviews and questionnaires administered and analyzed at the same time and the data they gather is complimentary. It is also

Embedded in the sense that researchers believe that there is no 100% qualitative or quantitative method (Mays & Pope, 2000). It's just that one is more dominant than the other. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2000) suggest that mixed research, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, enhances understanding of complex human experiences, addresses humanistic questions, and allows for high flexibility and equal roles for respondents.

3.6: Research Design

Rahi (2017) defines research design as a blueprint for conducting a study, categorized into exploratory, descriptive, and causal designs. This research followed an **Exploratory Design**, focusing on purpose, questions, hypotheses, and data collection methods (Williams, 2007). The study used an exploratory research design to identify and explain (Saunders et al., 2019; Swedberg, 2020) the impact of social media on brand reputation in Midland Urban Local Authorities. Hejase and Hejase (2013) report that this approach helps researchers gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon without prior research or empirical evidence. The literature review revealed a gap in understanding the impact of social media on brand reputation in Midlands.

3.7: Research Strategy

This study's research strategy is based on an embedded survey and case study of Midlands Urban Local Authorities. **Case studies**, according to Feagin et al (1991), are appropriate for in-depth, holistic exploration. Case studies were employed and Sjoberg, Orum, and Feagin (2020) define a case study as a strategy for doing research that involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. Thus, Willig and Rogers (2017) allude that case study focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of a particular entity or event at a specific time. Thus, it's an action plan from getting the data that answers the questions to conclusions in the research employed.

The purpose of the study was to examine how social media affects Urban Local Authorities' brand reputation in Midlands Province. Data were gathered for case studies via questionnaires, interviews, and document gathering. Because of the case study design's advantages in knowledge advancement, program evaluation, and policy formation (Merriam, 2009), it was selected. According to Stake (2005), case studies are preferable for adding to statistical surveys in research since they yield more realistic results. Explanatory and exploratory studies, as described by Saunders et al. (2019), entail the examination of variables to explain existing and potential co-correlations (cause and effect relationships).

3.8: Research Instruments

These are tools used to gather as much information as needed in the research. This is inevitably essential

in any research for the study to come up with relevant information it sought to bring to light (McClure, 2020). This research utilized questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and documentary reviews, following Biklen and Bogden's (2003) statement on data sources.

3.8.1 : Sources of Questions

The research instruments were drawn from the research questions explored in Chapter Two during the Literature review. The researcher did not craft his questions, he used questions from empirical literature to obtain results for the current settings of this research.

3.8.2 : Questionnaires

Questionnaires are short structured multiple choice and Likert scale questions that make it easier to answer and provide respondents with a choice of fixed responses thereby reducing searching time. In this case, data can be collected from many respondents over a relatively short period (Saunders et al 2000).

A questionnaire is a popular method for mixed research, consisting of a formalized form with carefully crafted questions (McNell, 1990). It is effective when designed to suit research aims and elicit cooperation from respondents. Haralambos and Holborn (1990) state that, in questionnaire research, similar questions are usually given in the same order so that the same information can be collected from every member of the sample. The information gathered from questionnaires is structured thereby making it easier to record, tabulate, quantify, and analyze quickly and efficiently and the results can be graphically represented (McClure, 2020).

3.8.3 : Semi Structured Interviews

Interviewing is a systematic way of gathering information by asking the same set of questions consistently to all selected respondents either face to face or through the telephone (Saunders et al 2000). McNeill (1990) reviews an interview as a two-way conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining relevant research information.

Semi-structured interviews, also known as in-depth interviews, are less structured and allow for qualitative data collection. They are open-ended, allowing for detailed discussions between the interviewer and interviewee (Merriam, 2001). These interviews are preferred due to their rich data, face-to-face contact, and in-depth exploration (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). Interviewers can clarify questions, increase the likelihood of useful responses, and be flexible in administering the interviews to specific individuals or circumstances.

3.8.4 : Documentary Review/ Data Mining

This research utilized a documentary review to collect secondary data from existing sources like social media sites, websites, press, journals, newspapers, and newsletters, enabling easy access and analysis of social media metrics.

Existing data is crucial for understanding our world (Love & Maxam, 2003), and document reviews are preferred due to their non-reactive nature, affordability, and quick access (Payne & Payne, 2004). Secondary data, which is less expensive, time-saving, and supplemented by primary sources (Pederson, Vingilis, Wickens, Koval & Mann, 2020), is also used for analyzing the impact of social media on brand reputation. However, the validity and reliability of secondary data can be questionable, and selecting the right information is a significant challenge.

3.9 : Sources of Data

The writer will now explore the two types of data sources, primary sources and secondary sources.

3.9.1 : Primary Sources

Primary data was collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, providing reliable, real-time information that complements outdated secondary data (Pederson, Vingilis, Wickens, Koval & Mann, 2020). This method was used for quantitative and qualitative data respectively, ensuring accuracy.

3.9.2 : Secondary Sources

Mason (1996) defined secondary data as pre-existing information that can be utilized to produce both quantitative and qualitative information. Secondary data was collected from pre-existing sources, which made it easy to acquire because it was readily available from related literary sources such as websites, blogs, social media platforms, newspapers, journals, and newsletters. That information was gathered about every study goal. The social media metrics analysis was aided by this information.

3.10 : Research Time Horizon

The time horizon refers to the number of points in time to collect data (Saunders et al 2007), with two options: cross-sectional and longitudinal. Cross-sectional research collects data from the population elements at one moment in time, analyzing it to determine research results (Rahi, 2017). Longitudinal research measures a fixed sample repeatedly on the same variables but is time-consuming (Wilson & Akter, 2012). As a result, a cross-sectional study was conducted. The researcher only collected data from

the population elements under consideration in their natural context at one moment in time. This information was then analyzed to determine the result of the research questions.

3.11 : Population

Thornhill, Lewis, and Saunders (1996) define a population as the entire group of people or objects with similar characteristics in a research study. Stratton (2021) defines a population as the target group in a perfect world, requiring information to be ascertained. The population was restricted to Council Employees, Residents, Councillors, Ministry Officials, and Patrons in Midlands Urban Local Authorities. Thus, it is upon these groups that the researcher would generalize the results of the study.

3.11.1 : Sampling Frame

Since the population was huge there was a need to consider sampling. A sample is a set of observations drawn from a population and the sample size is a subject of the population that represents the main interest of the entire population in the study (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). A sampling frame is a comprehensive list of all relevant units in a population, selected during a sampling procedure, as defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Thornhill et al (1996).

Table 3.1: Sampling Frame

Locations	Frequency	Groups
Zvishavane	45,230	1) Council Employees 2) Resident 3) Councillor 4) Ministry Official 5) Patron/Passerby
Shurugwi	21,905	
Gweru	158,200	
Kwekwe	119,863	
Redcliff	35,000	
Gokwe	24,054	
Estimate Total	404,252	

Source: ZIMSTATS Census (2022)

The study includes approximately 404,252 individuals from various municipalities as indicated above, including employees, residents, and stakeholders, making it challenging to accurately estimate the population and deal with them one by one hence making use of sampling.

3.11.2 : Sampling Procedure / Technique

Sampling is a procedure used to select a subset of a large population to represent the entire population

(Kothari, 2009). According to Zikmund (2003), sampling saves time, capital, and effort by reducing the number of individual respondents to be studied. Mareva and Nyota (2011), define a sampling technique as a procedure for selecting sample elements from a population.

Probability sampling, which involves random selection, allows for strong statistical inferences about the whole group (Jawale, 2012), ensuring accurate generalization and representativeness of the population as illustrated below (Pace, 2021).

The diagram illustrates probability sampling techniques;



Figure 3.10: Probability Sampling Methods (Pace, 2021).

The researcher chose stratified sampling and the strata chosen are the ones given.

Non-probability sampling involves non-random selection based on convenience or other criteria, allowing you to easily collect data (Pace, 2021) as shown below;

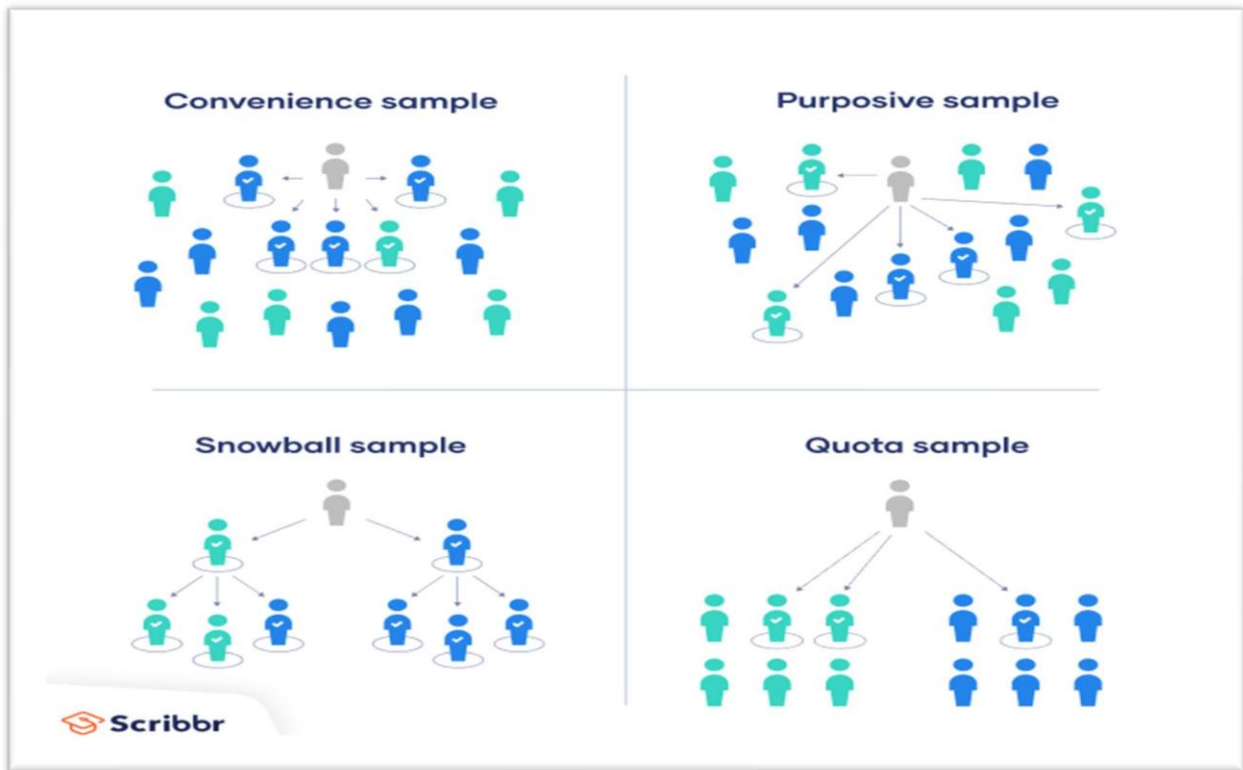


Figure 3.11: Non-Probability Sampling Methods (Pace, 2021).

The researcher employed both probability sampling (stratified) and non-probability (convenient sampling and purposive sampling). The researcher started by **stratified sampling**, where the population was divided into subgroups called strata based on Council Employees, Residents, Councillors, Ministry Officials, and Patrons.

For quantitative data, **Convenience sampling** was employed as a non-probability sampling method where units are selected for inclusion in the sample because they are the easiest for the researcher to access. This can be due to geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or willingness to participate in the research (Stratton, 2021). Therefore, within each Stratum per location, 145 respondents were chosen based on convenience or easy accessibility (Stratton, 2021), to come up with questionnaire respondents.

For qualitative data from Semi semi-structured interviews, we used **Purposive Sampling** for each Stratum per each Local Authority. It is a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher selects units to be sampled based on their knowledge (Jawale, 2012). The respondents selected were heads of sections from Mayors (Head of Councillors), Town Clerks (Head of Council Employees), Resident

Association Heads, District Administrators (Head of Ministry Officials), and a Random Patron. The sampling technique was chosen due to the limited number of individuals with the trait of interest and the researcher's knowledge and judgment. Judgmental sampling is the only viable method for obtaining information from a specific group (Jawale, 2012).

The researcher opted for these three methods because they provided adequate information for various sub-populations and random selection of individuals from hierarchical levels assisted in eradicating biased information hence it ended up generally generating more reliable data. The use of sampling methods chosen, saved time and capital since it reduced the number of individual respondents to be studied.

The diagram below illustrates the sampling technique;

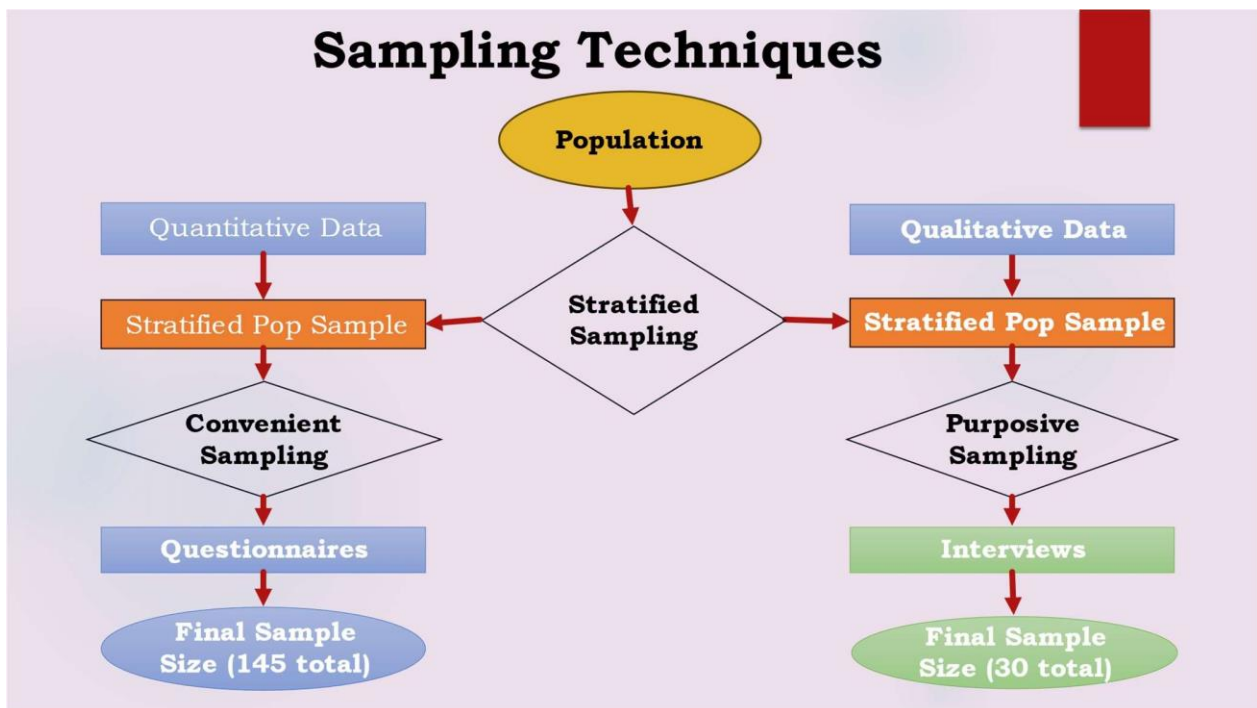


Figure 3.12: Sampling Technique Per Each Local Authority

The study used convenience sampling and purposive sampling to select respondents for the research from Zvishavane, Shurugwi, Gweru, Kwekwe, Redcliff, and Gokwe. Convenience sampling was used for locations due to proximity, availability, or interest.

3.11.4: Sampling Size

The sample size of the research comprised 175 respondents, drawn of the total population as follows.

Table 3.2: Sampling Size

Midlands Urban Local Authorities (Locations)	Strata in Each Location	Questionnaire Sample	Interview Sample
Zvishavane	1) Council Employees (35)	4 Pple by 5 Strata	5
Shurugwi		2 Pple by 5 Strata	5
Gweru	2) Resident (35)	10 Pple by 5 Strata	5
Kwekwe	3) Councillor (35)	8 Pple by 5 Strata	5
Redcliff	4) Ministry Official (35)	3 Pple by 5 Strata	5
Gokwe	5) Patron/Passerby (35)	2 Pple by 5 Strata	5
	175	145	30

Sample Size Calculator (Systemssurvey.com, 2023)

3.12 : Data Collection Procedure

These are techniques used to gather as much information as needed in the research. Research instruments refer to specific methods that are used to collect data in research (Lobe, Morgan, & Hoffman, 2020). The researcher used research instruments such as questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to investigate the impact of social media on brand reputation in Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province. The triangulation method was employed, using evidence from multiple sources to corroborate the same finding.

3.12.1 : Questionnaire Data Collection Procedure

The researcher distributed 145 questionnaires to a population sample, distributing them via hard copies, email, and social media. Questionnaires were chosen for their structured nature, directness, and easy-to-follow questions. They were collected from all six Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, and the data was structured for efficient recording, tabulating, quantifying, and analyzing. Questionnaires were short structured multiple choice and Likert Scale questions which were easier to answer (Lobe, Morgan, & Hoffman, 2020). They sourced Ordinal and Nominal Data. The results were graphically represented for easy representation.

3.12.2 : Semi-Structured Interview Data Collection Procedure

The study involved 30 interviews conducted across six Local Authorities, with five per each. The interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended questions based on the researcher's topic areas. This allowed flexibility in the questioning process, as the researcher was in control of the situation. The interview guide guided the discussion, and the interviewed experts provided insights into the problem's nature and solutions. Semi-structured interviews encouraged the researcher to seek more information from respondents, such as possible recommendations for solutions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The interviewer was flexible in administering interviews, adjusting questions, and changing direction as needed to ensure there was no danger of loss of meaning as a consequence of imposing a standard way of asking questions (Fielding & Thomas, 2001). The researcher ensured the confidentiality of sensitive information and used questionnaires to complement mixed research.

3.12.3 : Secondary Data Collection Procedure

The researcher collected data on social media metrics using secondary sources such as social media sites, websites, press, journals, newspapers, and newsletters. They also used documents from six Urban Local Authorities in the Midlands Province, such as banners, circulars, and autobiographies. Secondary data was used as it was less expensive, saved time, and supplemented primary sources. However, the validity and reliability of secondary data were sometimes questionable due to its abundance.

3.13 : Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument

3.13.1: Validity

Saunders et al. (2012) define validity as the accuracy of data collection methods and research findings. It is crucial for research instruments to measure what they are supposed to measure. Instruments with content validity have a representative sample of the subject matter (Kothari, 2009). Improving instrument validity involves matching questions with research objectives, external peer review, and incorporating OECD Oslo Innovation guidelines (Rasmussen, Rauscher, Kearns, González & Sintes, 2019).

3.13.2 : Reliability of the Research Instrument

Reliability refers to the accuracy and precision of the results, ensuring they accurately represent the population under study (Cohen et al., 2018). Threats to reliability can arise from instrument, observer, or respondent errors. To ensure reliability, researchers standardize data collection conditions and use trained assistants (Saunders et al., 2012; Kothari, 2009). Cronbach's alpha coefficient measures internal

consistency among items, assessing the consistency of responses from the same set of respondents (Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020).

3.13.3 : Pilot Test

A pilot test was carried out on a small sample of the population to test the research instrument. The response to questions in the questionnaire was used to evaluate the instrument in terms of questions' variation, meaning, clarity, length of the questionnaire, and ease of answering questions by the respondents. The pilot study was also used to assess whether each question measured what it was supposed to measure, that is if all the respondents similarly interpreted the questions. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to determine the reliability of the scale. Most of Cronbach's alpha coefficients were high above 0.70 and were generally considered acceptable. Based on the responses, the questionnaire was revised to improve validity.

3.14 : Data Analysis and Presentation

Kothari (2009) defines data analysis as a process of editing, coding, classifying, and tabulating collected data to make them amenable. Before carrying out data analysis, the collected data was cleaned, and errors were identified and corrected.

Questionnaire Data: The researcher used data coding to convert questionnaire responses into numerical data for analysis. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (Fielding & Thomas, 2001). From data collection, data was recorded into an Excel sheet and used VLOOKUP to map string variable responses to numerical data for SPSS analysis. Numerical data code definitions were inserted into each variable under SPSS to enable a switch between data value and labels i.e., that A-1 switch. Variable relationship tests using Chi-square and Pearson's correlation coefficient were done. Descriptive statistics were used to understand the data and identify patterns and trends. These analyses helped to determine if there was a significant relationship between demographics and social media as well as social media and brand reputation.

Semi-Structured Interviews: The data was presented in a qualitative manner using narrative format, complementing the quantitative approach with tables and graphs, and in either written or textual form.

Thematic Presentation and Analysis are a systematic approach to the analysis of data by identifying themes or patterns of meaning, coding, and classifying data (Creswell, 2014). This was done based on the research questions and objectives of the research. According to Creswell (2014) putting the subjects' experiences into words by writing transforms the experience into a communicable representation while the tables, charts, or graphs will show the numbers or frequency of responses obtained from the study.

Each research question and objective formed a theme. Data presentation and analysis were done following these themes.

3.15 : Ethical Considerations

Ethics is one of the most crucial areas of research and ethical considerations are sets of standards or norms of good conduct for the research (McNeill, 1990). Harmsely and Traianou (2012) define ethics as a set of principles that embody or exemplify what is good or right and allow one to identify what is good or bad. The researcher observed the following research ethics.

