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DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA AND SOCIETY STUDIES

Deepleague's Use of Social Media as an Advertising Platform for Products and Services

BY

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Abstract

In this era of Internet of Things (IoT), new technology innovations are constantly introduced globally however with less developed countries adopting these innovations and ways of doing things at a later stage. This research focuses on one of these innovations which is the use of social media by businesses as an advertising platform for products and services. Various types of businesses in Zimbabwe are embracing this concept of social media advertising but lacking the knowledge on the how to and also the benefits and drawbacks. The phenomenon that is discussed later is on Deepleague which has over the years grown to be one of the biggest E-commerce platforms in Zimbabwe advertising on behalf of other businesses and organizations. This shed more light on the whole process of advertising and the input that is required. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in investigating the use. The clients of Deepleague, followers, employees and social media users were interviewed. The study revealed that social media advertising requires skills and knowledge to get tangible benefits, amateur businesses in the advertising on social media still need to gain knowledge of how to interact with consumers as profits are still a challenge. Consumers are the main focus of online advertising as they wield power to determine the success of a business through electronic word of mouth and also interaction with the business. Once a business has achieved and understood the power of online consumers, the benefits are limitless like what Deepleague is enjoying now. The benefits include wide consumer base, low income expenditure since they are online operations, involuntary advertising of business by electronic word of mouth from satisfied consumers to the other among several others. Drawbacks include less tangible profits for the business and government interference affecting the stability of the business.

Acronyms

CBZ.....Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe

CEO.....Chief Executive Officer

EWM.....Electronic Word of Mouth

ICT.....Information Communication Technology

POTRAZ.....Postal and Telecommunication Regulation Authority in
Zimbabwe

SME.....Small Medium Enterprises

UCG.....User Generated Content

VAS.....Value Added Services

Zimdef.....Zimbabwe Development Fund

ZBC.....Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation

ZOCC.....Zimbaabwe Online Content Creators

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The mass media have been considered the most credible platform for advertising since the birth of advertising itself with newspapers, television and radio being the ideal and go to platforms for an advertisement to have a wider and most definite reach. The advent of social media however has raised a rather debatably cheaper and more convenient platform for businesses to reach out to their customers with the guarantee of a wider and bigger audience.

The rise and pervasive nature of the internet which led to the increase of interest and use by consumers and potential consumers resulted in companies and businesses from different parts of the market considering and embracing online marketing enabling the establishment of possible solid relationships with these consumers through interaction Cheong & Morrison(2008). This research therefore examines closely the use of social media as an advertising platform by businesses, mainly in trying to identify the pros and cons of such a business venture for the business and its success or profitability.

This chapter presents the background and the purpose of the study, as well as research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, the statement of the problem, key assumptions, limitations of the study, delimitations of the study, methods of research and the structure of the study.

1.2 Background to the study

The social media era was started over ten years ago. It began with LinkedIn, which was launched in 2003, followed by MySpace and Facebook in 2004, YouTube in 2005, and Twitter in 2006. In less than a decade, its population has grown rapidly, and it has reached billions of people worldwide.

Facebook has more than 500 million users worldwide; Twitter has approximately 175 million users; LinkedIn has more than 90 million users; and MySpace has 57 million users (Curtis, 2011). Interestingly, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp were initially introduced to provide people with easier ways of staying in touch and communicating with their friends and loved ones despite the distance only to evolve into a massive and major marketing

platform i.e. advertising and marketing platforms especially for both small and big businesses. Social media is currently considered the rapidly growing and significantly rising online platform for advertising and marketing to consumers for a business (Trusov et al, 2009). However, businesses are embracing marketing on social media with little or no knowledge of the benefits and drawbacks of advertising on these platforms. It is also worth noting that online companies that have all their operations and channels running online and businesses are increasingly emerging showing the potential of social media.

Companies started using social media platforms like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, websites and LinkedIn among several others after realizing how efficient and faster it was compared to the mass media and therefore needed to establish effective online presence and participation (Kaplan & Haenlein: 2010; Laroche et.al. (2012)). The author in this research tries to bring out the benefits and drawbacks of advertising on social media as quite a few literatures has been released on this topic while research on social media has been mainly concerned with addressing what social media is and how to attract more customers to a company's website, page or account.