3.15.1 : Research permission

The researcher sought permission to conduct the study from the responsible authorities of the sampled Urban Local Authorities in the Midlands province. Application letters were written to the heads of institutions in this regard. See Appendix...

3.15.2 : Informed consent

Based on what Blakstad (2008) alluded to, it's very crucial to obtain informed consent from participants involved in the study from their guardians and those participating should be informed and explained the purpose of the study. The researcher sought permission and informed consent from participants who were involved in the research. They were informed that they had the right not to participate and to withdraw from the interview at any moment. All this was done before the study was conducted and data gathering instruments administered and before getting access to any document(s) found in the Organizations.

3.15.3 : Confidentiality

Data collected was handled in strict confidentiality and the names of participants remained anonymous. The names of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province participants taking part in this research were protected and the participants were assigned pseudonyms names. No name was provided, instead, the researcher named them as respondents 1, 2, 3, and so on to protect them from privacy. Participants were informed that the information collected from them will not be shared with any person for whatever reason and will be used for the study only.

3.15.3: Protection from harm

Barnes et al (2009) say that ethical concerns require researchers not to put participants in a situation where they might be at risk of harm as a result of their participation, thus all of these were strictly adhered

to. Participation was voluntary and involves no risk, penalty, or loss of benefits

3.16 : Chapter Conclusion.

The chapter discussed the methodology used to carry out this research and various instruments used when collecting qualitative and quantitative data together with their pros and constraints; that is semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and documentary reviews. Apart from this, the research design, data collection, presentation procedure sample size, and the ethical considerations that were followed when this research was conducted have been explained in this chapter. The next chapter looks at data presentation, analysis, and interpretation.

4.0 : CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 : Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter described the research methods employed in this study, emphasizing that the information was gathered through questionnaires, interviews, and documentary reviews. This chapter summarizes the research findings derived from the data collection conducted. The findings are provided individually under several thematic areas, each research question and objective make a thematic area. The responses from the questionnaires and interviews obtained from a sample of Midlands Urban Local Authorities as well as the documentary review were presented in this chapter. The results of this study were provided in tables and various types of chart formats, although they were organized according to the types of questions or research themes.

4.2 : Research Setting.

The researcher conducted one hundred and forty-five (145) questionnaires and thirty (30) semi-structured interviews with the selected participants at their chosen time. This format corresponded with the data-collection method described in Chapter 3 of participants being in a convenient, private, and comfortable environment. These participants included Residents, Councilors, Council Employees, Ministry Officials, And Patrons. The interviews were done with the heads of these groups only for all the six Local Authorities.

4.2.1 : Response Rate from Questionnaires

The response rate for questionnaires was high at 100% of the sample size, that is all the participants managed to participate in the questionnaires.

4.2.2 : Response Rate from Semi-Structured Interviews

All thirty face-to-face interviews occurred as planned. One head participant from each group was interviewed. The participants were purposively selected from the six different Local Authorities that are in Urban Midlands Province. The response rate was therefore 100%.

4.2.3 : Research Credibility.

Credibility in research is achieved through persistent observation, member checking, and audit trails (Soderberg, Errington & Nosek, 2020). The researcher used an audit trail, transparently recruited participants, obtained written permission, and obtained consent before recording proceedings.

4.2.4 : Transferability.

Transferability is the extent to which the results of a study can be transferred to other respondents in different contexts and settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). However, Marshall and Rossman (2016)

argue that the reader's decision on transferability is ultimately up to the reader. The researcher ensured transferability by adhering to the research methodology, providing detailed descriptions of findings, and consistent use of interview protocol and introductions.

4.2.5 : Dependability.

The researcher meticulously recruited participants, recorded responses, and maintained an audit trail for reliability. This systematic approach ensures the reproducibility of the study with similar participants under similar conditions (Avizienis, Laprie & Randell, 2001).

4.2.6 : Confirmability.

To implement confirmability, the researcher affirmed the study's credibility, dependability, and transferability. The researcher aligned the findings with the conclusions and interpretation to avoid personal bias in the study. Each theme identified was supported by quotes or descriptions from participants (Chung, Biddix & Park, 2020).

4.2.7 : Thematic Areas and Data Organization

Thematic analysis is a method of examining latent ideas, ideologies, and conceptualizations by identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data, presented in various forms like tables, pie charts, and graphs (Sabharwal & Miah, 2021). Data collection and presentation were done in the form of themes as the data was broken down into thematic areas. The themes were derived from the research questions and objectives as follows;

- **Theme 1:** Research question 1 (social media platforms), questionnaire questions are 8, sub-themes drawn documentary review, from demographics, brand reputation, and impact sections.
- **Theme 2:** Research question 2 (social media usage), questionnaire questions 6 and 7, sub-themes drawn from documentary review, demographics, brand reputation and impact sections.
- **Theme 3:** Research question 3 (social media content), questionnaire questions are 9, sub-themes drawn from documentary review, demographics, brand reputation, and impact sections.
- **Theme 4:** Research question 4 (social media strategies), interview questions, sub-themes drawn from documentary review, demographics, brand reputation, and impact sections.

Emerging themes and sub-themes were presented by research questions that guided the study and some figures were used to elaborate and present the phenomenon under investigation.

Data organization is the technique of categorizing and classifying data to make it more usable for easy access, processing, and analysis (Dunkel & Soparkar, 1999). To answer the research questions, the researcher required qualitative and quantitative data on how the respondents viewed the responses to the research questions.

Semi-Structured Interview Data: Semi-structured interview respondents were identified as Respondent A, Respondent B, Respondent C, and so on. The data obtained was organized using the themes. So, each research question made a thematic area with subthemes from sub-questions.

Questionnaire Data: The questionnaires sought to gather quantitative data on the impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities. The researcher recorded all the data from 145 questionnaires into an Excel sheet and then used the VLOOKUP facility to map string variable responses to numerical data for SPSS analysis (Field, 2013). The researcher created variables in SPSS for data analysis. He used the Chi-square and Pearson's correlation coefficient since he dealing mainly with relationship tests for categorical data being ordinal and nominal data.

Therefore, the Excel sheet had three sheets within it which are interlinked to transport natural responses to numerical data. The data was imported to SPSS to enable the system to analyze it. Numerical data code definitions were inserted into each variable under SPSS to enable a switch between data value and labels i.e., that A-1 switch. The data under each section was computed to obtain a mean for example:

- summary data on social media **platforms** was put into a new variable in SPSS that summarizes responses from questions 6 to 7 of **Section B** to obtain a **mean**.
- summary data on social media **usage** was put into a new variable in SPSS that summarizes responses from questions 8 to 9 of **Section C** to obtain a **mean**.
- summary data on social media **content** was put into a new variable in SPSS that summarizes responses from questions 11 to 12 of **Section D** to obtain a **mean**.
- summary data **on brand reputation** was put into a new variable in SPSS that summarizes responses from questions 13 to 14 of **Section E** to obtain a **mean**.
- summary data **on data collection and analysis** was put into a new variable in SPSS that summarizes responses from questions 15 to 17 of **Section F** to obtain a **mean**.

The mean was used as descriptive statistics or to test for a relationship with another variable like social media platform, usage, content, or demographics.

4.3: Data Validation and Sifting

Data was gathered using the three instruments and was presented separately. Data validation is defined as checking the accuracy and quality of source data before using, importing, or otherwise processing data (Cerone, 2016). Data validation is a form of data cleansing.

Duplication of data collection also serves as a data validation mechanism. For example, data relating to social media was gathered through questionnaires in primary data collection and was also collected through documentary reviews in secondary data collection. The same applies to brand reputation data. There should be congruency in the general trends of the data collected if there is data validity.

4.3.1 : Validating Questionnaires

The researcher used stratified sampling, a probability sampling technique to come up with groups or strata of the population. Within that population convenient sampling per each group per area was employed to obtain a sample for questionnaires. This made a sample size of 145 participants.

The data was captured in SPSS an IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences that is used to present and analyze data (Field, 2013). The questionnaires gathered data on demographics, social media, and brand reputation from the selected population sample. The validation of the data is as follows;

Table 4.3: Data Collection Statistics

Data Collection Statistics		Local Authority/Location	Gender	Age	Education Level	Strata/ Your Grouping
N	Valid	145	145	145	145	145
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0

The above tables were extracted from SPSS, and the information shows the questionnaire's validity. Questionnaire validation was done in two ways the system and the respondents assess the questionnaire to see if it measures what it was supposed to measure. If the validation of a questionnaire is successful, the creators identify the questionnaire as valid (Rosellini & Brown, 2021). Based on the SPSS validity report, the validity of that data is on the fact that there are no missing or invalid responses.

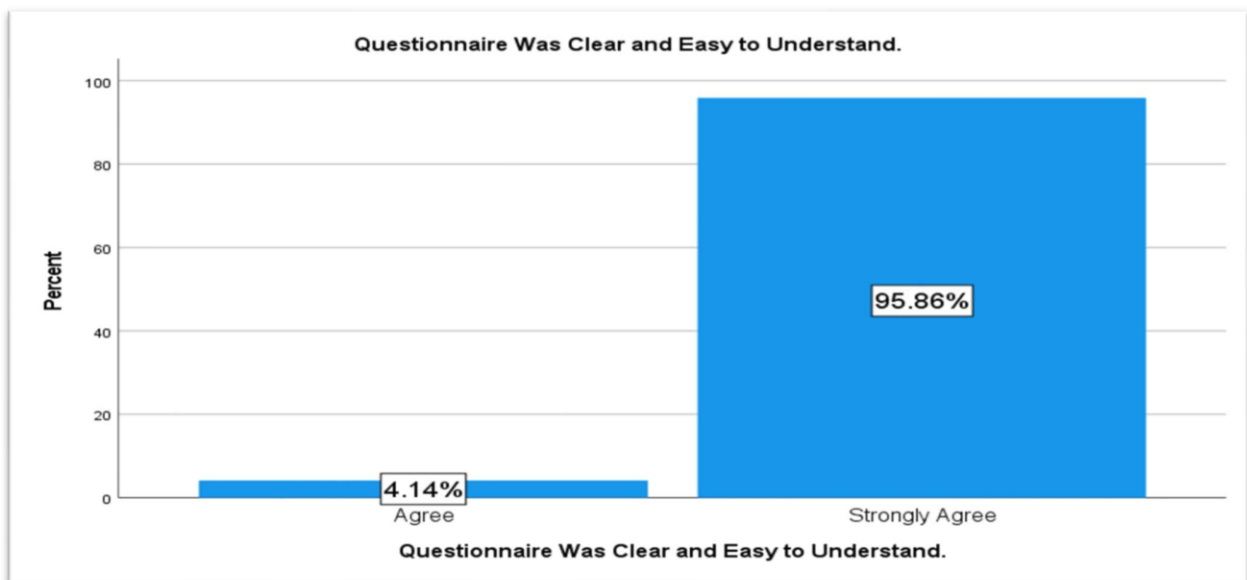


Figure 3.13: The Questionnaire Clarity

The majority of the respondents testified that the questions were clear to understand by strongly agreeing to the Likert item that “The questionnaire items were clear and easy to understand.”

The below diagram illustrates the responses;

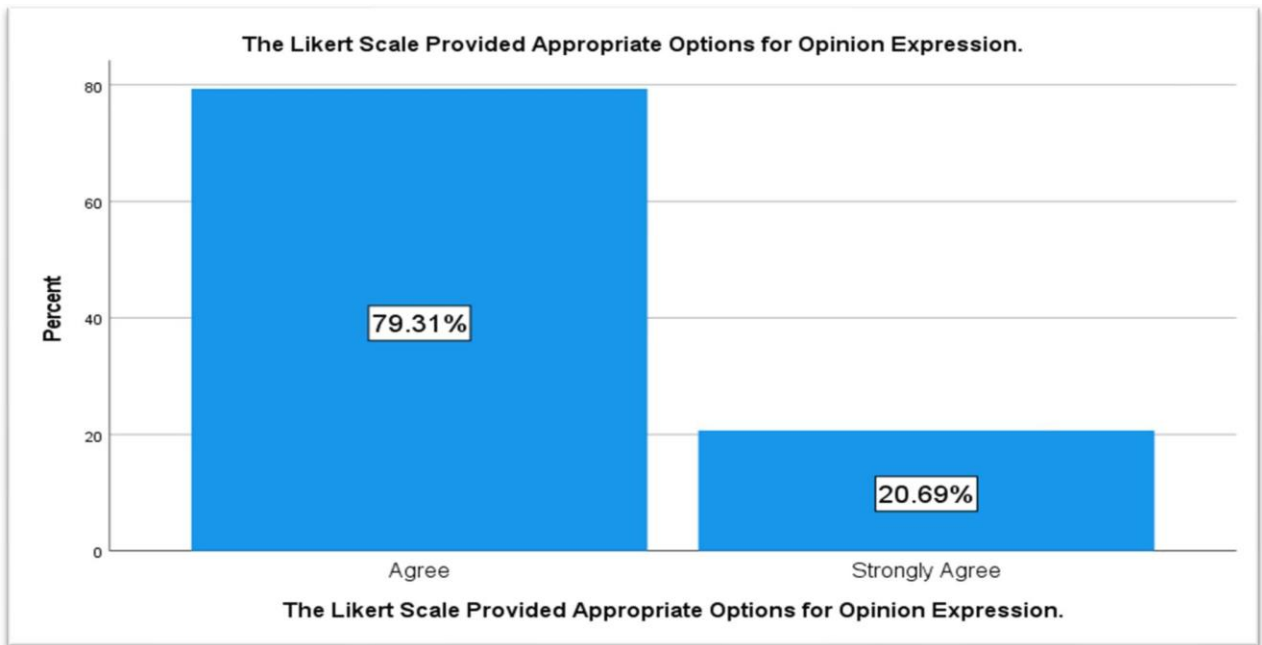


Figure 4.14: The Questionnaire Likert Scale

The majority of the respondents testified that the Likert Scale used in the questionnaire was appropriate by agreeing to the statement that “The Likert scale provided appropriate response options for expressing my opinions.”

The bar graph below shows the statistics of how respondents felt that their responses were going to be kept confidential.

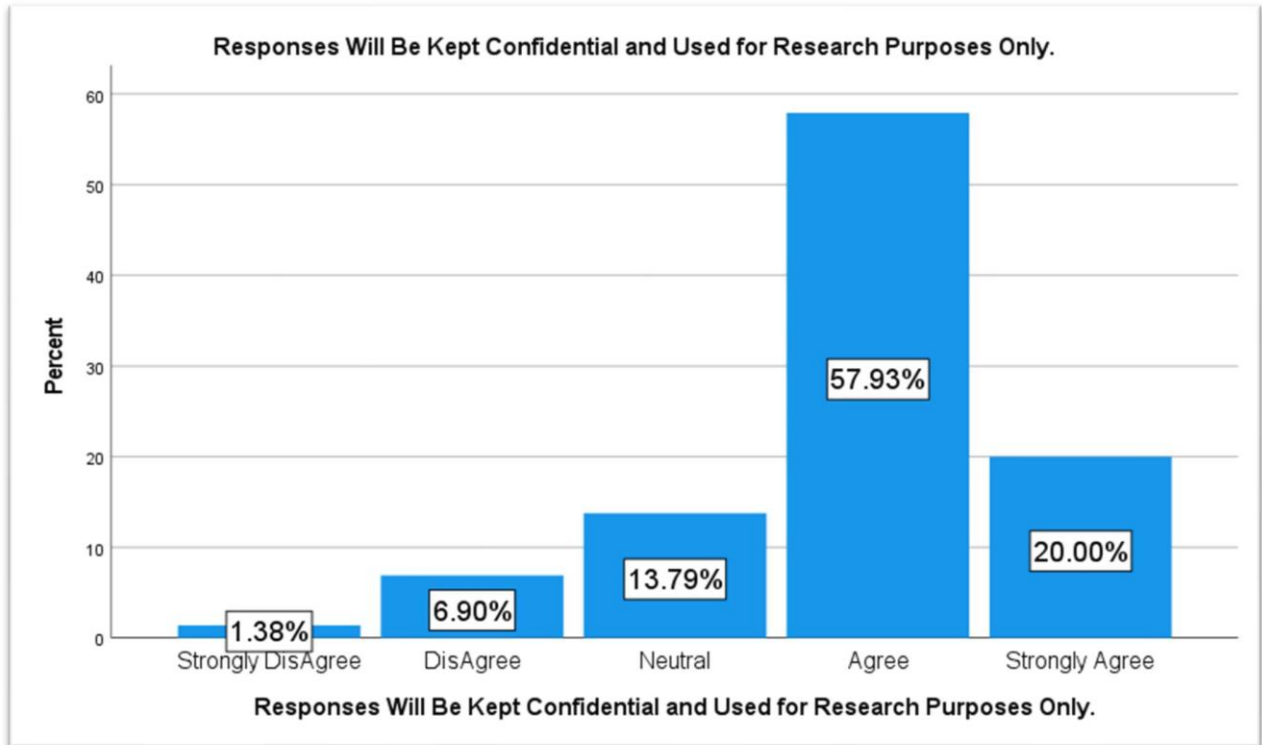


Figure 4.15: The Questionnaire Confidentiality

The majority of the respondents generally felt that their responses were going to be treated with confidentiality by agreeing to the statement that “The Likert scale provided appropriate response options for expressing my opinions.” Therefore, the data supplied by respondents on evaluating the questionnaire generally shows that it is valid.

4.3.2 : Validating Semi-structured interviews

The researcher used stratified sampling, a probability sampling technique to come up with groups or strata of the population. Within that population purposive sampling of 1 per each group per area was selected as the sample for interviews. This made a sample size of 30 participants.

The validity of the research instrument refers to the extent to which the tool measures what it is supposed to measure. An instrument has content validity if it contains a representative sample of the universe of subject matter of interest (Kothari, 2009). Thirty semi-structured interviews were held to a non-probability sampling size. Therefore, to validate the responses the researcher checked if all the questions were answered and if the responses made generally acceptable sense (Harris et al, 2000). If not, the researcher could relay the question again.

4.3.2: Validating Documentary Review

The researcher gathered data related to social media and brand reputation for the Midlands Urban Local Authorities. The data sources were websites, social media platforms, and the press. By making sure the data answers the research question the researcher was able to validate the data collected.

4.3 : Demographics

Demographics play a crucial role in research as they provide valuable information about the characteristics of a population or sample under study (Lee & Schuele, 2010). Demographic variables include factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, education level, income, marital status, occupation, and geographical location. Here are some key reasons why demographics are important in research:

- Understanding the Target Population
- Sample Selection and Generalizability
- Identifying Disparities and Inequalities
- Targeted Interventions and Policy Development
- Market Research and Planning

Overall, demographics provide a foundational understanding of the characteristics and diversity within a population. They enable researchers to investigate relationships, identify disparities, develop targeted interventions, and make evidence-based decisions. Incorporating demographic variables in research enhances the validity, relevance, and applicability of findings for specific populations or segments of interest. The first section of the questionnaire had demographics focusing on location, gender, age, education level, and participant group.

4.3.1 : Location Details

Demographic data on location is presented in the table below.

Table 4.4: Location Demographics

Local Authority/Location	N	%
Zvishavane	20	13.8%
Shurugwi	10	6.9%
Gweru	50	34.5%
Kwekwe	40	27.6%
Redcliff	15	10.3%
Gokwe	10	6.9%

The graphic presentation is illustrated below where the majority of the respondents were from Gweru and Kwekwe as guided by the population sampling techniques and sizes.

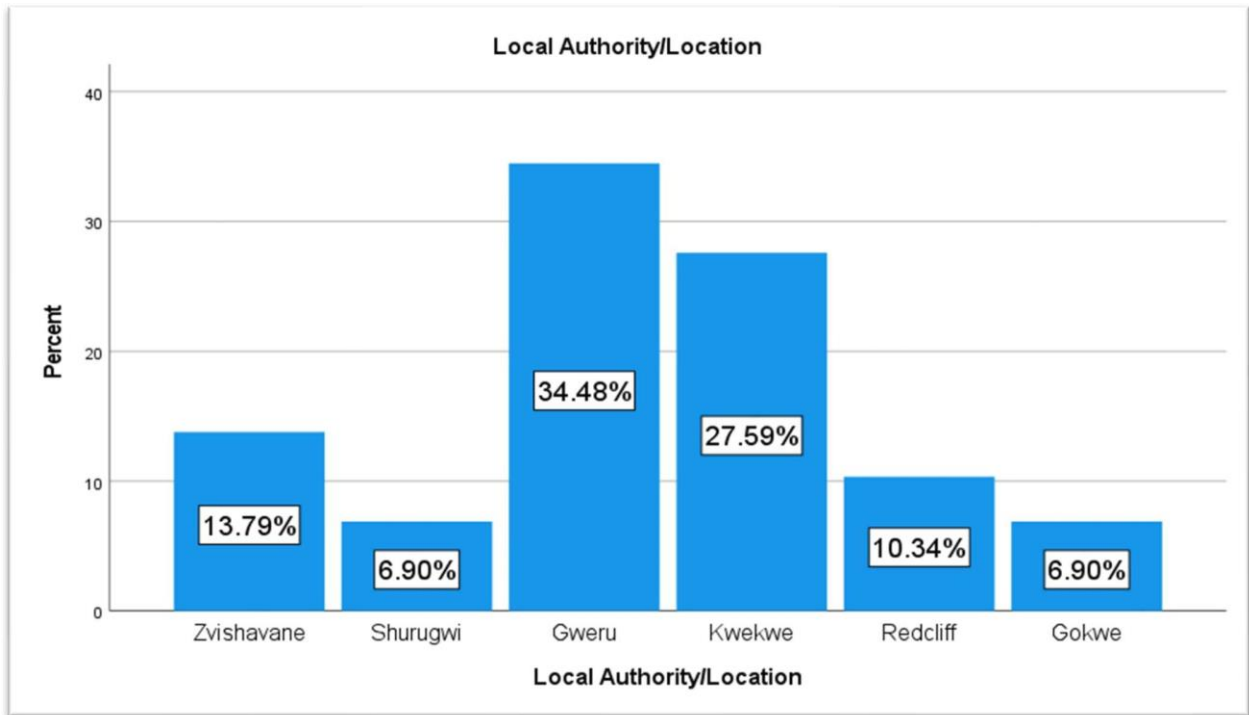


Figure 4.16: Location

The sampling techniques that were used managed to produce a sample size that follows the population size of the Local Authorities as shown above. We also notice that a larger sample size was taken from the Midlands capital Gweru, followed by Kwekwe. Shurugwi had the smallest sample size due to its smaller population.

4.3.2 : Gender Matrix

Demographic data on gender is presented in the table below.

Table 4.5: Gender Demographics

	Gender	
	N	%
Male	75	51.7%
Female	70	48.3%

It is shown that males constituted 51.7% and females constituted 48.3%.

The graphic presentation of the gender matrix is illustrated below where the majority of the respondents were males.

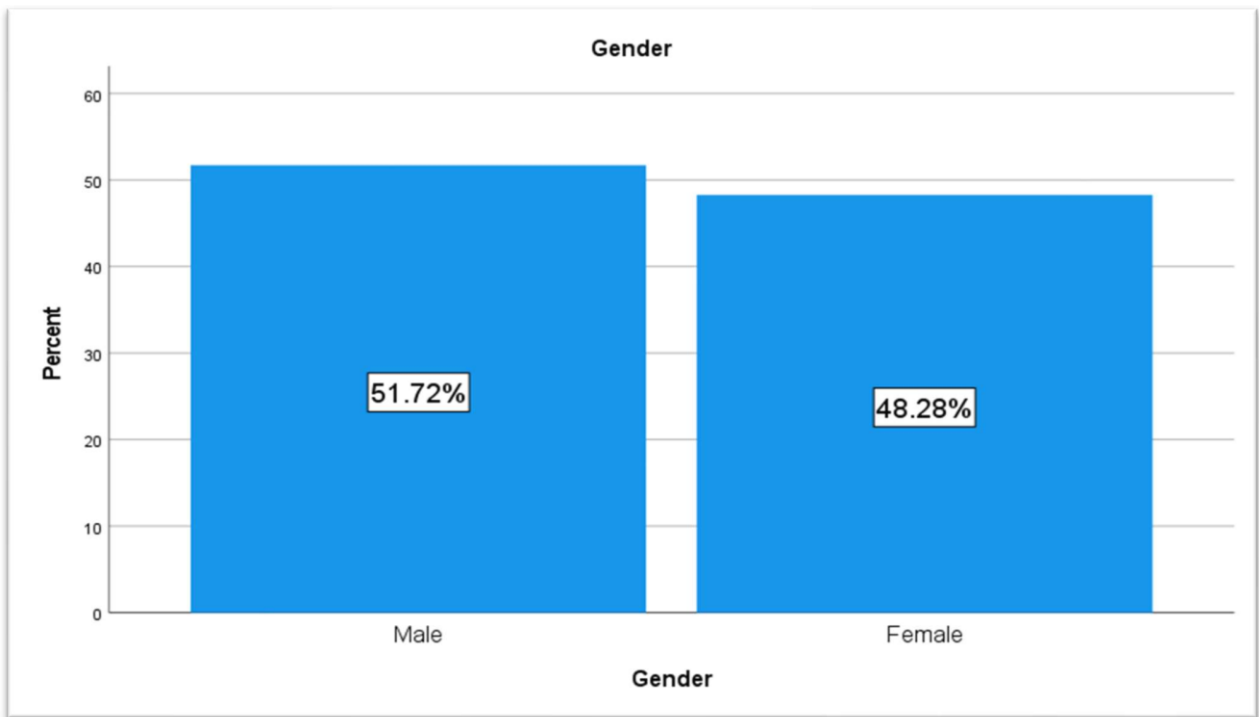


Figure 4.17: Gender

There were 51.7% males and 48.28% females in the population sample. But generally, the figures are close to each other. So, gender was fairly represented in the research.

4.3.3 : Age Distribution

Demographic data on age is presented in the table below.

Table 4.6: Age Demographics

Age	N	%
(18-24)	10	6.9%
(25-34)	26	17.9%
(35-44)	76	52.4%
(45-54)	27	18.6%
(55++)	6	4.1%

It is shown that greater percentages of respondents were 35 to 44 years old.

The graphic presentation of age distribution is illustrated below where the majority of the respondents were from the age range of 35 to 44 years.

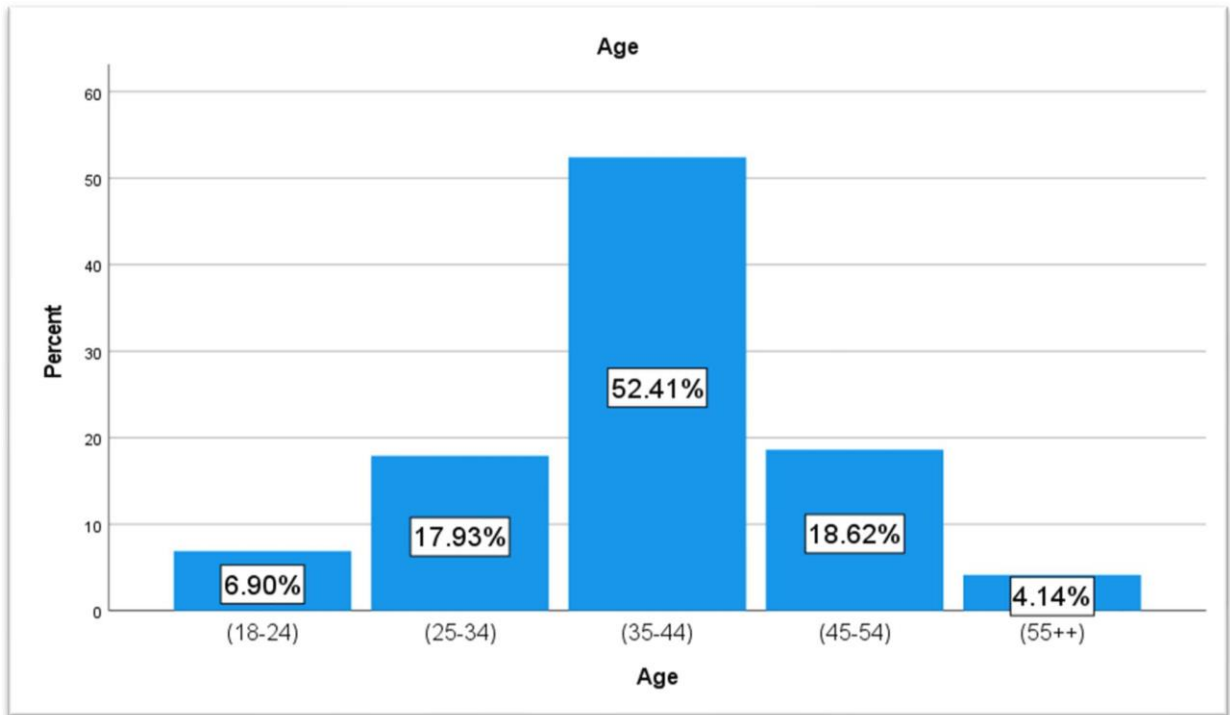


Figure 4.18: Age

The highest population sample was of the 35 to 44 years age range. There were fewer than 24 years and below as well as 55 years and above. From convenient sampling of the selected strata, it means that generally (35-44) age range has more people in the Midlands Province than other age ranges.

4.3.4 : Education Level

The demographic details for education are presented in the table below.

Table 4.7: Education Level

Education Level	N	%
A' Level or Below	16	11.0%
Cert/ Diploma	43	29.7%
Degree	59	40.7%
Masters	24	16.6%
Ph.D. or above	3	2.1%

It is shown that greater percentages of respondents have at least a degree.

The graphic presentation of the education levels of the population sample is illustrated below.

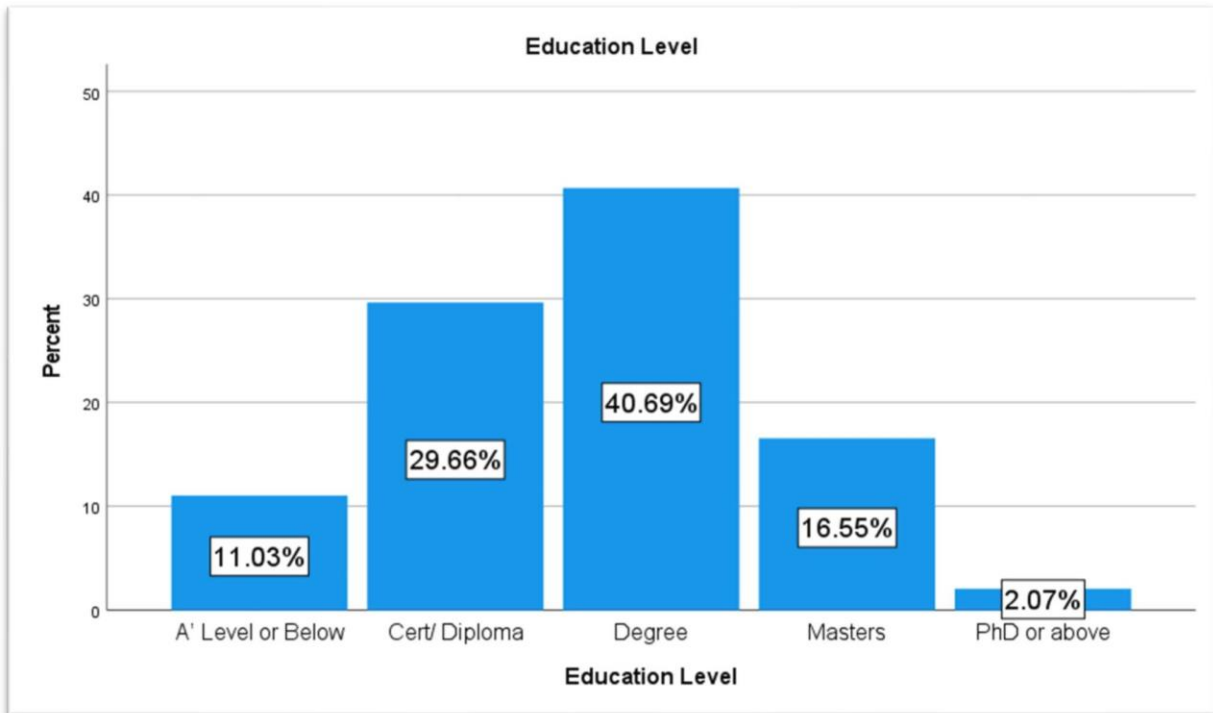


Figure 4.19: Education Level

The majority of the respondents have a degree or at least hold a diploma or certificate. A smaller number holds Master and A level and below while the smallest was from Ph.D.

4.3.5 : Participant Group

The demographic details for the participant group or strata are presented in the table below.

Table 4.8: Participant Group

Strata / Your Grouping	N	%
Council Employee	29	20.0%
Resident	29	20.0%
Councillor	29	20.0%
Ministry Official	29	20.0%
Patron/ Passerby	29	20.0%

Since this was from a research setting, the sample had an equal number of people within in strata of a given Local authority.

4.4: Theme 1: Social Media Platform and Brand Reputation

Research Question 1: “What is the significance of social media platforms on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?” (Jahn & Kunz, 2022; Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015).

The data gathered to answer this theme question is quantitative and the results were presented in three parts social media platforms against demographics, usage, and brand reputation as follows;

4.4.1 : Social Media Platforms and Demographics

A relationship test for social media platforms and demographics like Location, gender, age, education level, and stratum or grouping are presented below in a, b, c, d, and e.

a. Relationship Test for Social Media Platforms and Location

The data collected from the questionnaires is summarized below;

Table 4.9: SM Platforms and Location Crosstab

Type of SM Platforms Commonly Used in LA.		Local Authority/Location						Total
		Zvishavane	Shurugwi	Gweru	Kwekwe	Redcliff	Gokwe	
Messaging Apps e.g., WhatsApp, BulkySMS		9	5	25	17	11	3	70
Social Network Sites e.g., Facebook		6	1	11	12	2	3	35
Content Sharing e.g., YouTube,		2	2	7	4	1	1	17
Microblogging Platform e.g., Twitter,		1	1	4	4	1	2	13
Professional Networking e.g., LinkedIn		2	1	3	3	0	1	10
Total		20	10	50	40	15	10	145

The commonly used social media platform is WhatsApp and Facebook across all Locations. If we have a null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between social media platform and location”, we can perform a Chi-square test for the relationship.

Table 4.10: Social Media Platform and Location Chi-Square Test

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.537 ^a	20	.957
Likelihood Ratio	11.340	20	.937
Linear-by-Linear Association	.010	1	.921
N of Valid Cases	145		

a. 23 cells (76.7%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is .69.

With the above results, we fail to reject the null hypothesis since the p-value is greater than 0.05 i.e., 0.957. concluding that there is no significant relationship between social media platforms and location.

b. Relationship Test for Social Media Platforms and Gender

The data collected from the questionnaires is summarized below;

Table 4.11: SM Platforms and Gender Crosstab

Type of SM Platforms Commonly Used in LA. * Gender Crosstabulation				
		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Type of SM Platforms Commonly Used in LA.	Messaging Apps e.g., WhatsApp, BulkySMS	30	40	70
	Social Network Sites e.g., Facebook	22	13	35
	Content Sharing e.g., YouTube,	11	6	17
	Microblogging Platform e.g., Twitter,	8	5	13
	Professional Networking e.g., LinkedIn	4	6	10
Total		75	70	145

The commonly used social media platform is WhatsApp and Facebook across all gender. If we have a null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between social media platform and gender”, we can perform a Chi-square test for the relationship.

Table 4.12: SM Platforms and Gender Chi-Square

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.141 ^a	4	.189
Likelihood Ratio	6.195	4	.185
Linear-by-Linear Association	.964	1	.326
N of Valid Cases	145		

a. 1 cells (10.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.83.

With the above results, we fail to reject the null hypothesis since the p-value is greater than 0.05 i.e., 0.189 concluding that there is no significant relationship between social media platforms and gender.

c. Relationship Test for Social Media Platforms and Age

The data collected from the questionnaires is summarized below;

Table 4.13: SM Platforms and Age Crosstab

Type of SM Platforms Commonly Used in LA. * Age Crosstabulation		Age					Total
		(18-24)	(25-34)	(35-44)	(45-54)	(55++)	
Type of SM Platforms	Messaging Apps e.g., WhatsApp, BulkySMS	6	11	34	16	3	70
Commonly Used in LA.	Social Network Sites e.g., Facebook	3	6	20	4	2	35
	Content Sharing e.g., YouTube,	0	2	12	3	0	17
	Microblogging Platform e.g., Twitter,	1	4	6	2	0	13
	Professional Networking e.g., LinkedIn	0	3	4	2	1	10
Total		10	26	76	27	6	145

The commonly used social media platform is WhatsApp and Facebook across all ages. If we have a null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between social media platform and age”, we can perform a Chi-square test for the relationship.

Table 4.14: SM Platforms and Age Chi-Square

Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.707 ^a	16	.827
Likelihood Ratio	13.267	16	.653
Linear-by-Linear Association	.044	1	.834
N of Valid Cases	145		

a. 16 cells (64.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is .41.

With the above results, we fail to reject the null hypothesis since the p-value is greater than 0.05 i.e., 0.827 concluding that there is no significant relationship between social media platforms and gender.

d. Chi-Square Tests for Social Media Platforms and Education Level

The data collected from the questionnaires is summarized below;

Table 4.15: Social Media Platforms and Education Level Crosstab

Type of SM Platforms Commonly Used in LA. * Education Level Crosstabulation		Education Level					Total
		A' Level or Below	Cert/ Diploma	Degree	Masters	Ph.D. or above	
Type of SM Platforms	Messaging Apps e.g., WhatsApp, BulkySMS	4	18	36	11	1	70
Commonly Used in LA.	Social Network Sites e.g., Facebook	4	14	8	8	1	35
	Content Sharing e.g., YouTube,	5	4	8	0	0	17
	Microblogging Platform e.g., Twitter,	2	2	7	2	0	13
	Professional Networking e.g., LinkedIn	1	5	0	3	1	10
Total		16	43	59	24	3	145

If we have a null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between social media platform and education level”, we can perform a Chi-square test for the relationship.

Table 4.16: Social Media Platforms and Education Level Chi-Square

Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	29.573 ^a	16	.020
Likelihood Ratio	34.185	16	.005
Linear-by-Linear Association	.965	1	.326
N of Valid Cases	145		

a. 15 cells (60.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is .21.

With the above results we reject the null hypothesis since the p-value is less than 0.05 i.e., 0.020 concluding that there is a significant relationship between social media platforms and education level.

e. Chi-Square Tests for Social Media Platforms and Grouping/Stratum

The data collected from the questionnaires is summarized below;

Table 4.17: Social Media Platforms and Grouping/Stratum Crosstab

Type of SM Platforms Commonly Used in LA.		Strata/ Grouping					Total
		Council Employee	Resident	Council or	Ministry Official	Patron/Passerby	
Messaging Apps e.g., WhatsApp, BulkySMS		8	22	9	17	14	70
Social Network Sites e.g., Facebook		6	6	11	2	10	35
Content Sharing e.g., YouTube,		5	0	6	4	2	17
Microblogging Platform e.g., Twitter,		4	1	3	2	3	13
Professional Networking e.g., LinkedIn		6	0	0	4	0	10
Total		29	29	29	29	29	145

If we have a null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between social media platform and grouping/stratum”, we can perform a Chi-square test for the relationship.

Table 4.18: Social Media Platforms and Grouping/Stratum Chi-Square

Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	41.824 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	48.730	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.657	1	.103
N of Valid Cases	145		

a. 15 cells (60.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.00.

With the above results, we reject the null hypothesis since the p-value is less than 0.05 i.e., 0.000 concluding that there is a strong significant relationship between social media platforms and grouping /stratum. This is associated with user-friendliness, subscription numbers, and general costs associated.

Therefore, the research conclusion is that there is no significant relationship between social media platforms and location, gender, and age in the Midlands Urban Local Authorities. However, there is a significant relationship between social media platforms and education level as well as grouping or stratum. The more educated the group is the more they use professional networks like LinkedIn. Also, a

certain type of social media platform is always unique to a certain group between Council Employees, Councilors, Ministry Officials, Residents, and Patrons. However, generally, the most commonly used social media platforms are WhatsApp and Facebook across all demographics.

This coincides with literature review outcomes for example, according to the research by Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, and Pihlström (2022) it was concluded that there is a huge impact in selecting the most appropriate social media platforms based on their characteristics and user demographics to enhance a positive brand reputation.

4.4.2 : Social Media Platforms and Usage

This section will explore the crosstabs and the relationship tests for the two sub-variables as shown below.

a. Crosstab of Social Media Platforms and Usage Frequency

Table 4.19: Social Media Platforms and Usage Frequency Crosstab

Type of SM Platforms Commonly Used in LA.		LA Frequently Use SM for Public Engagement.			Total
		Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Commonly Used in LA.	Messaging Apps e.g., WhatsApp, BulkySMS	6	16	48	70
	Social Network Sites e.g., Facebook	2	15	18	35
	Content Sharing e.g., YouTube,	0	7	10	17
	Microblogging Platform e.g., Twitter,	2	2	9	13
	Professional Networking e.g., LinkedIn	0	3	7	10
Total		10	43	92	145

From the above information, we conclude that messaging applications like WhatsApp have a high usage frequency followed by social network sites like Facebook.

b. Test for Correlation Between SM Platform and Usage

Table 4.20: Social Media Platforms and Usage Frequency Correlations

		Correlations	
		SM Platforms Types Affect BR of LA.	Mean SM Usage
SM Platforms Types Affect BR of LA.	Pearson Correlation	1	.466**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	145	145
Mean SM Usage	Pearson Correlation	.466**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	145	145

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Since the sig 2-tailed value is less than 0.05 and there are positive asterisks on Pearson’s Correlation, we conclude that there is a positive strong relationship between social media usage and platform types. Message applications have a high usage frequency on social media.

The research findings tally with a study by Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman (2015) who concluded that certain social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, had a stronger impact on brand reputation due to their widespread user base and content-sharing capabilities.

4.4.3 : Social Media Platforms and Impact on Brand Reputation

To answer **Research Question 1:** “*What is the significance of social media platforms on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?*” (Jahn & Kunz, 2022: Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015), we assess the mean rating variables of social media platforms and brand reputation by testing for a correlation.

We use hypothesis testing to ensure whether the correlation exists or not.

Null hypothesis

- **H₀¹** – There is no significant relationship between social media platforms and brand reputation.

Alternative Hypothesis

- **H₁¹** – There is a significant relationship between social media platforms and brand reputation.

We analyze the data collected using Pearson’s Coefficient Correlation.