Online businesses like Zimbabwe's Deepleague are gaining momentum on the market as the global village grows bigger and stronger. Deepleague is an E-commerce platform. It's essentially an enabler of trade, albeit online, to the generality of the public. It has an online classifieds website; www.deepleague.co.zw, and several social media accounts on Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp. Deepleague also makes use of advertisements on its social media accounts to attract more advertisers, while also paying one on one visits to possible clients showing them how they could get their business running by advertising for them online among several other methods. The organization has two agents who are mainly paid on commission basis after they lure in advertisers.

On their website, different individuals and companies come to display their various products and services by simply logging in, opening an account and uploading their adverts, so as to tap into the strong traffic that visits the website on a daily basis, currently at a daily average of 4 000 users.

Buyers visit the site in order to browse through the various adverts, so as to buy whatsoever they need. A lot of trade therefore is facilitated by the website. Deepleague also has several Value-

Added Services (VAS). These are services that are an extension of the larger business, as they are derived from the main service but choose a particular niche to focus on for example a product that is called Deepleague Mobi-Homes. This product is mobile based, meaning it essentially is accessed through mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets whereby Deepleague advertises real estates and properties for clients to those consumers who are strictly interested in knowing and buying properties and estates. This product focuses on real estate services, and therefore targets people interested in properties, be they home seekers, buyers and sellers. This enables those that are interested in property to get content that is strictly property, and this has allowed Deepleague to monetize as niching results in payment for services.

There is also another Value Added Services Called DeepleagueMobi-Jobs that is specifically suited for those seeking employment or employees. Deep League was started in the year 2012 and has grown by the years into becoming one of the most reliable and reputable E-commerce platforms in Zimbabwe. Other competitive businesses include Gumtree, Hammer and Tongues and ZimClassified who are also online platforms advertising products and services to the public on behalf of other businesses while also Hammer and Tongues produces and advertises its own services and products.

The study therefore seeks to uncover or unveil the benefits and drawbacks that are brought in by using social media as an advertising platform to reach audiences and potential customers.

Furthermore, it is worth noting the fact that advertisements on print and broadcasting media continue to be published and aired respectively serving as proof that businesses are still making use of the mass media thus social media advertising is not as rosy as it appears to be. The research tries to uncover and closely analyze exactly what the advantages and disadvantages are of using social media as an advertising platform.

A closer analysis of Deepleague will shed more light since Deepleague's main business focus is advertising products and services for both individuals and companies on its social media accounts and website; therefore Deepleague provides the audiences while companies and individuals provide the advertisements which are then advertised by Deepleague on their behalf for a certain amount or commission. Some of Deepleague's clients include Commercial Bank of

Zimbabwe (CBZ), Technology Unzipped (TechUnzipped), Zimbabwe Development Fund (Zimdef) and Kwese Television (KweseTV).

1.3 Problem Statement

This research seeks to closely analyze and uncover the benefits and drawbacks for businesses which advertise their products and services on social media. This is mainly spearheaded by the fact that businesses rush to use and depend on these cheaper platforms of advertising with little or no knowledge of what this type of advertising really produces as a result for the success and progress of their business.

With reference to Zimbabwe, the economic hardships currently faced in the country have forced most people to be highly dependent on social media considering the ridiculously high amounts of advertising fees that they have to pay to the print and broadcasting media where 80% is owned and controlled by the government. Therefore, you find that small businesses rush to establish accounts and websites online not knowing exactly if the whole process is going to be of great benefit to the business or not. On the sidelines, the research also seeks to uncover how to effectively reach out to customers as a novice in the online business operations with pointers from Deepleague which is one of the biggest online E-commerce in Zimbabwe.

1.4 Research Objectives

By the end of the study, the researcher must be able to:

- To accurately reveal the actual benefits and drawbacks for businesses that operate mainly on social media.
- Unveil the different perceptions of online audiences towards online advertisements.
- Shed more light on what online advertising comprises and how companies can increase their consumer base.

1.5 Research Questions

- How is Deepleague attracting audiences and traffic for its website and social media accounts?
- How did Deepleague manage to get these advertisers who then advertise on their platforms?
- What is the attitude of online audiences towards advertisements of products and services online?
- How efficient and useful do the clients find the online advertising services of Deepleague?

1.6 Significance of the study

Studies on social media business operations have mainly focused on how a business can have a wider reach to its website, accounts or pages on social media while others focus on the consumers themselves and how they interpret the advertisements that they see and what they make of the products and services advertised. Scholars such as Haida, et al (2005) conducted a research on the consumer perception of social media advertising value which aimed to uncover what the consumers feel about the online advertisements and how a business can build and strengthen its brand.