Table 4.21: Social Media Platforms and Brand Reputation Correlation

		Correlations	
		SM Platforms Types Affect BR of LA.	Mean BR
SM Platforms Types Affect BR of LA.	Pearson Correlation	1	.229**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006
	N	145	145
Mean BR	Pearson Correlation	.229**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	
	N	145	145

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on Pearson’s correlation test, we reject H_0^1 since the p-value sig 2-tailed is less than 0.05 and conclude that there is a positive significant relationship between social media platform types and the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in the Midlands Province.

The diagram below also proves that.

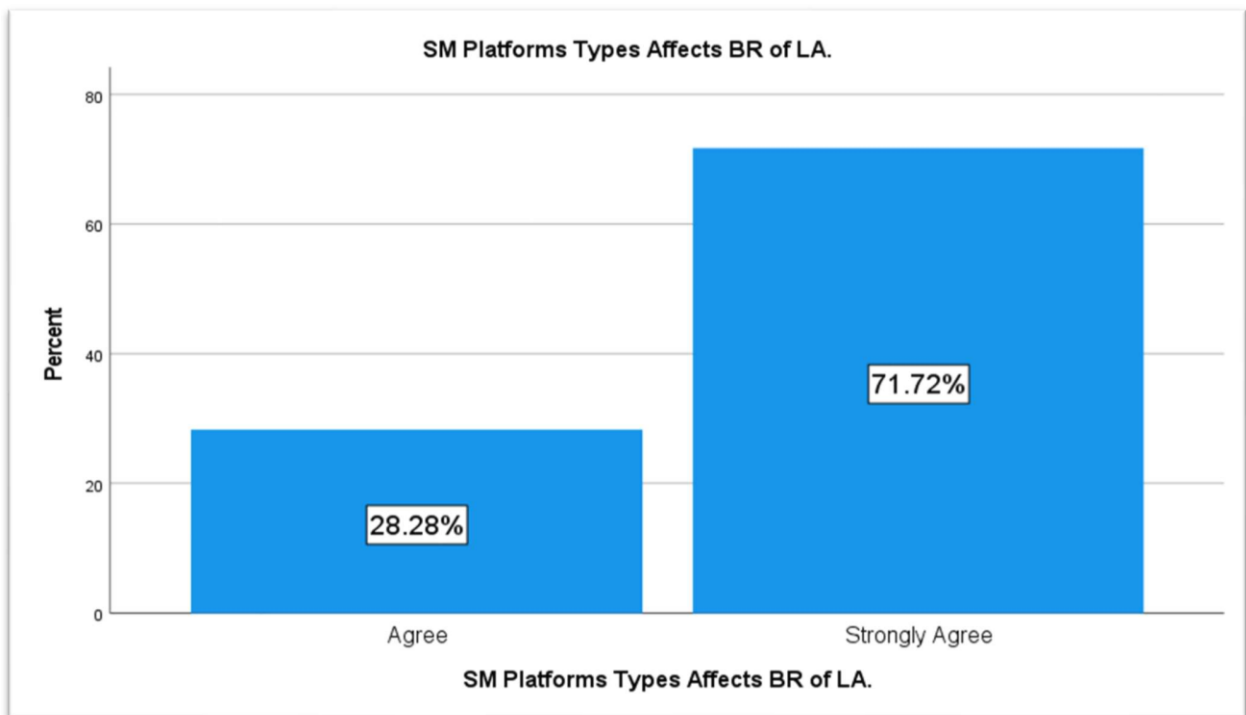


Figure 4.20: Do Social Media Platforms Impact Brand Reputation

From the diagram above, 71.72% of the population sample strongly agrees that social media platform types affect the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities. The other percentage generally agrees with the perception again. Concluding that there is a positive significant relationship between social media

platforms and brand reputation, social media platform selection affects the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities.

This coincides with previous research done by Jahn and Kunz (2022) who explored the impact of social media platform selection on brand reputation and found that the choice of platform should align with the target audience and brand objectives. Moreover, Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2021) highlighted the distinct features of different social media platforms and their impact on brand reputation. The authors emphasized the need for brands to align their communication strategies with platform-specific characteristics.

4.4.4 : Secondary Data Findings on Platforms

The existence of the Urban Local Authorities on websites is shown below;

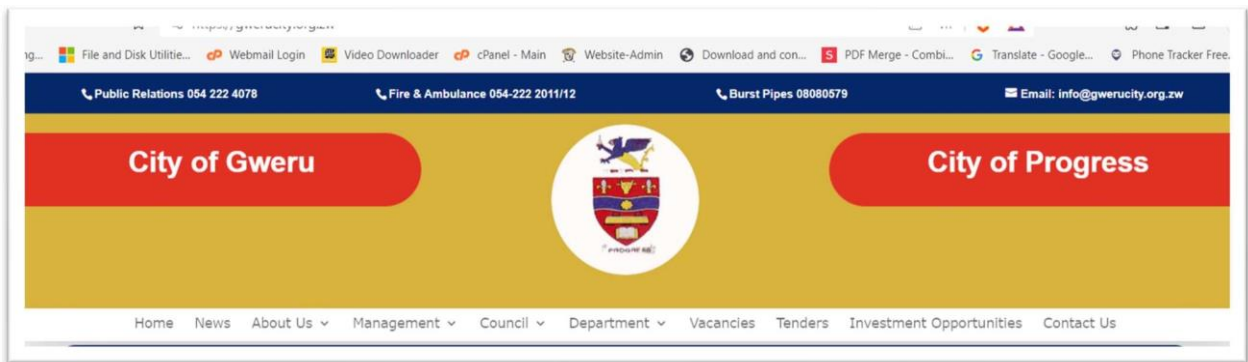


Figure 4.21: Gweru City Website (Gwerucity, 2023)

The diagram above shows the Gweru City Council website that is used as social media handle.

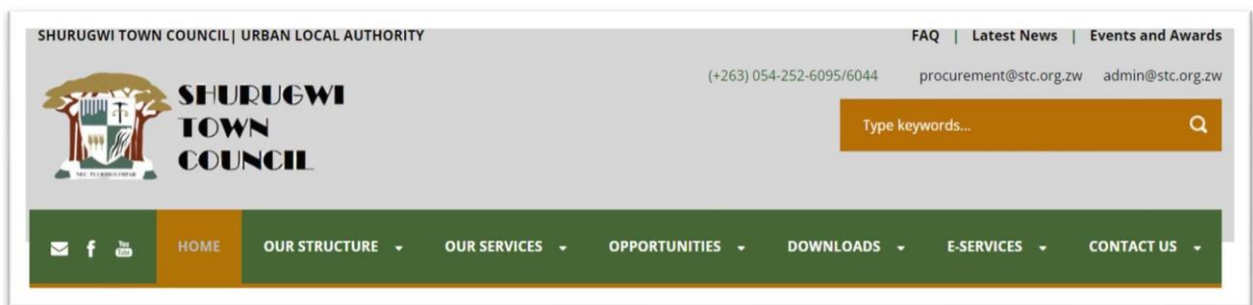


Figure 4.22: Shurugwi Town Website (ShurugwiCouncil, 2023)

The diagram above shows the Shurugwi Town Council website that is used as social media handle.

The diagram below shows the social media ranging based on Lua Alfred (2023).

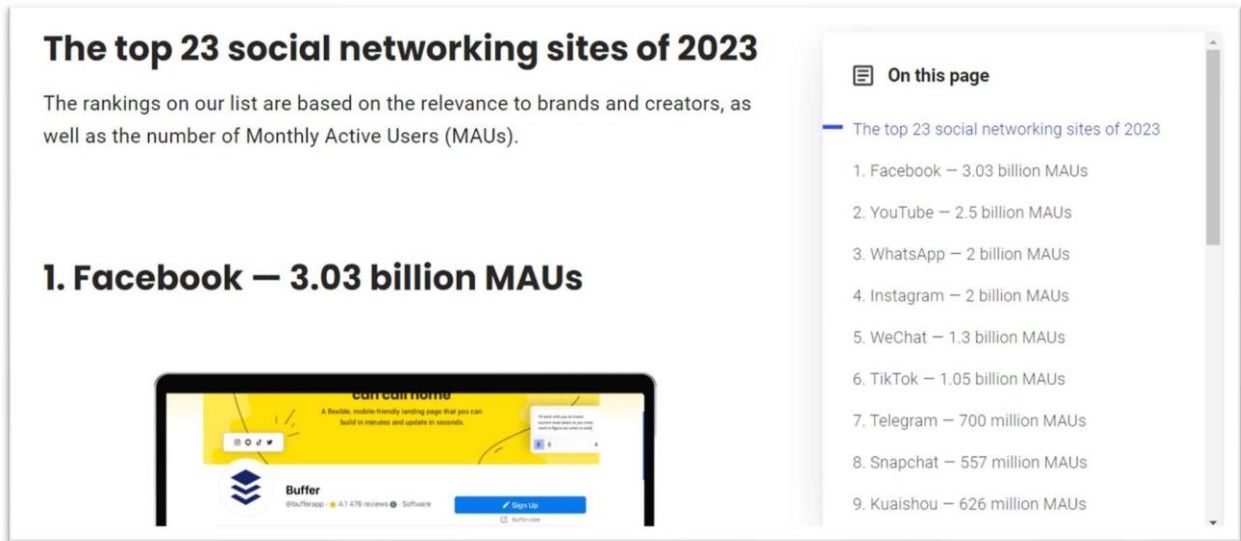


Figure 4.23: Top Social Media Sites (Lua Alfred, 2023)

The documentary review also supported that social media platforms have an impact on brand reputation by ranking them as shown above. If there was no impact they would not have been listed in an order.

4.5 : Theme 2: Social Media Usage and Brand Reputation

Research Question 2: “What is the impact of social media usage on brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?” (Liang & Wei, 2017; Zhang & Daugherty, 2021).

The data gathered to answer this theme question is quantitative and the results were presented in three parts social media usage against demographics, content, and brand reputation as follows;

4.5.1 : Social Media Usage and Demographics

A relationship test for social media usage and demographics like Location, gender, age, education level, and stratum or grouping are presented below in a, b, c, d, and e.

a. Relationship Test for Social Media Usage Frequency and Location

The data collected from the questionnaires is summarized below;

Table 4.22: Social Media Usage Frequency and Location Crosstab

LA Frequently Use SM for Public Engagement. * Local Authority/Location Crosstabulation		Local Authority/Location						Total
		Zvishavane	Shurugwi	Gweru	Kwekwe	Redcliff	Gokwe	
LA Frequently Use SM for Public Engagement.	Neutral	2	0	2	2	2	2	10
	Agree	5	3	15	14	5	1	43
	Strongly Agree	13	7	33	24	8	7	92
Total		20	10	50	40	15	10	145

This data can also be presented on a chart as shown below.

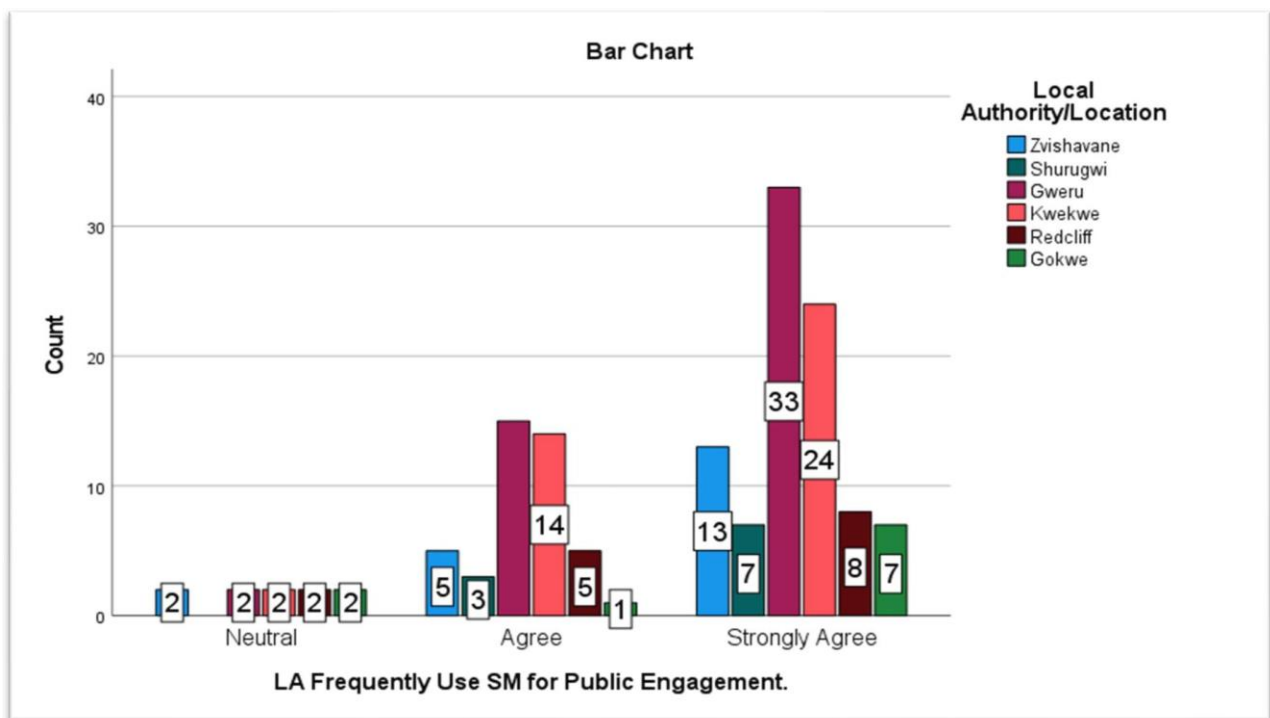


Figure 4.24: Social Media Usage Frequency and Location

There is a noticeably high social media usage in all the locations of Midlands Urban Local Authorities. There is no distinct relationship between usage frequency and location.

b. Relationship Test for Social Media Usage Frequency and Gender

The data collected from the questionnaires is illustrated below;

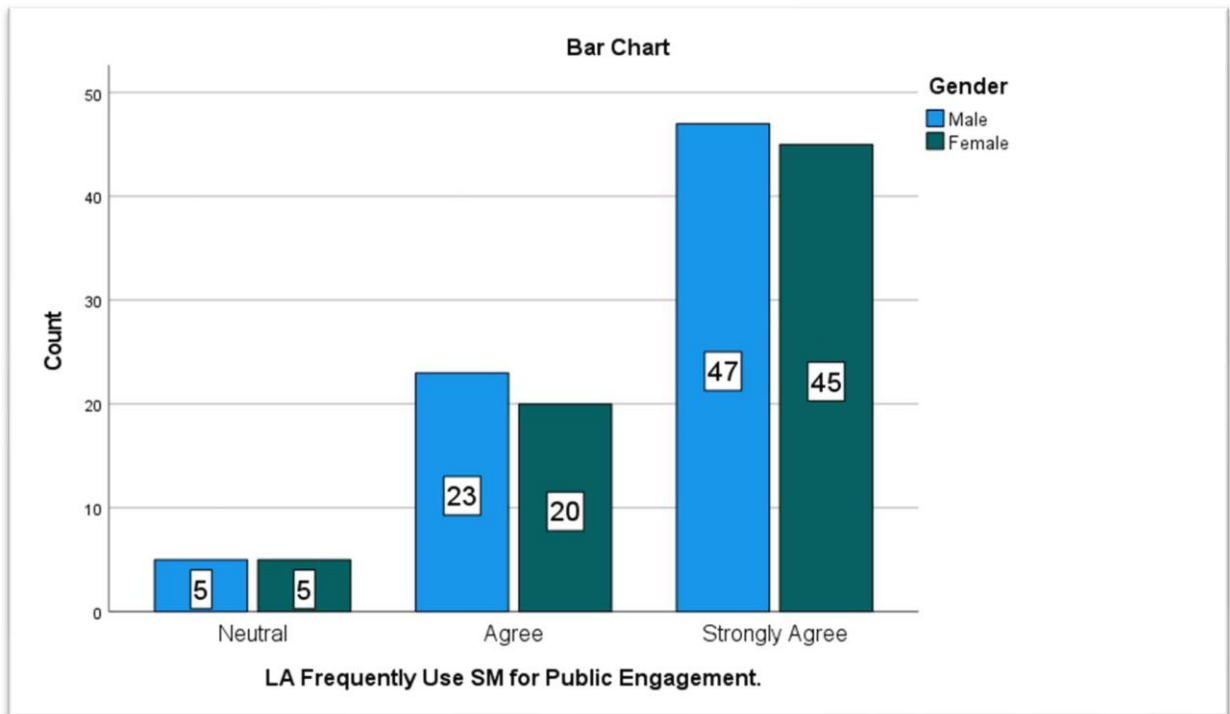


Figure 4.25: Social Media Usage Frequency and Gender

There is no distinct relationship between gender and usage frequency of social media. It is just that there are more males than females in the survey who share almost similar sentiments about social media usage.

c. Relationship Test for Social Media Usage Frequency and Age

The data collected from the questionnaires is illustrated below;

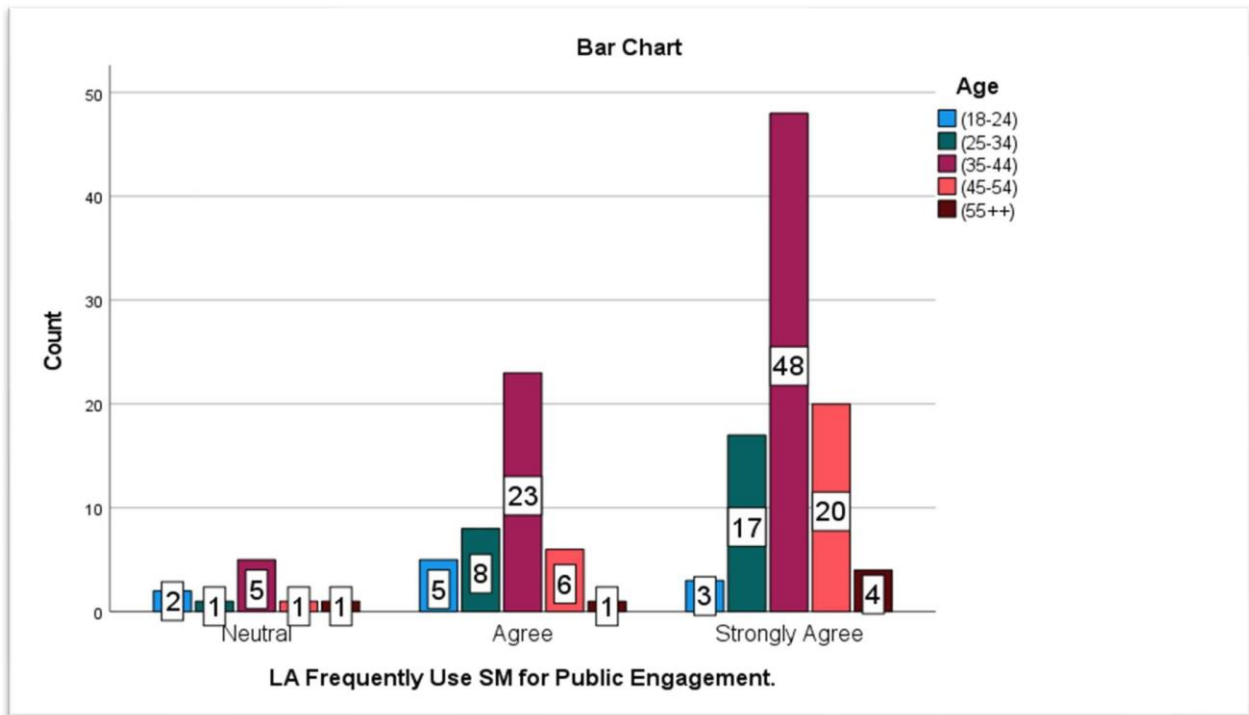


Figure 4.26: Social Media Usage Frequency and Age

The majority of the pollution generally agrees that usage frequency is high on social media regardless of age. This implies that there is no significant relationship between social media usage and gender.

d. Chi-Square Tests for Social Media Usage Frequency and Education Level

The data collected from the questionnaires is illustrated below;

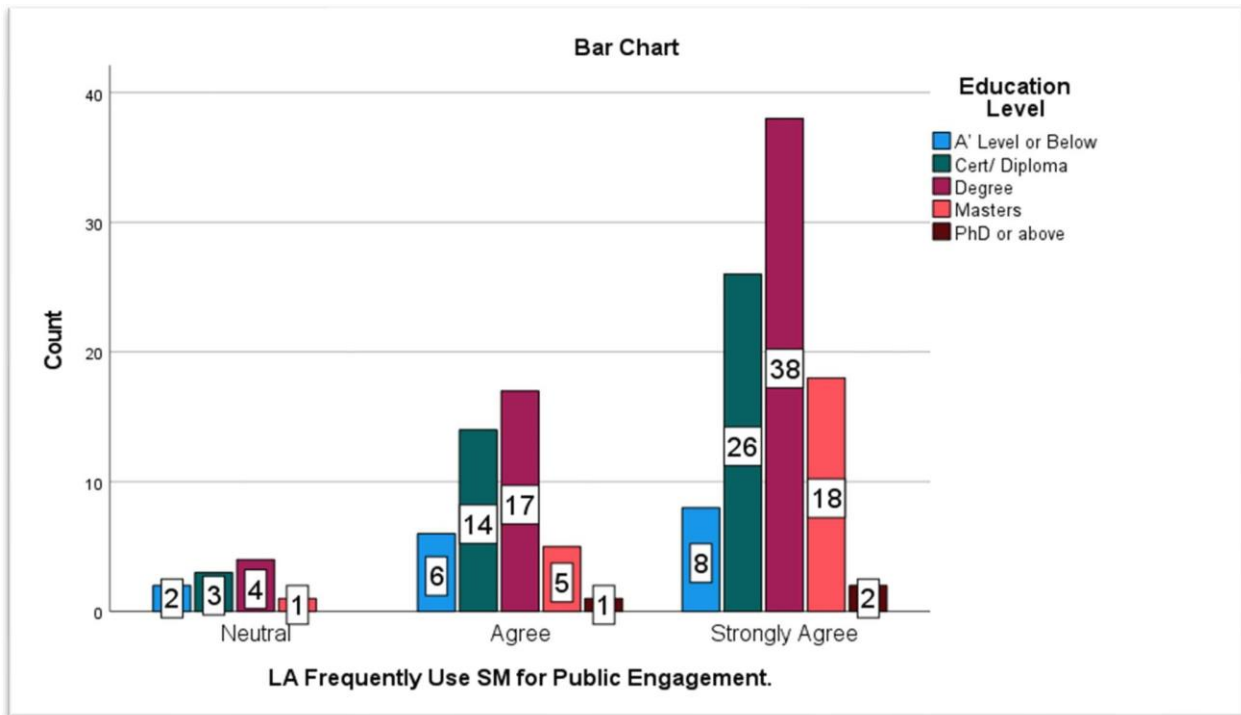


Figure 4.27: Social Media Usage Frequency and Education Level

Based on the results above there is no significant relationship between social media usage and education level.

e. Chi-Square Tests for Social Media Usage and Grouping/Stratum

The data collected from the questionnaires is summarized below;

Table 4.23: Social Media Usage and Grouping/Stratum Crosstab

		Strata/ Grouping					Total
		Council Employee	Resident	Councilor	Ministry Official	Patron/ Passerby	
LA Frequently Use SM for Public Engagement.	Neutral	2	1	0	0	7	10
	Agree	8	1	7	5	22	43
	Strongly Agree	19	27	22	24	0	92
Total		29	29	29	29	29	145

If we have a null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between social media usage and grouping/stratum”, we can perform a Chi-square test for the relationship.

Table 4.24: Social Media Usage and Grouping/Stratum Chi-Square

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	71.290 ^a	8	.001
Likelihood Ratio	86.259	8	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	22.316	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	145		

a. 5 cells (33.3%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.00.

With the above results, we reject the null hypothesis since the p-value is less than 0.05 i.e., 0.001 concluding that there is a strong significant relationship between social media usage and grouping /stratum.

The graphic view follows;

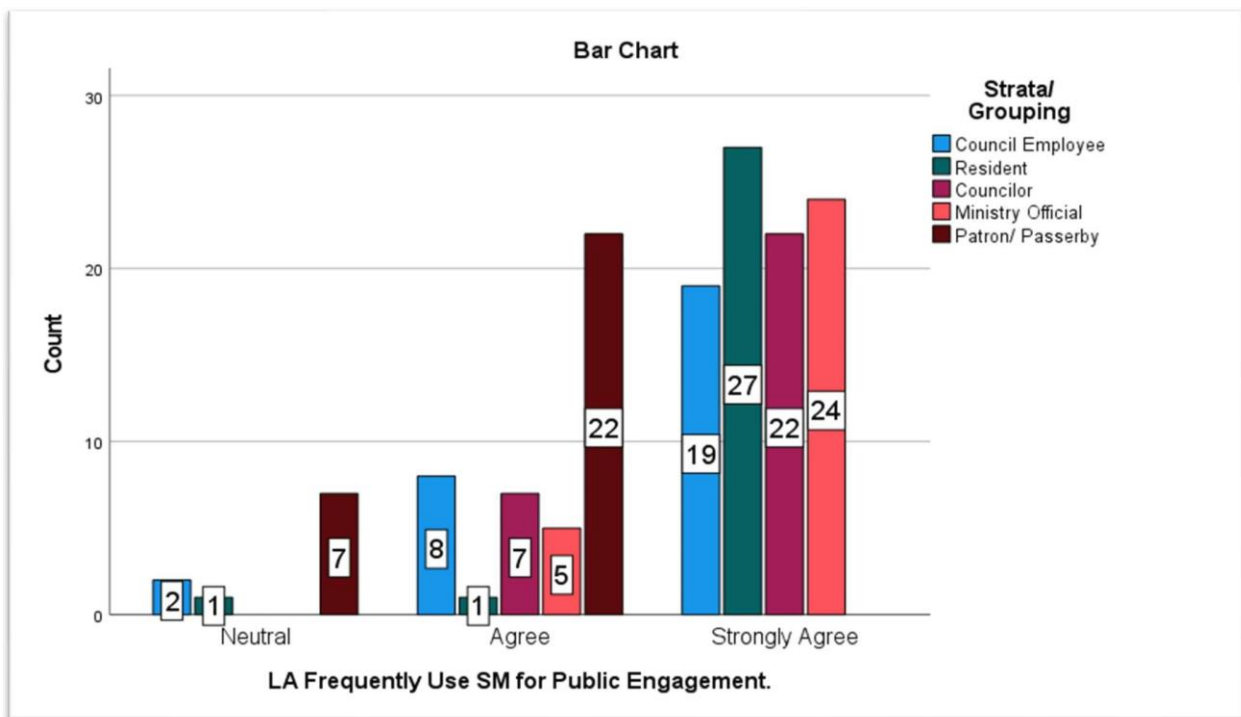


Figure 4.28: Social Media Usage and Grouping/Stratum

Therefore, the research conclusion is that there is no significant relationship between social media usage and location, gender, age, and education level in the Midlands Urban Local Authorities. However, there is a significant relationship between social media usage frequency and stratum/grouping. A certain type of social media frequency is always unique to a certain group between Council Employees, Councilors,

Ministry Officials, Residents, and Patrons. However, there is generally high social media usage across all demographics.

This is supported by Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, and Pihlström (2022) who concluded that there is a huge impact in selecting the most appropriate social media platforms based on their characteristics and user demographics to enhance a positive brand reputation.

4.5.2 : Social Media Usage and Content

Social media usage and content data analysis start with crosstabs for the two and then a test for the correlation as shown in a and b below.

a. Crosstab of Social Media Usage and Content-Type

Table 4.25: Social Media Usage and Content-Type Crosstab

		Type of SM Content Commonly Used in LA.					Total
		Text Content	Audio Content	Video Content	Imagery Content	Printed Content	
LA Frequently Use SM for Public Engagement.	Neutral	6	0	2	2	0	10
	Agree	6	3	6	25	3	43
	Strongly Agree	8	11	32	34	7	92
	Total	20	14	40	61	10	145

From the above information, we conclude that Imagery and Video content result in high social media usage.

b. Test for Correlation Between SM Usage and Content

Table 4.26: Social Media Usage and Content-Type Correlation

		Correlations	
		Mean SM Usage	Mean SM Content
Mean SM Usage	Pearson Correlation	1	.185*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.026
	N	145	145
Mean SM Content	Pearson Correlation	.185*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	
	N	145	145

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Since the sig 2-tailed value is less than 0.05 and there are positive asterisks on Pearson’s Correlation, we conclude that there is a positive relationship between social media usage and content types. social media with Imagery and Video content have a high usage frequency.

This supports the results of research conducted by Luo, Xu, and Lu (2019) which revealed that engaging in informative content types on social media positively affected brand reputation, leading to increased consumer trust and loyalty.

4.5.3 : Social Media Usage and Impact to Brand Reputation

To answer the **Research Question 2:** “What is the impact of social media usage on brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?” (Liang & Wei, 2017; Zhang & Daugherty, 2021), we assess the mean rating variables of social media usage and brand reputation by testing for a correlation.

We use hypothesis testing to ensure whether the correlation exists or not.

Null hypothesis

- H_0^2 – There is no significant relationship between social media usage and brand reputation.

Alternative Hypothesis

- H_1^2 – There is a significant relationship between social media usage and brand reputation.

We analyze the data collected using Pearson’s Coefficient Correlation.

Table 4.27: Social Media Usage and Brand Reputation Correlation

		Correlations	
		Mean SM Usage	Mean BR
Mean SM Usage	Pearson Correlation	1	.427**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	145	145
Mean BR	Pearson Correlation	.427**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	145	145

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

We reject H_0^1 since the p-value sig 2-tailed is less than 0.05 and conclude that there is a positive significant relationship between social media Usage frequency and the brand reputation of Urban

Local Authorities in the Midlands Province. The diagram below also proves that.

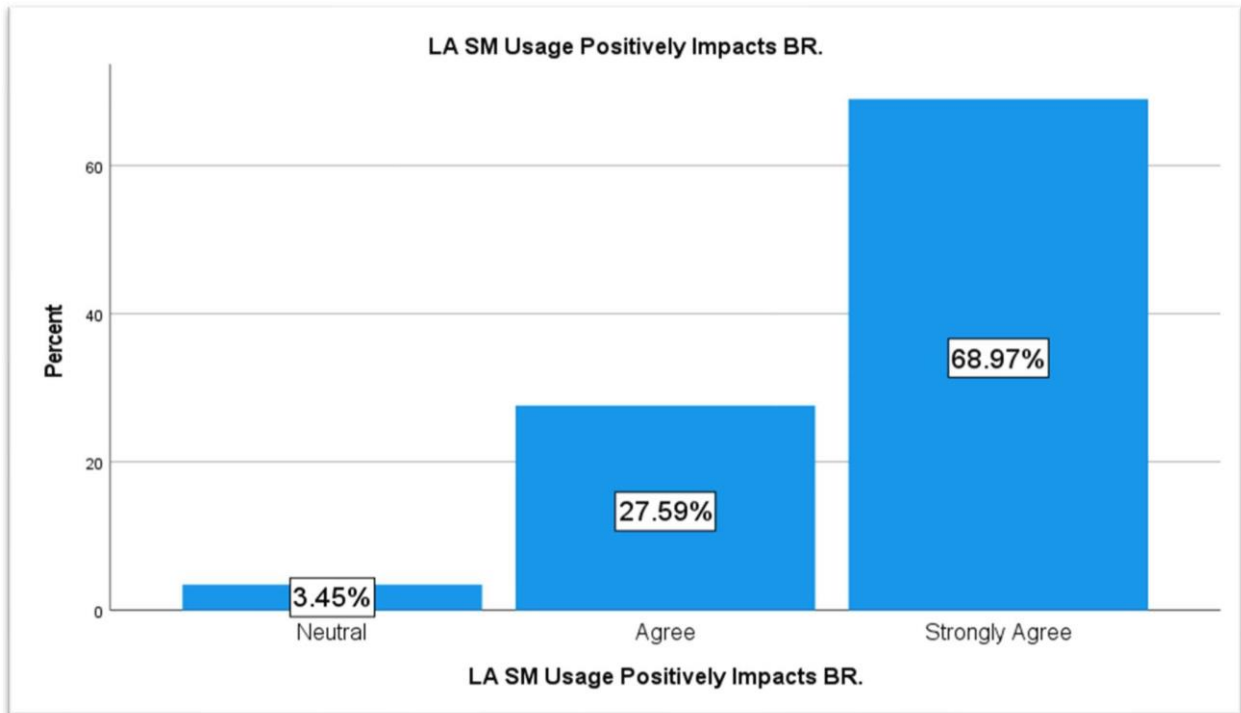


Figure 4.29: Does Social Media Usage Impact Brand Reputation

From the diagram above, 68.97% of the population sample strongly agrees that social media usage positively affects the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities. Only 3.45% are neutral about the perception. Concluding that there is a positive impact between high social media usage and brand reputation, social media usage frequency affects the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities.

This is supported by research from Liang and Wei (2017) who highlighted that there is a positive association between social media usage and consumer engagement, which, in turn, enhances brand reputation. Also, Zhang and Daugherty (2021) suggested that social media usage facilitated real-time customer feedback, allowing brands to address concerns promptly and positively impacting brand reputation.

4.5.4 : Secondary Data Findings on Usage

The image below was taken from Facebook where a post was made that Gweru City Council held a physical budget consultation meeting at MSU.



Figure 4.30: Gweru City Holding Budget Consultations (Facebook, 2023)

The comments which point to the social media usage are given below;



Figure 4.31: Reactions to Gweru City Consultations (Facebook, 2023)

In the comment section above a resident actually advocated for maximum usage of social media to enhance a wholesome budget review exercise citing physical meeting attendance challenges.

Usage of other social media platforms like Twitter to distribute a tender notice is shown below;



Figure 4.32: Kwekwe City Tweets Tender Publication (Twitter, 2023)

The use of Twitter to share awareness around the COVID-19 pandemic, especially during the times when physical gatherings were not allowed is shown below;



Figure 4.33: Gweru City Tweets Covid-19 Notice (Twitter, 2023)

However, it's not always and everywhere, in some towns like Redcliff the residents still reject social media as shown below;



Figure 4.34: Redcliff Resident Deny Social Media (Facebook, 2023)

In the comment above the resident says “Come physically to the Hall so that you talk to people, not this”.

It is therefore behind this analysis that the documentary review also supported that social media usage has an impact on brand reputation to a greater extent. If there was no impact, there would not have been a need to use it.

4.6: Theme 3: Social Media Content and Brand Reputation

Research Question 3: “What is the effect of social media content on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?” (Kwon & Sung, 2019; Liu, Huang, Zhang & Zhang, 2016).

The data gathered to answer this theme question is quantitative and the results were presented in three parts social media content against demographics, content, and brand reputation as follows;

4.6.1 : Social Media Content and Demographics

A relationship test for social media content and demographics like Location, gender, age, education level, and stratum or grouping are presented below in a, b, c, d, and e.

a. Relationship Test for Social Media Content Types and Location

The data collected from the questionnaires is summarized below;

Table 4.25 Social Media Content Types and Location

Table 4.28: Social Media Content Types and Location Crosstab

Type of SM Content Commonly Used in LA.		Local Authority/Location						Total
		Zvishavane	Shurugwi	Gweru	Kwekwe	Redcliff	Gokwe	
Text Content		1	1	8	6	2	2	20
Audio Content		2	0	5	4	1	2	14
Video Content		6	1	14	10	6	3	40
Imagery Content		8	7	22	18	4	2	61
Printed Content		3	1	1	2	2	1	10
Total		20	10	50	40	15	10	145

This data can also be presented on a chart as shown below.

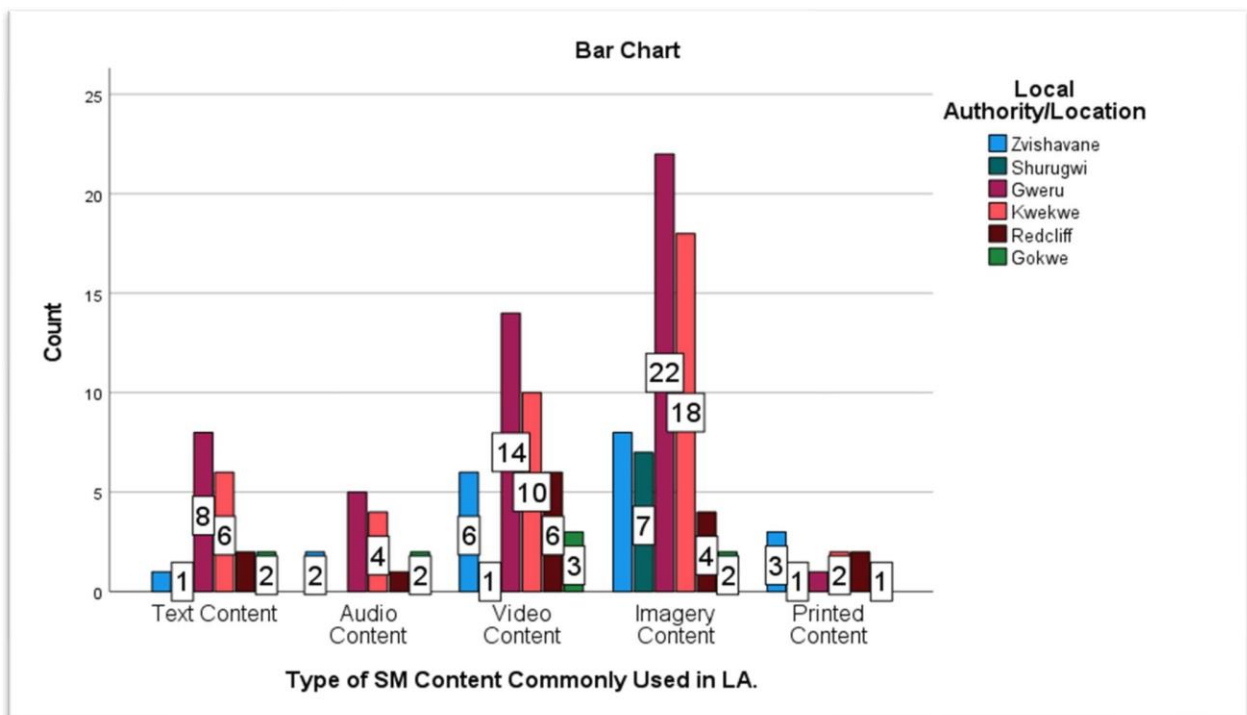


Figure 4.35: Social Media Content Types and Location

There is a noticeable high Imagery and video content usage in all the locations of Midlands Urban Local Authorities. There is no distinct relationship between content type and location.

b. Relationship Test for Social Media Content Type and Gender

The data collected from the questionnaires is illustrated below;

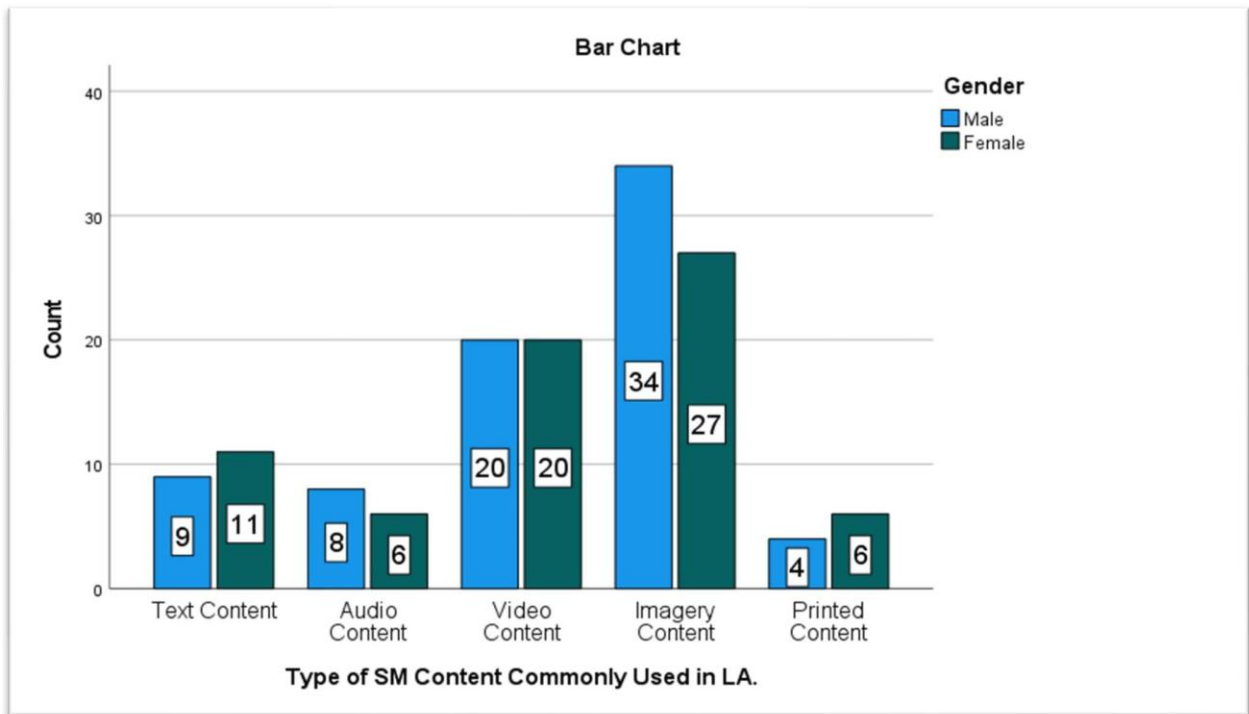


Figure 4.36: Social Media Content Type and Gender

There is no distinct relationship between gender and social media content types. It is just that there are more males than females in the survey who share almost similar sentiments about social media content in terms of relevance, authenticity, and type.

c. Relationship Test for Social Media Content Type and Age

The data collected from the questionnaires is illustrated below;

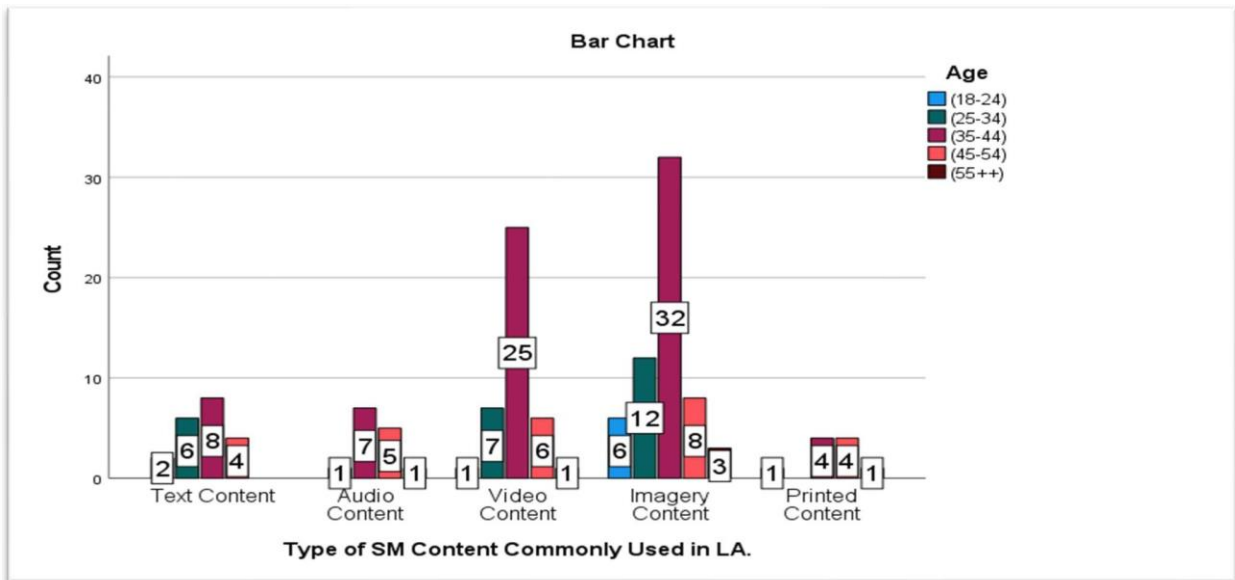


Figure 4.37: Social Media Content Type and Age

The majority of the population generally agrees that imagery content and video content are more useful regardless of age. It is only that the population sample is a huge (35-44) age range. This implies that there is no significant relationship between social media content and gender.

d. Crosstab for Social Media Content Type and Education Level

The data collected from the questionnaires is illustrated below;

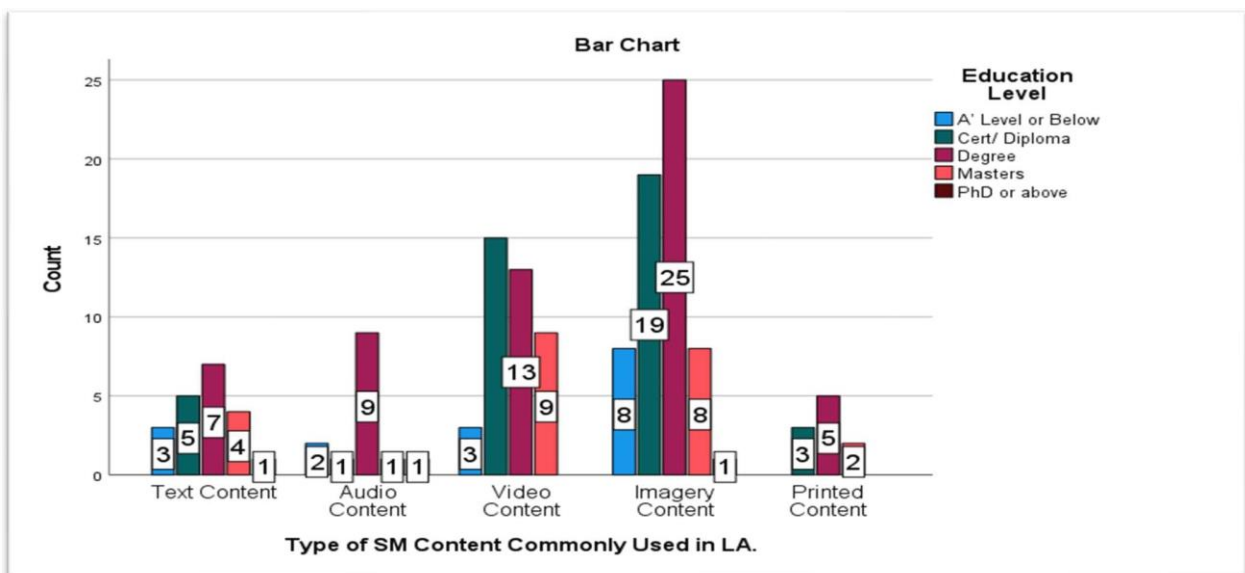


Figure 4.38: Social Media Content Type and Education Level

Based on the results above there is no significant relationship between social media content and education level.

e. Chi-Square Tests for Social Media Content and Grouping/Stratum

The data collected from the questionnaires is summarized below;

Table 4.29: Social Media Content Type and Stratum Crosstab

Count		Type of SM Content Commonly Used in LA. * Strata/ Grouping Crosstabulation					Total
		Strata/ Grouping					
Type of SM Content Commonly Used in LA.		Council Employee	Resident	Councilor	Ministry Official	Patron/ Passerby	
Text Content		2	3	2	2	11	20
Audio Content		2	3	5	4	0	14
Video Content		11	14	9	6	0	40
Imagery Content		14	6	11	14	16	61
Printed Content		0	3	2	3	2	10
Total		29	29	29	29	29	145

If we have a null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between social media content and Grouping/Stratum”, we can perform a Chi-square test for the relationship.

Table 4.30: Social Media Content Type and Education Level Chi-Square

Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	43.019 ^a	16	.001
Likelihood Ratio	51.729	16	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	.316	1	.574
N of Valid Cases	145		

a. 15 cells (60.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.00.

With the above results, we reject the null hypothesis since the p-value is less than 0.05 i.e., 0.001 concluding that there is a significant relationship between social media content type and grouping /stratum.

The graphic view follows;

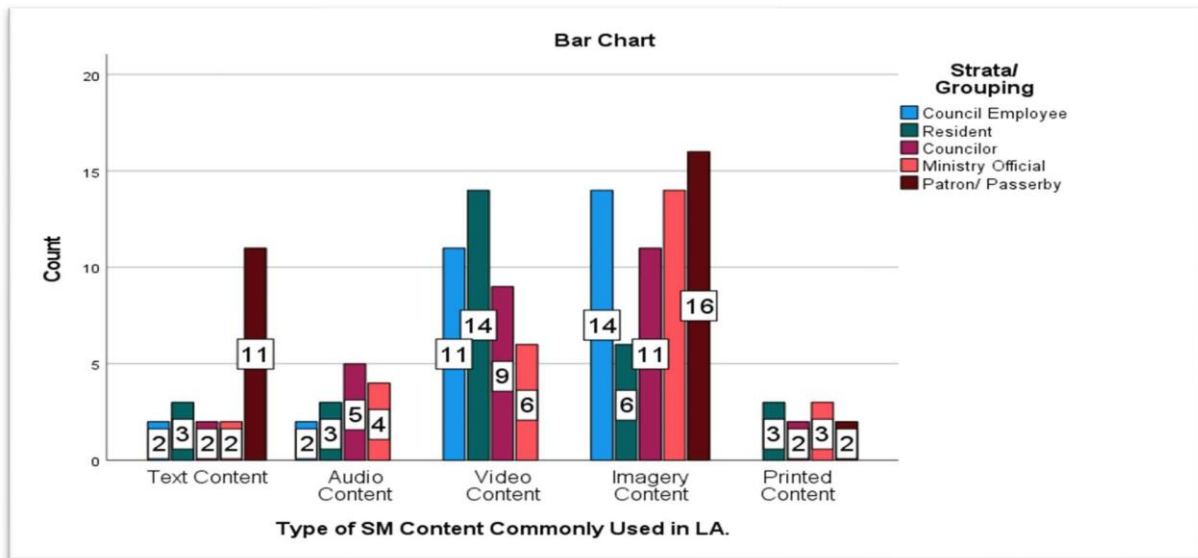


Figure 4.39: Social Media Content Type and Strata

Therefore, the research conclusion is that there is no significant relationship between social media content and location, gender, age, and education level in the Midlands Urban Local Authorities. However, there is a significant relationship between social media content type and stratum/grouping. A certain type of social media content is always unique to a certain group between Council Employees, Councilors, Ministry Officials, Residents, and Patrons. However, there is generally Imagery and video content is highly common across all demographics.

4.6.2 : Social Media Content and Platforms

Social media content and platforms data analysis starts with crosstabs for the two and then a test for the correlation as shown in a and b below.

a. Crosstab of Social Media Platforms and Content

Table 4.31: Social Media Platforms and Content Crosstab

Type of SM Platforms Commonly Used in LA.		Type of SM Content Commonly Used in LA.					Total
		Text Content	Audio Content	Video Content	Imagery Content	Printed Content	
Messaging Apps e.g., WhatsApp, BulkySMS		11	8	17	30	4	70
Social Network Sites e.g., Facebook		3	0	12	18	2	35
Content Sharing e.g., YouTube,		3	3	3	6	2	17
Microblogging Platform e.g., Twitter,		3	2	4	2	2	13
Professional Networking e.g., LinkedIn		0	1	4	5	0	10
Total		20	14	40	61	10	145

From the above table, we conclude that imagery content and WhatsApp are the most used social media elements.

b. Test for Correlation Between SM Platform and Content

Table 4.32: Social Media Platforms and Content Correlation

Correlations		SM Platforms Types Affect BR of LA.	Mean SM Content
SM Platforms Types Affect BR of LA.	Pearson Correlation	1	.206*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.013
	N	145	145
Mean SM Content	Pearson Correlation	.206*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	
	N	145	145

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Since the sig 2-tailed value is less than 0.05 and there are positive asterisks on Pearson's Correlation, we conclude that there is a positive relationship between social media usage and content types. Message applications and imagery content are the most used social media.

This coincides with the research by Luo, Xu, and Lu (2019) which revealed that engaging in informative content types on social media positively affected brand reputation, leading to increased consumer trust and loyalty. More also, a conclusion of the research by Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) is also seen in this research as illustrated below;

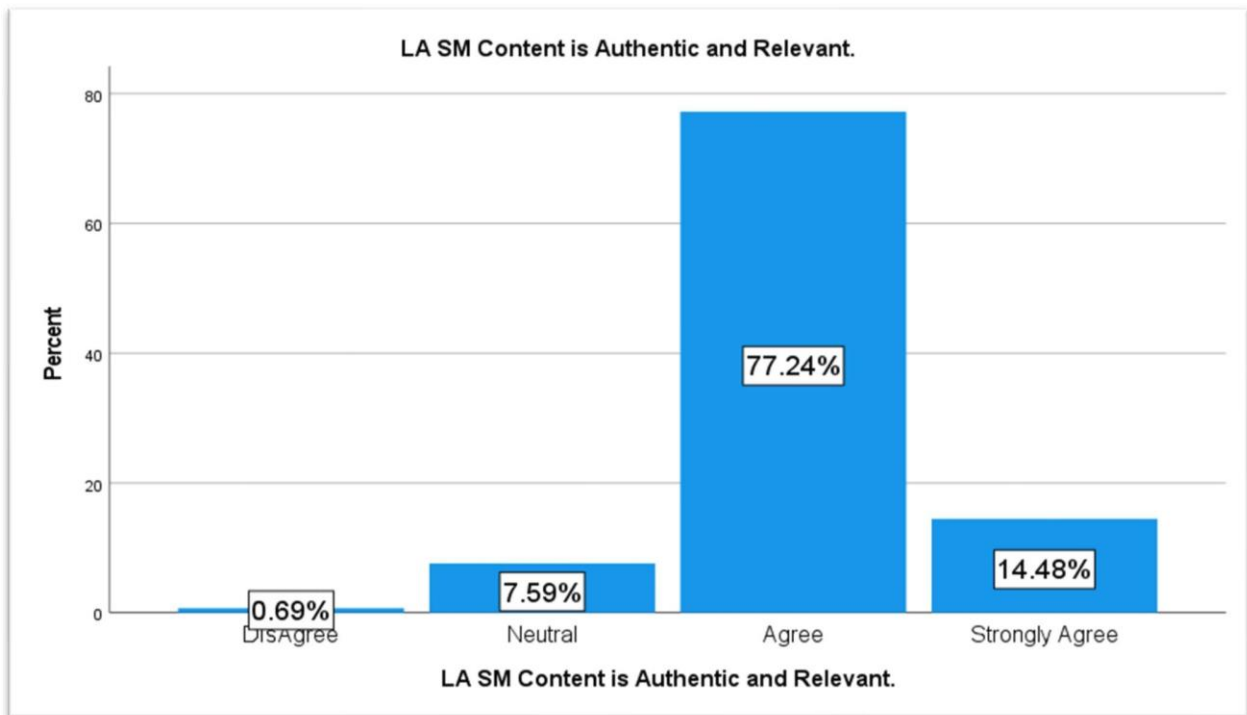


Figure 4.40: LA Social Media Content is Relevant

From the bar graph above 77.24% and 14.48% of the population sample agree that Local Authority social media content is authentic and relevant as propounded by Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) who emphasized the importance of authentic and relevant content in maintaining a favorable brand reputation on social media platforms.

4.6.3 : Social Media Content and Impact to Brand Reputation

To answer **Research Question 3**: “What is the effect of social media content on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?” (Kwon & Sung, 2019; Liu, Huang, Zhang & Zhang, 2016), we assess the mean rating variables of social media content and brand reputation by testing for a correlation.

We use hypothesis testing to ensure whether the correlation exists or not.

Null hypothesis

- H_0^2 – There is no significant relationship between social media content and brand reputation.

Alternative Hypothesis

- H_1^2 – There is a significant relationship between social media content and brand reputation.

We analyze the data collected using Pearson’s Coefficient Correlation.

Table 4.33: Social Media Content and Impact on Brand Reputation

Correlations		LA SM Content is Authentic and Relevant.	
LA SM Content is Authentic and Relevant.	Pearson Correlation	1	.427**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.045
	N	145	145
LA Has a Positive brand reputation.	Pearson Correlation	.427**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	
	N	145	145

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.045 level (2-tailed).

We reject H_0^1 since the p-value sig 2-tailed is less than 0.05 and conclude that there is a positive significant relationship between social media content authenticity or relevance and the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in the Midlands Province.

The graph below proves that.

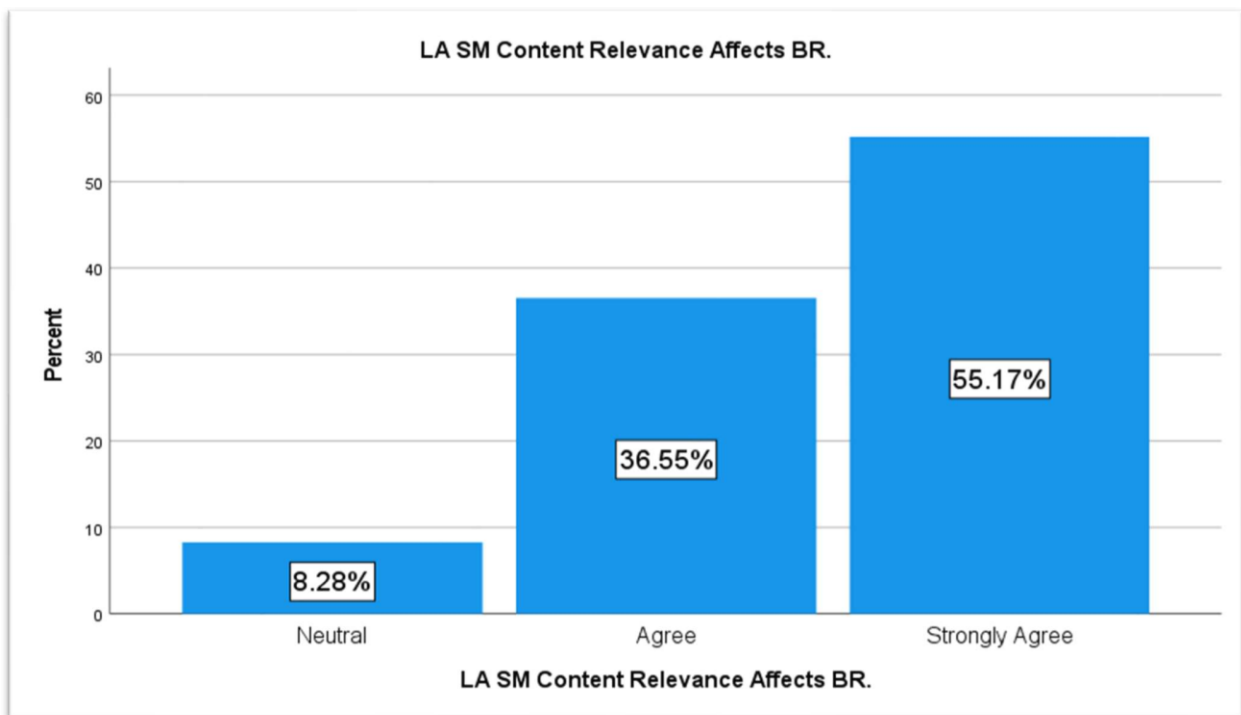


Figure 4.41: Social Media Content Affects Brand Reputation

From the graph above, 55.17% and 36,55% of the population sample agree that social media content relevance positively affects the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities. Only 8.28% are neutral about the perception. Concluding that social media platforms have a positive effect on brand reputation, social media platform selection affects the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities.

This is supported by Liu, Huang, Zhang, and Zhang (2016) who conducted research demonstrating that user-generated content, particularly positive reviews and recommendations, played a crucial role in enhancing brand reputation on social media platforms. Moreover, a study by Kwon and Sung (2019) found that positive social media content significantly influenced brand reputation, while negative content had a detrimental effect.

4.6.4 : Secondary Data Findings on Content

We also discovered on documentary review that some Local Authorities still prefer hard copies and then scan them to social media platforms like Facebook as imagery content as shown below;



Figure 4.42: Gokwe Imagery Content (Facebook, 2023)

The image above shows that Gokwe is still using imagery content on social media.

Other Local Authority prefer audio content via social media to engage their audience as shown below;

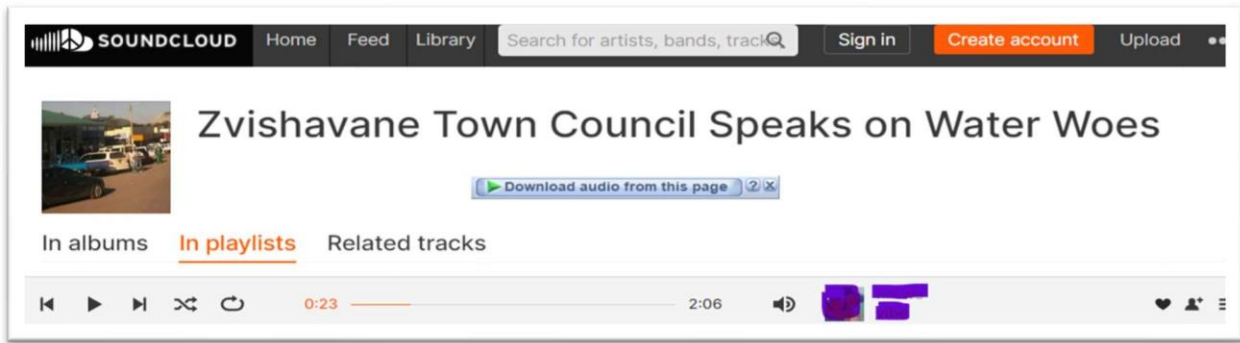


Figure 4.43: Zvishavane Audio Content (Soundcloud, 2023)

Others make full use of the web to do online business as shown below;

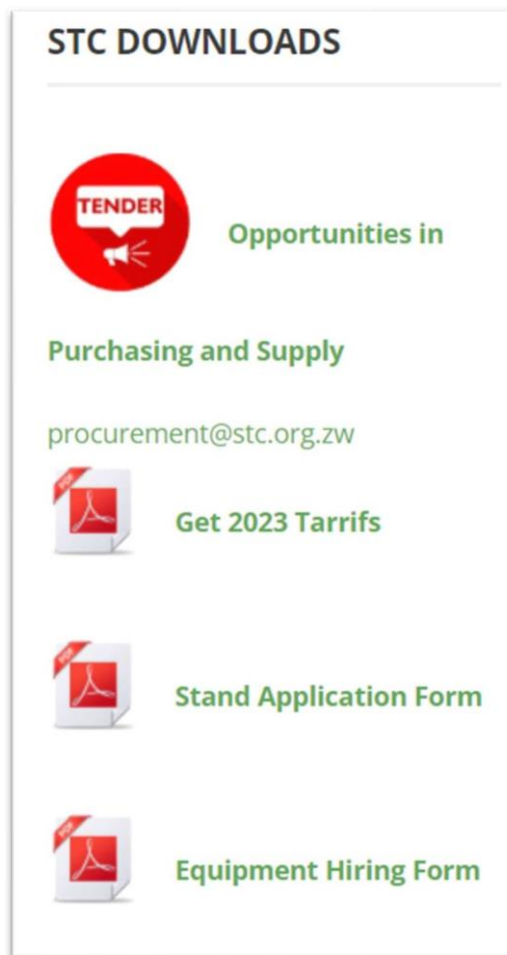


Figure 4.44: Shurugwi Website Download Page (ShurugwiCouncil, 2023)

It is therefore behind this analysis that the documentary review supports that social media content has an impact on brand reputation to a greater extent.

4.7: Theme 4: Social Media Strategies and Brand Reputation

Research Question 4: “What strategies can be employed to embrace social media for a good brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?”, as drawn from research by Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014). To answer this theme question, sub-questions were drawn from it and were asked as semi-structured interview questions to collect qualitative data presented as SM usage challenges, SM legal frameworks, and strengthening recommendations as follows;

4.7.1 : Social Media Usage Challenges

Research Question 4(a): “Are there any challenges relating to the use of social media in Midlands Local Authorities?”, as drawn from research by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010). A summary of key responses from the interviews is as follows one respondent from Gokwe mentioned the challenge of limited internet access;

*“Access to reliable and affordable internet connectivity can be a challenge in some areas of Gokwe” ...said
Gokwe Resident*

Another respondent from Zvishavane a Council Employee stated a challenge of the digital divide:

*“There is a significant digital divide in Zvishavane, with some areas having better access to technology and internet compared to other areas. This disparity can affect the equitable reach and engagement of social media initiatives by local authorities, as well as limit the participation of residents from marginalized communities”
...said Zvishavane Council Employee*

A Shurugwi Ministry official mentioned the challenge of limited digital skills;

“Some local authorities’ staff and residents may lack the necessary digital skills and expertise to effectively leverage social media platforms. This can result in inconsistent or ineffective use of social media, leading to missed opportunities for engagement and reputation building. Especially on the Councilors and the aged residents.” ...said Shurugwi Ministry Official

A Kwekwe Councilor mentioned the challenge of language and cultural barriers;

*“Most Midlands towns are multiracial societies with multiple languages and cultures. Local authorities need to consider language preferences and cultural sensitivities when communicating through social media. Failure to address these barriers can result in miscommunication or exclusion of certain segments of the population.”
...said Kwekwe Councilor*

One Redcliff Patron mentioned a challenge of negative online behavior and cybercrimes;

“Social media platforms can be prone to negative behavior such as cyberbullying, harassment, or spreading misinformation. Local authorities may face challenges in managing and responding to such behavior, which can potentially damage their brand reputation and cause public perception issues.” ...said Redcliff Patron/Passerby

One Gweru Council Employee mentioned an issue of regulatory and legal considerations;

“Local authorities must comply with relevant regulations and legal frameworks governing social media usage, data protection, and privacy. Navigating these regulations and ensuring compliance can be challenging, particularly in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.” ...said Gweru Council Employee

To answer the research question from the interviews held, yes challenges relating to the use of social media in Midlands Local Authorities do exist as shown from the interview results above. The challenges include

- Limited internet access,
- Digital divide,
- Limited digital skills,
- Language and cultural barriers,
- Cyber-crimes and negative online behavior,
- Limited legislation and audit trail.

The reported challenges coincide with what has been reported by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) that social media platforms can amplify both positive and negative feedback about local organizations. Local authorities need to be aware of these challenges and develop strategies to overcome them. Collaborations with relevant stakeholders, investments in infrastructure and training, and continuous adaptation to emerging trends can help mitigate these challenges and leverage social media for effective brand reputation management. Managing online reputation requires active monitoring, timely responses, and effective crisis management. Without proper strategies and resources in place, Local Authorities may struggle to maintain a positive brand image and address reputational challenges effectively.

4.7.2 : Social Media Legal Frameworks

Research Question 4(b): “What are the legal frameworks governing social media in Zimbabwe?”, as drawn from research by Mugari, Ishmael (2020). Here are some key responses we obtained from the interviews of legal frameworks that apply to social media in Zimbabwe where a Kwekwe Patron mentioned the Constitution of Zimbabwe;

*“The Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of expression, including the right to receive and impart information. However, this right is subject to limitations such as public order, national security, and the protection of other people’s rights and reputation.” ...said **Kwekwe Patron***

A Shurugwi Council employee mentioned about the Postal and Telecommunications Act (Chapter 12:05);

*“The PTC Act regulates internet service providers (ISPs) and the use of electronic communications. It provides provisions for the interception of communications, lawful access to data, and the prevention of offensive, abusive, or harmful messages.” ...said **Shurugwi Council Employee***

A Zvishavane Resident mentioned about the Broadcasting Services Act (Chapter 12:06);

*“The ZBC Act governs broadcasting services, including radio and television. It sets out licensing requirements, content regulations, and standards for broadcasting organizations operating in Zimbabwe.” ...said **Zvishavane Resident***

A Gweru Councilor mentioned about the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) (Chapter 10:27);

*“AIPPA is a broader legislation that covers various aspects of media and information. It includes provisions related to the registration and accreditation of media organizations, access to information, and the protection of personal privacy.” ...said **Gweru Councilor***

A Gokwe Ministry Official mentioned about the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (Chapter 9:23);

"This Criminal law act addresses various criminal offenses, including those committed through electronic means. It covers aspects such as cyberbullying, harassment, defamation, and the dissemination of offensive or harmful content." ...said Gokwe Ministry Official

A Redcliff resident mentioned about the Cybercrime and Cybersecurity Act (Chapter 9:26);

"The Cybersecurity act specifically focuses on cyber-related offenses and cybersecurity measures. It criminalizes various activities such as unauthorized access to computer systems, identity theft, hacking, and the distribution of harmful or false information." ...said Redcliff Resident

To answer the research question of listing the legal frameworks governing social media in Zimbabwe from the interviews held, the statutes include

- Constitution of Zimbabwe,
- Postal and Telecommunications Act (Chapter 12:05),
- Broadcasting Services Act (Chapter 12:06),
- Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) (Chapter 10:27),
- Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (Chapter 9:23),
- Cybercrime and Cybersecurity Act (Chapter 9:26);

It's important to note that the legal landscape surrounding social media and online activities can evolve, and new legislation or amendments may be introduced (Mugari, 2020). Local Authorities and Residents are advised to consult legal professionals or refer to official sources to obtain the most up-to-date information regarding the legal frameworks governing social media in Zimbabwe.

4.7.3 : Social Media Strengthening Recommendations

Research Question 4(c): "What recommendation can be obtained on strengthening social media in Local Authorities?", as drawn from research by Ndawana (2023). Here are some key responses we obtained from the interviews of recommendations that can strengthen social media in Zimbabwe a Shurugwi Councilor mentioned the Institutionalization and Development of a Comprehensive social media Strategy;

"Create a well-defined social media strategy that aligns with the local authority's goals and objectives. It should outline target audiences, content themes, key messaging, and engagement tactics. This will provide effective and consistent social media management." ...said Shurugwi Councilor

Another Gweru Councilor mentioned about investing in digital skills training;

"Provide training and capacity-building programs to local authority staff members involved in managing social media accounts. This includes training on social media best practices, content creation, community management, crisis communication, and data analysis. Building digital skills will enhance the effectiveness of social media efforts." ...said Gweru Councilor

A Zvishavane Ministry Official mentioned about establishing guidelines and policies;

*"Develop clear guidelines and policies for social media usage within local authorities. These guidelines should cover areas such as content creation, response protocols, tone of communication, and crisis management. Establishing guidelines ensures consistency, professionalism, and responsible use of social media platforms." ...said **Zvishavane Ministry Official***

A Gokwe resident mentioned about collaborating with stakeholders for SM usage;

*"Foster partnerships with community influencers, local organizations, and residents to amplify the local authority's social media reach and engagement. Collaborative efforts can include co-creating content, organizing online campaigns, or hosting virtual events. Engaging stakeholders will enhance the local authority's credibility and community participation." ...said **Gokwe Resident***

A Kwekwe Council employee mentioned about monitoring and analyzing social media platform performance;

*"Utilize social media analytics tools to monitor key performance metrics such as engagement, reach, sentiment analysis, and follower growth. Regularly analyze this data to gain insights into the effectiveness of social media initiatives and make data-driven decisions to optimize strategies." ...said **Kwekwe Council Employee***

A Redcliff Councilor spoke about Encouraging Citizen Participation;

*"Actively encourage citizen participation through social media platforms. Conduct polls, surveys, and online forums to gather residents' opinions, suggestions, and feedback. Engage with users by responding to comments and messages promptly. By involving citizens, local authorities can foster a sense of ownership and promote transparency." ...said **Redcliff Councilor***

On the other hand, a Gokwe resident spoke about creating compelling and engaging content;

*"Develop high-quality, relevant, and visually appealing content to capture the attention of social media users. Share success stories, project updates, community events, and informative content that resonates with the local population. Utilize multimedia formats such as images, videos, and infographics to enhance engagement." ...said **Gokwe Resident***

A Gweru patron talked about Allocating Adequate Resources;

*"Allocate sufficient resources such as budget, staff, and technology infrastructure to support social media initiatives. This includes investing in social media management tools, monitoring software, and hiring dedicated personnel to manage and optimize social media activities." ...said **Gweru Patron/ Passerby***

To answer the research question of obtaining recommendations on strengthening social media in Local Authorities from the interviews, the recommendations include;

- Institutionalization and development of a comprehensive social media strategy,
- Investing in digital skills training,
- Establishing guidelines and policies,
- Collaborating with stakeholders for SM usage,
- Monitoring and analyzing social media platform performance,
- Encouraging citizen participation;
- Creating compelling and engaging content,
- Allocating adequate resources.

By implementing these recommendations, Zimbabwe Local Authorities can strengthen their social media presence, engage with the community effectively, and build a positive brand reputation as earlier reported by Ndawana (2023).

4.7.4 : Social Media Strategies for a Good Brand Reputation

To answer the research question “*What strategies can be employed to embrace social media for a good brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?*”, the interviews sought to get corporate strides or broader picture plans to embrace social media for a good brand reputation (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014).

*"Establish official social media accounts for each local authority and maintain an active presence on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.
Regularly post updates, news, and announcements related to the local authority's activities, projects, and community initiatives.
Engage with followers by responding to comments, messages, and inquiries promptly and courteously." ...said
Gweru Council Employee*

Another Kwekwe ministry official talked about platforms and transparent communication;

*" Use social media platforms as a means to foster transparency and open communication with the public. Share information about policies, regulations, and decision-making processes.
Address concerns and complaints raised by residents through social media channels and provide timely and helpful responses.
Share progress reports and updates on ongoing projects to keep the public informed about the local authority's initiatives." ...said Kwekwe Ministry Official*

A Shurugwi Councilor spoke about being mindful of social media content and training saying;

*" Actively engage with the local community through social media by sharing relevant content, including local events, cultural activities, and community development projects.
Highlight the achievements and success stories of the local authority through social media channels. Share images, videos, and testimonials that showcase positive impact and progress in areas such as infrastructure development, environmental initiatives, and social welfare projects.
Establish clear guidelines and policies for social media usage, content creation, response protocols, and crisis management to ensure consistent messaging and professionalism.
Provide social media training to employees and staff members involved in managing the local authority's social media accounts." ...said Shurugwi Councilor*

The strategies obtained from the research are summarized as;

- Active social media presence and usage,
- Platforms and transparent communication
- Being mindful of the social media content and training

These strategies cover all aspects of community engagement, showcasing achievements, crisis management, and rapid response, social media monitoring and analysis of performance, collaborating with influencers and local media as well as training and issuing guidelines (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). Implementing these strategies requires a long-term commitment, active monitoring, and ongoing engagement with the community. It's also important to note that the strategies align with the social media

elements (platforms, usage, and content) of this research and hence can be employed to embrace social media for a good brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.

4.8 Quantitative and Qualitative Triangulation

4.8.1: Paradigm Similarities

a. Usage Challenges and Social Media Impact on Brand Reputation

Qualitative research shows that challenges like limited internet access, digital divide, limited digital skills, language and cultural barriers, cyber-crimes and negative online behavior, and limited legislation and audit trail can increase the negative impact of social media on brand reputation. A certain group of people who are able to handle these challenges can positively use social media for a good brand reputation. This is also supported by the quantitative research results that there is a significant relationship between social media platforms usage and education level as well as grouping or stratum. This can be caused by the challenges noticed during the qualitative research. This is also in line with the results of secondary data from documentary review.

b. SM Legal Frameworks and Social Media Impact on Brand Reputation

Qualitative research shows that statutes like Constitution of Zimbabwe, Postal and Telecommunications Act (Chapter 12:05), Broadcasting Services Act (Chapter 12:06), Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) (Chapter 10:27), Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (Chapter 9:23), and Cybercrime and Cybersecurity Act (Chapter 9:26) help mitigate the noted challenges on social media usage. The quantitative research supports this by showing that there is a significant relationship between social media usage frequency, content types (relevance and authenticity) and stratum/grouping. A certain type of social media content and frequency is always unique to a certain group between Council Employees, Councilors, Ministry Officials, Residents, and Patrons. This depends on their understanding of the above legal instruments.

4.8.2: Paradigm Differences

There are minor differences in the two research approach results. The quantitative research gives the impact of social media on brand reputation while the qualitative research looks into possible causes of the impact and possible mitigation to ensure a positive impact or a positive brand reputation. This is how the two researches complement each other. The quantitative research through positivism gave the descriptive state of the impact of social media to brand reputation while the qualitative research through interpretivism gave explanations and explored possible strategies and recommendations to strengthen brand reputation through social media. We could not rush to give recommendations without a full picture of what is transpiring. Hence the paradigm allowed the researcher to explore both objective patterns and subjective interpretations to the impact of social media on brand reputation.

4.9 Chapter Summary.

This chapter presented findings obtained from respondents of questionnaires and interviews as well as the documentary review. Biodata was captured and all information on the main questions relating to the study was captured and analyzed for recommendations. The chapter also discussed data findings as per thematic areas from research questions employed in this research study. This was also aligned with the literature reviewed to reveal the impact of social media on the brand reputation of the Midlands Urban Local Authorities in Zimbabwe.

5.0: CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1: Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter presented a discussion of research results and findings in addressing each research question and objectives of the research study as per the thematic areas. This triggered the genesis of this chapter which gives conclusions, implications, and recommendations per each research question discussed from the findings to fully understand the impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. The writer shall present the research setting summary, research results, recommendations, and conclusion.

5.2: Research Setting Summary

The research aims to investigate the impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe. It follows a Mixed Research Paradigm, with both quantitative and qualitative aspects. The research philosophy is pragmatic, employing both positivism and interpretivism. The research logic is abduction, using induction and deduction to explore theories and observations. The research strategy includes case studies, surveys, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and documentary reviews. The population is restricted to all residents in Midlands Urban Local Authorities, with stratified sampling for qualitative data and convenient sampling for quantitative data. Ethical considerations are observed during the process. The results are presented in thematic areas, and the response rate for questionnaires and semi-structured interviews is high at 100% of the sample size.

5.3: Demographics Results Summary

The location demographic results were as per the population sample ratios. We had more samples from Gweru and Kwekwe than from Gokwe and Shurugwi due to their population sizes. There were 51.7% males and 48.28% females in the population sample. But generally, the figures are close to each other. So, gender was fairly represented in the research. The highest population sample was of the 35 to 44 years age range. There were fewer than 24 years and below as well as 55 years and above. From convenient sampling of the selected strata, it means that generally (35-44) age range has more people in the Midlands Province than other age ranges. The majority of the respondents have a degree or at least hold a diploma or certificate. A smaller number holds Master and A level and below while the smallest was from PHD. Lastly, the sample had an equal number of people within in strata of a given Local authority.

5.4: Theme 1: Social Media Platform and Brand Reputation

Research Question 1: “*What is the significance of social media platforms on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?*” (Jahn & Kunz, 2022; Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015).

Research Objective 1: To assess the significance of social media platforms on brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.

The data gathered to answer this theme question was quantitative and the results were presented in three parts social media platforms against demographics, usage, and brand reputation as follows;

5.4.1 : Social Media Platforms and Demographics

A relationship test for social media platforms and demographics like Location, gender, age, education level, and stratum or grouping was done. The research conclusion is that there is no significant relationship between social media platforms and location, gender, and age in the Midlands Urban Local Authorities. However, there is a significant relationship between social media platforms and education level as well as grouping or stratum.

The more educated the group is the more they use professional networks like LinkedIn. Also, a certain type of social media platform is always unique to a certain group between Council Employees, Councilors, Ministry Officials, Residents, and Patrons. This is associated with user-friendliness, subscription numbers, and general costs associated. However, generally, the most commonly used social media platforms are WhatsApp and Facebook across all demographics. This coincides with literature review outcomes for example, according to the research by Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, and Pihlström (2022) it was concluded that there is a huge impact in selecting the most appropriate social media platforms based on their characteristics and user demographics to enhance a positive brand reputation.

5.4.2 : Social Media Platforms and Usage

This section explored the crosstabs and the relationship tests for social media platforms and usage.

A conclusion was made that messaging applications like WhatsApp have a high usage frequency followed by social network sites like Facebook. This implied that there is a positive strong relationship between social media usage and platform types. Message applications have a high usage frequency on social media. The research findings tally with a study by Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman (2015) who concluded that certain social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, had a stronger impact on brand reputation due to their widespread user base and content-sharing capabilities.

5.4.3 : Social Media Platforms and Impact on Brand Reputation

To summarily answer **Research Question 1**: “*What is the significance of social media platforms on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?*” (Jahn & Kunz, 2022; Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015), we assessed the mean rating variables of social media platforms and brand reputation by testing for a correlation.

A conclusion was made that there is a positive significant relationship between social media platform types and the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in the Midlands Province. This coincides with previous research done by Jahn and Kunz (2022) who explored the impact of social media platform selection on brand reputation and found that the choice of platform should align with the target audience and brand objectives. Moreover, Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2021) highlighted the distinct features of different social media platforms and their impact on brand reputation. The authors emphasized the need for brands to align their communication strategies with platform-specific characteristics.

The documentary review also supported that social media platforms have an impact on brand reputation.

5.5: Theme 2: Social Media Usage and Brand Reputation

Research Question 2: “*What is the impact of social media usage on brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?*” (Liang & Wei, 2017; Zhang & Daugherty, 2021).

Research Objective 2: To establish the impact of social media usage on brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.

The data gathered to answer this theme question was quantitative and the results were presented in three parts social media usage against demographics, content, and brand reputation as follows;

5.5.1 : Social Media Usage and Demographics

A relationship test for social media usage and demographics like Location, gender, age, education level, and stratum or grouping was done.

A research conclusion was made that there is no significant relationship between social media usage and location, gender, age, and education level in the Midlands Urban Local Authorities. However, there is a significant relationship between social media usage frequency and stratum/grouping. A certain type of social media frequency is always unique to a certain group between Council Employees, Councilors, Ministry Officials, Residents, and Patrons. However, there is generally high social media usage across all demographics. This is supported by Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, and Pihlström (2022) who

concluded that there is a huge impact in selecting the most appropriate social media platforms based on their characteristics and user demographics to enhance a positive brand reputation.

5.5.2 : Social Media Usage and Content

Social media usage and content data analysis started with crosstabs and then a test for the correlation. A research conclusion was made that Imagery and Video content result in high social media usage proving that there is a positive relationship between social media usage and content types. This supports the results of research conducted by Luo, Xu, and Lu (2019) which revealed that engaging in informative content types on social media positively affected brand reputation, leading to increased consumer trust and loyalty.

5.5.3 : Social Media Usage and Impact to Brand Reputation

To summarily answer **Research Question 2:** *“What is the impact of social media usage on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?”* (Liang & Wei, 2017; Zhang & Daugherty, 2021), we assessed the mean rating variables of social media usage and brand reputation by testing for a correlation.

A conclusion was made that there is a positive significant relationship between social media Usage frequency and the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in the Midlands Province. This is supported by research from Liang and Wei (2017) who highlighted that there is a positive association between social media usage and consumer engagement, which, in turn, enhances brand reputation. Also, Zhang and Daugherty (2021) suggested that social media usage facilitated real-time customer feedback, allowing brands to address concerns promptly and positively impacting brand reputation.

The documentary review also supported that social media usage has an impact on brand reputation to a greater extent.

5.6 : Theme 3: Social Media Content and Brand Reputation

Research Question 3: *“What is the effect of social media content on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?”* (Kwon & Sung, 2019; Liu, Huang, Zhang & Zhang, 2016).

Research Objective 3: To examine the effect of social media content on brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.

The data gathered to answer this theme question was quantitative and the results were presented in three parts social media content against demographics, content, and brand reputation as follows;

5.6.1 : Social Media Content and Demographics

A relationship test for social media content and demographics like Location, gender, age, education level, and stratum or grouping was done.

The research conclusion was that there is no significant relationship between social media content and location, gender, age, and education level in the Midlands Urban Local Authorities. However, there is a significant relationship between social media content type and stratum/grouping. A certain type of social media content is always unique to a certain group between Council Employees, Councilors, Ministry Officials, Residents, and Patrons. However, there is generally Imagery and video content that is highly common across all demographics.

5.6.2 : Social Media Content and Platforms

Social media content and platforms data analysis started with crosstabs for the two and then a test for the correlation.

A research conclusion was made that imagery content and WhatsApp are the most used social media elements which implies that there is a positive relationship between social media usage and content types. Message applications and imagery content are the most used social media. This coincides with the research by Luo, Xu, and Lu (2019) which revealed that engaging in informative content types on social media positively affected brand reputation, leading to increased consumer trust and loyalty. Moreover, a conclusion of the research by Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) is also seen in this research as 77.24% and 14.48% of the population sample agree that Local Authority social media content is authentic and relevant. Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) emphasized the importance of authentic and relevant content in maintaining a favorable brand reputation on social media platforms.

5.6.3 : Social Media Content and Impact to Brand Reputation

To summarily answer **Research Question 3**: “*What is the effect of social media content on the brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?*” (Kwon & Sung, 2019; Liu, Huang, Zhang & Zhang, 2016), we assessed the mean rating variables of social media content and brand reputation by testing for a correlation.

A research conclusion is made that there is a positive significant relationship between social media content authenticity or relevance and the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in the Midlands Province. This implies that social media platforms have a positive effect on brand reputation, hence social media platform selection affects the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities. Liu, Huang, Zhang, and Zhang (2016) conducted research demonstrating that user-generated content, particularly

positive reviews and recommendations, played a crucial role in enhancing brand reputation on social media platforms. Moreover, a study by Kwon and Sung (2019) found that positive social media content significantly influenced brand reputation, while negative content had a detrimental effect.

The documentary review supports that social media content has an impact on brand reputation to a greater extent.

5.7: Theme 4: Social Media Strategies and Brand Reputation

Research Question 4: *“What strategies can be employed to embrace social media for a good brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?”*, as drawn from research by Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014).

Research Objective 4: **To determine strategies that can be employed to embrace social media for a good brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.**

To answer this theme question, sub-questions were drawn from it and were asked as semi-structured interview questions to collect qualitative data presented as SM usage challenges, SM legal frameworks, and Strengthening recommendations as follows;

5.7.1 : Social Media Usage Challenges

Research Question 4(a): *“Are there any challenges relating to the use of social media in Midlands Local Authorities?”*, as drawn from research by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010).

Research Objective 4a: **To identify the challenges relating to the use of social media in Midlands Local Authorities.**

A summary of key responses proved that ‘yes’ challenges relating to the use of social media in Midlands Local Authorities do exist and the challenges include

- Limited internet access,
- Digital divide,
- Limited digital skills,
- Language and cultural barriers,
- Cyber-crimes and negative online behavior,
- Limited legislation and audit trail.

The reported challenges coincide with what has been reported by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) that social media platforms can amplify both positive and negative feedback about local organizations. Local authorities need to be aware of these challenges and develop strategies to overcome them. Collaborations

with relevant stakeholders, investments in infrastructure and training, and continuous adaptation to emerging trends can help mitigate these challenges and leverage social media for effective brand reputation management.

5.7.2 : Social Media Legal Frameworks

Research Question 4(b): “What are the legal frameworks governing social media in Zimbabwe?”, as drawn from research by Mugari, Ishmael (2020).

Research Objective 4b: To identify the legal frameworks governing social media in Zimbabwe.

The key responses we obtained from the interviews are

- Constitution of Zimbabwe,
- Postal and Telecommunications Act (Chapter 12:05),
- Broadcasting Services Act (Chapter 12:06),
- Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) (Chapter 10:27),
- Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (Chapter 9:23),
- Cybercrime and Cybersecurity Act (Chapter 9:26);

It's important to note that the legal landscape surrounding social media and online activities can evolve, and new legislation or amendments may be introduced (Mugari, 2020). Local Authorities and Residents are advised to consult legal professionals or refer to official sources to obtain the most up-to-date information regarding the legal frameworks governing social media in Zimbabwe.

5.7.3 : Social Media Strengthening Recommendations

Research Question 4(c): “What recommendation can be obtained on strengthening social media in Local Authorities?”, as drawn from research by Ndawana (2023).

Research Objective 4c: To draft recommendations that can be made on strengthening social media.

Key responses we obtained from the interviews are;

- Institutionalization and development of a comprehensive social media strategy,
- Investing in digital skills training,
- Establishing guidelines and policies,
- Collaborating with stakeholders for social media usage,
- Monitoring and analyzing social media platform performance,
- Encouraging citizen participation;

- Creating compelling and engaging content,
- Allocating adequate resources.

By implementing these recommendations, Zimbabwe Local Authorities can strengthen their social media presence, engage with the community effectively, and build a positive brand reputation as earlier reported by Ndawana (2023).

5.7.4 : Social Media Strategies for a Good Brand Reputation

To answer **Research Question 4** “*What strategies can be employed to embrace social media for a good brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?*”, the interviews sought to get corporate strides or broader picture plans to embrace social media for a good brand reputation (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). The responses we got include;

- Active social media presence and usage,
- Platforms and transparent communication
- Being mindful of the social media content and training

These strategies cover all aspects of community engagement, showcasing achievements, crisis management and rapid response, social media monitoring and analysis of performance, collaborating with influencers and local media as well as training and issuing guidelines (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). Implementing these strategies requires a long-term commitment, active monitoring, and ongoing engagement with the community. It's also important to note that the strategies align with the social media elements (platforms, usage, and content) of this research and hence can be employed to embrace social media for a good brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities.

5.8 Research Recommendations

The recommendations will be given below for the Local Authorities (the Government), the Residents, and academic future research.

5.8.1 : Recommendations to Local Authorities

To ensure a good brand reputation, Local Authorities must consider the following;

- To be active across all social media platform types to cater to diverse demographic variables e.g., age and educational qualifications.
- Social media usage and participation e.g., real-time customer feedback must be very high so that the audience should not feel ignored.
- Local Authorities must be mindful of the content in terms of its type, authenticity, and relevancy.
- Comply with legislation governing social media to mitigate the challenges of social media.

- Employ strategies like active social media presence and usage, platforms and transparent communication, and being mindful of the social media content and training.

5.8.2 : Recommendations to the Residents

To ensure a good brand reputation, Residents must consider the following;

- To actively and constructively use social media.
- To comply with legislation when using social media.
- Respect and observe order on social media platforms used by Local Authorities.

5.8.3 : Recommendations for Future Research

Future research in this field needs to;

- Try longitudinal time horizons
- Measure the productivity factor of social media and brand reputation
- Try other population sampling techniques and compare results.

5.9 Chapter Summary.

This chapter discussed a variety of aspects of research questions concerning the conclusion and recommendations of each research objective as a way of revealing and finding solutions to the data collected in the research. The researcher would like to echo the sentiments that active social media presence and usage, platforms, transparent communication, and being mindful of social media content and training can help Local Authorities improve their brand reputation by making use of the inevitable social media. This is because change is unavoidable, Globalisation is coming with new norms such as social media which has the potential to bless the brand's reputation or damage it. It is therefore behind the findings of this research that leveraging positively on social media can result in a positive brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities which will make them productive, achieve a competitive advantage, realize their strategic goals, and increase their bottom line.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Request for Permission to Carry Out Study

**GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY
MUNHUMUTAPA SCHOOL OF COMMERCE
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
P Bag 1235
MASVINGO**

15 September 2023

**Midlands Urban Local Authorities
Midlands Province, Zimbabwe
ATTENTION: Town Clerk/Secretary**

Dear Sir /Madam

REF: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH STUDY

I am Micah Musarandega, a Master of Commerce Student in Strategic Management at Great Zimbabwe University. I am currently conducting a study entitled:

“THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE BRAND REPUTATION OF URBAN LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN MIDLANDS PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE”

My research targets the Council Employees, Councillors, Residents, Ministry Officials and Patrons within your area of jurisdiction. The research makes use of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and documentary review. Data collected shall be used solely for academic purposes and ethical considerations shall be observed. I am seeking for your permission to carry out my research within your locality.

Your approval will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully



**Micah Musarandega
M196817
0771038440
musaramu@gmail.com**

Appendix 2: QUESTIONNAIRE

Social media and brand reputation in Midlands Urban Local Authorities

My name is Musarandega Micah a Master of Commerce Degree Student in Strategic Management at Great Zimbabwe University. I am conducting a dissertation entitled;

“The impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe.”

The questionnaire consists of multiple-choice questions and a Likert scale to measure participants' perceptions of brand reputation and social media. I am kindly asking for your participation and assistance in this research. May I promise that;

- all information discussed in this questionnaire shall be treated with confidentiality,
- this information shall be used solely for academic purposes only,
- you shall not be advised to write your names, I shall identify you as respondent A, B, C, and so on,
- you have the right to freely participate or to freely withdraw whenever you feel uncomfortable.

SECTION A: Demographics

Please write the number inside the Response box of where your answer is e.g., if ‘Shurugwi’ put 2 in the box. This mixes Nominal and Ordinal data.

#	Question	Possible Answers						Response
1	Your Location	1. Zvishavane	2. Shurugwi	3. Gweru	4. Kwekwe	5. Redcliff	6. Gokwe	
2	What is your Gender	1. Male		2. Female		3. Other		
3	What is your Age	1. (18-24)	2. (25-34)	3. (35-44)	4. (45-54)	5. (55 ++)		
4	Your Education Level	1. A' Level or Below	2. Cert/ Diploma	3. Degree	4. Masters	5. Ph.D. or above		
5	Your Grouping	1. Council Employee	2. Resident	3. Councilor	4. Ministry Official	5. Patron/ Passerby		

SECTION B: social media Platform

Please write the number inside the response box of where your answer is. Please note that the numbering of answers has no numerical value. This is just nominal data.

6	Which type of social media platforms does your Local Authority actively use the most?					Response
	1. Messaging Apps e.g., WhatsApp, Bulky SMS	2. social Network Sites e.g., Facebook	3. Content Sharing e.g., YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Telegram	4. Microblogging Platform e.g., Twitter, Tumblr	5. Professional Networking e.g., LinkedIn	

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale

7	Social media platform types significantly affect the brand reputation of my Local Authority					Response
	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree	

SECTION C: social media Usage

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale

						Response
	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree	
8	My Local Authority frequently uses social media for public engagement.					
9	Social media usage positively impacts the brand reputation of my Local Authority					

SECTION D: social media Content

Please write the number inside the box where your answer is.

10	Which type of social media content does your Local Authority actively use the most?					Response
	1. Text Content	2. Audio Content	3. Video Content	4. Imagery Content	5. Printed Content	

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale

						Response
	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree	
11	My Local Authority shares authentic and relevant content on social media					
12	Social media content relevance significantly affects the brand reputation of my Local Authority.					

SECTION E: brand reputation

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale

						Response
	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree	
13	My Local Authority has a positive brand reputation.					
14	The brand perception of my Local Authority is shaped using social media.					

SECTION F: Data Collection and Analysis

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale

						Response
	<i>1. Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>2. Disagree</i>	<i>3. Neutral</i>	<i>4. Agree</i>	<i>5. Strongly Agree</i>	
15	The questionnaire items were clear and easy to understand.					
16	The Likert scale provided appropriate response options for expressing my opinions.					
17	I trust that my responses will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only.					

The END.

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire! Your responses will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. If you are submitting it online, please send it to musaramu@gmail.com

Appendix 3: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Social media and brand reputation in Midlands Urban Local Authorities

My name is Musarandega Micah a Master of Commerce Degree Student in Strategic Management at Great Zimbabwe University. I am conducting a dissertation entitled;

“The impact of social media on the brand reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe.”

The interview consists of multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions to measure participants' perceptions of brand reputation and social media. I am kindly asking for your participation and assistance in this research. May I promise that;

- all information discussed in this interview shall be treated with confidentiality,
- this information shall be used solely for academic purposes only,
- you shall not be advised to write your names, I shall identify you as respondent A, B, C, and so on,
- you have the right to freely participate or to freely withdraw whenever you feel uncomfortable.

SECTION A: Interviewee Details

1. Interview Respondent eg A, B, C, etc

#	Question	Possible Answers					Response
2.	Your Location	1. Zvishavane	2. Shurugwi	3. Gweru	4. Kwekwe	5. Gokwe	
3.	Your Grouping	1. Council Employee Head (Town Clerk)	2. Resident Association Head	3. Councilor Head (Mayor)	4. Ministry Official (DA)	5. Patron/Passerby (Random)	

SECTION B: Open-Ended Questions

1. Are there any challenges relating to the use of social media in Midlands Local Authorities?
.....
.....
2. What are the legal frameworks governing social media in Zimbabwe?
.....
.....
3. What recommendations can be obtained on strengthening social media in Local Authorities?
.....
.....
.....

4. What strategies can be employed to embrace social media for a good brand reputation of Midlands Urban Local Authorities?

.....
.....

The END.

Thank you for participating in these interviews! Your responses will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. If you are submitting it online, please send it to musaramu@gmail.com

Appendix 4: Gweru City Confirmation Letter



If calling or phoning this matter.
Please ask for
MR J.N.S ZIMUSI

ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE CHAMBER SECRETARY

CITY of GWERU

CHAMBER SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT

Municipal Offices

P.O. Box 278 Telephone 263-054-224071-9

Fax 263-054-24309-Gweru, Zimbabwe

E-mail: gweruchambersec@comone.co.zw

Your Ref:

Our Ref: JNSZ/nmd/Personnel

16 October 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: RESEARCH CONFIRMATION LETTER

This serves to confirm that Micah Musarandega a Master of Commerce student in Strategic Management (Great Zimbabwe University) has been awarded a permission to conduct research on "*The Impact of Social Media on the Brand Reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe*", to the Gweru Community.

May you provide him with any necessary support.

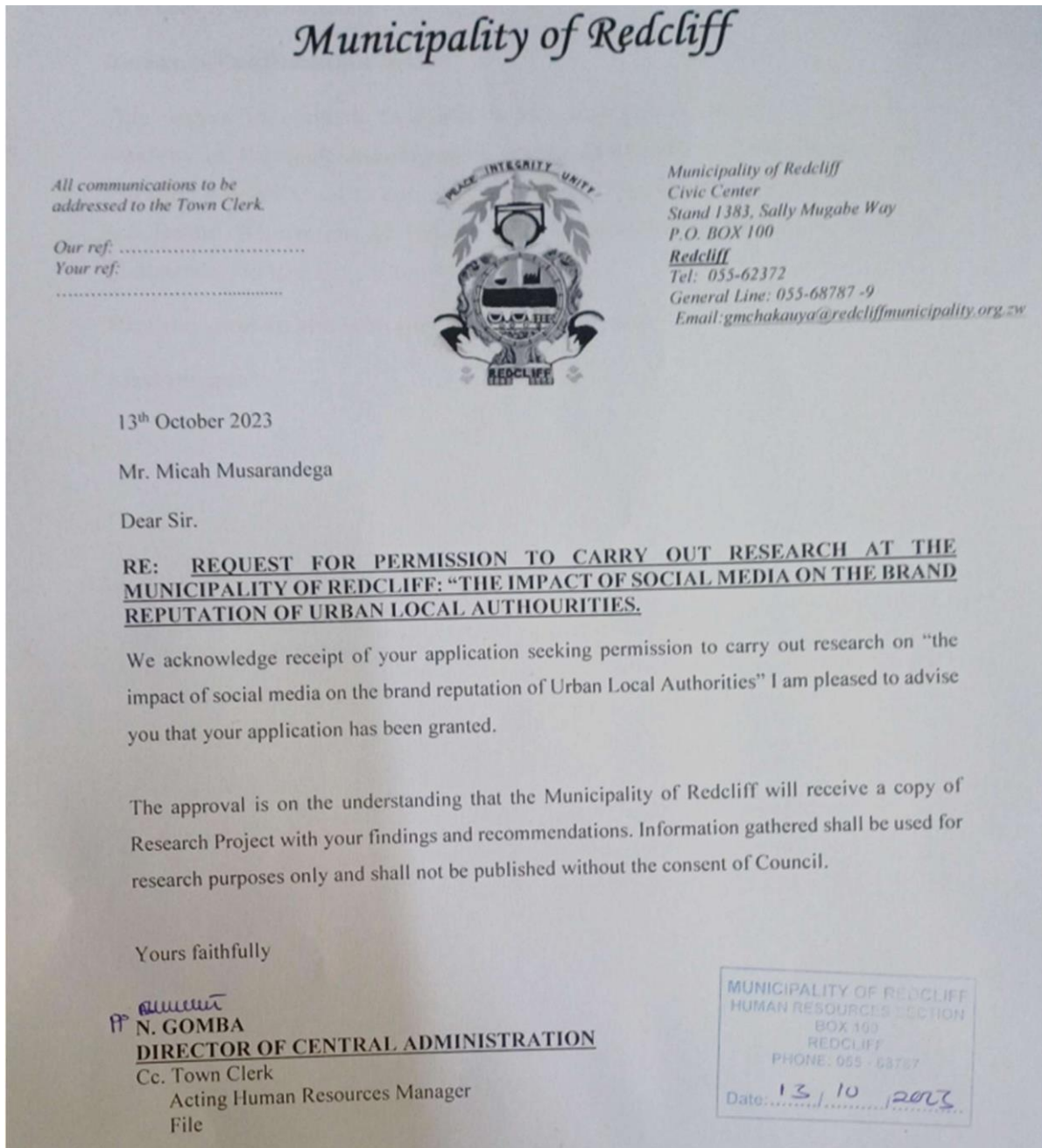
Kind regards.

J.N.S. ZIMUSI
HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER

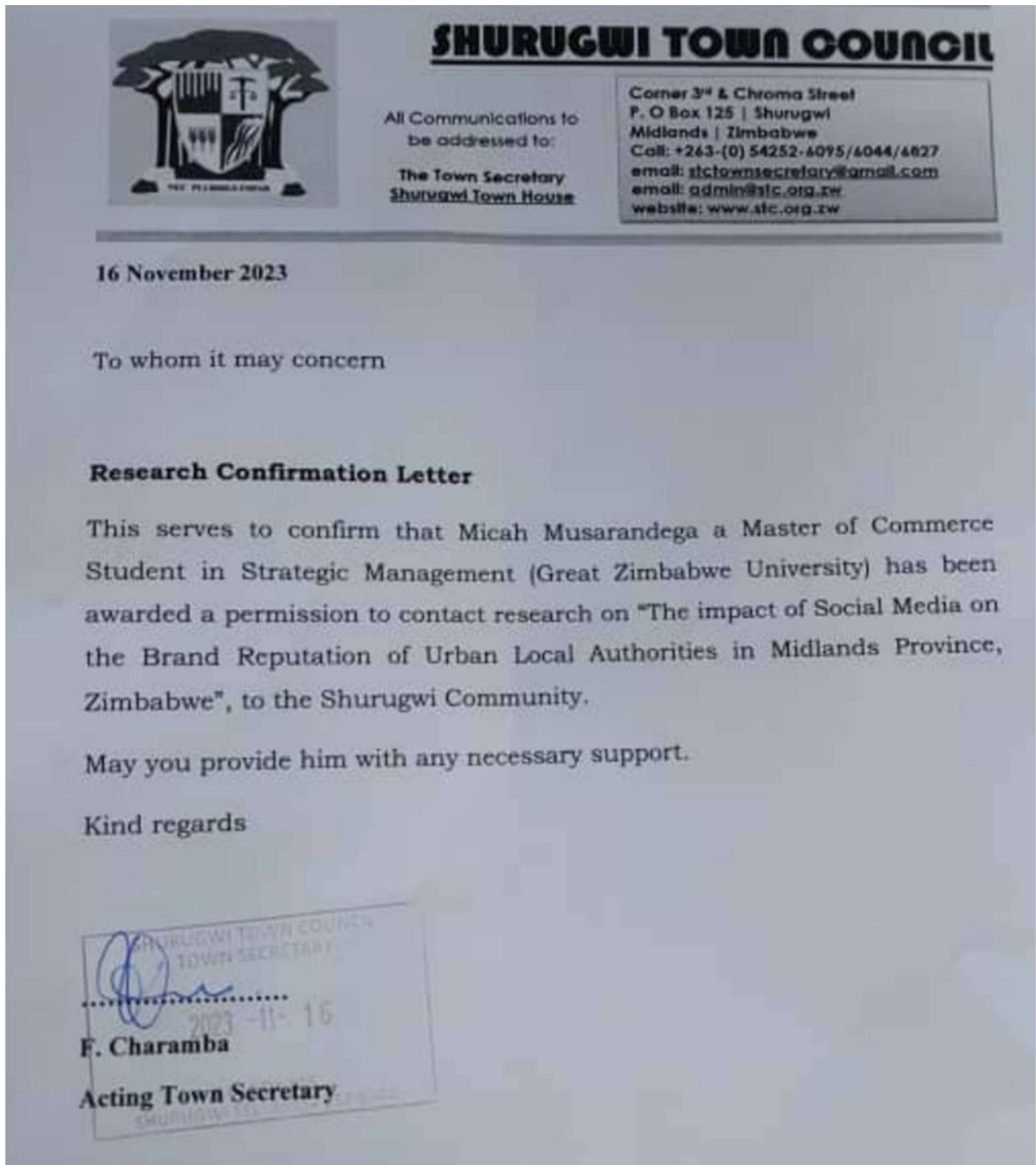
cc : File



Appendix 5: Redcliff Municipality Confirmation Letter



Appendix 6: Shurugwi Town Confirmation Letter



Appendix 7: Zvishavane Town Confirmation Letter



Correspondence should only
be addressed to Harare

16 November 2023

To whom it may concern

Research Confirmation Letter

This serves to confirm that Micah Musarandega a Master of Commerce Student in Strategic Management (Great Zimbabwe University) has been awarded a permission to contact research on "The impact of Social Media on the Brand Reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe", to the Zvishavane Community.

May you provide him with any necessary support.

Kind regards



Appendix 8: Gokwe Town Confirmation Letter



GOKWE TOWN COUNCIL

All communications to be addressed to:
The Town Secretary

Telephone: (059)284011/2/9
P. Bag 6041
GOKWE

Email: gokwetown@gmail.com

17 October 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RESEARCH CONFIRMATION LETTER

The above subject matter pertains.

In my capacity as Gokwe Town Council Acting Town Secretary, I hereby confirm that Micah Musarandega a Master of Commerce Student in Strategic Management (Great Zimbabwe University) has been authorised to conduct research on: "The impact of Social Media on the Brand Reputation of Urban Local Authorities in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe." to the Gokwe Town community.

For further information you may contact the undersigned.

Yours Faithfully

A Nyandoro
ACTING TOWN SECRETARY

PRIVATE BAG 6041
GOKWE

GOKWE TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN SECRETARY
17 OCT 2023
PRIVATE BAG 6041
GOKWE