While another research by Elisabetta Corvi for her Masters thesis focuses on measuring the advertising effectiveness in persuading, drawing attention, memory and behaviour of consumers towards the brand. Hence I have found it imperatively important to write about the benefits and drawbacks that are brought about by advertising and running a business on social media considering most upcoming businesses are mainly operational on social media.

Moreover, as mentioned above, research on social media business operations are mainly centered on directing the business on how to get more customers and increase audience for the pages and accounts for businesses hence the study on the benefits and drawbacks for online businesses will actually add information in an area that is already lagging behind and suffering due to lack of research especially for less developed countries where people are still trying to fully embrace the whole concept of buying and selling on the internet.

The research therefore will shed more light for small business enterprises and entrepreneurs considering starting an online business. This research is also going to guide studies on social media especially in the advertising sector where most people are now embracing social media as a marketing platform for businesses and individuals because of its wider reach. As a result, this shed more light in all aspects.

1.7 Key Assumptions

- Deepleague is not getting any tangible profit retains.
- Online audiences do not trust the advertisements they see on Deepleague website.
- Consumers do not actually make purchases of the goods and products on Deepleague, they are just virtual window shoppers who are good at asking about stuff but do not actually make purchases.
- Online advertising will soon overtake and replace all the other types of advertising.

1.8 Research Methods and Methodology

The research will mainly focus on uncovering the benefits and drawbacks of the use of social media as an advertising platform hence it will include much of empirical research. Also, because social media is an area that has not received much attention and established published literature, it requires the researcher to actually try practical methods to get accurate information with regards to this topic.

Qualitative research methods like interviews, questionnaires, online focus groups and participant observation will be used in uncovering and investigating the use of social media by Deepleague. Of main interest will be the employees of Deepleague and how they go about in securing and securing clients who then advertise on their social media platforms. The attitude and behaviour of consumers and audiences on these platforms will also be key in shedding more light with regards to the benefits and drawbacks of using social media as an advertising platform.

Data analysis methods will also be used such as content analysis whereby the type of advertisements will be closely analysed. This is in the sense that the researcher will look at the text, content of the chosen advertisements getting a closer understanding of the type of advertisements they specialise in and trying to differentiate and compare them with those on other platforms like the mass media.

1.9 Theories Used

Social media related studies suffer a huge deficit in terms of recognized and established literature that only focus mainly on them and key issues such that most literature on social media are journals, dissertation projects from other scholars around the world. There is also lacking in the field of theoretical framework that exists in explaining the social media phenomenon. The researcher will use theories which are close in trying to explain the social media phenomenon. Several theories such as diffusion of innovations theory, Marshal McLuhan's global village and the social shaping of technology theory.

The diffusion of innovations theory coined by Rogers (1983) seeks to explain the rate at how people adopt and accept new ideas and innovations in society. In this case, the theory is used in trying to understand how people adopt the use of social media for advertising and shopping online. While Marshal McLuhan's concept of global village is used to examine to what extent the internet or rather the introduction of social media has led to a global village especially in the advertising sector where global markets are being established and people getting to buy goods online without any geographical limitations and boundaries.

Lastly, the social shaping of technology theory coined by MacKenzie and Wakman (1999) is then used to explain how people use technologies to suit their own needs and requirements instead of technology using the people who use it. Therefore bringing to light the fact that people adopted advertising on social media for different reasons that suit their own needs while other companies and organizations are still not using social media for advertising but experiencing good business.

1.10 Scope of the study/ Delimitations

This study is only restricted to investigating Deepleague which advertises products and services on behalf of its clients. The research focuses on the start of Deepleague in 2012 to present day and is not limited to a specific group of people since the company advertises almost everything (properties, jobs, clothes, applications, events etc) that can be used by anyone from anywhere although it is mainly focused on the Zimbabwean population which the advertisements are mainly for.

Moreover, the study will not be focused on measuring the profits that come from these online operations but rather will be focused on providing an insight of what the benefits and disadvantages are of advertising online with regards to the responses of online customers to the adverts that they see on Deepleague and the regularity of advertisers(clients) of Deepleague. These drawbacks and benefits are for businesses not for the consumers of products on social media businesses because consumers have been the main focus on a number of studies.

1.11 Limitations

The issues of online advertisements and operations have raised a rather interesting debate among scholars as major businesses have operations both on online platforms and mass media while small online businesses tend to exaggerate the statistics of their traffic and benefits that they get from their customers, so it is difficult to actually get the truthful statistics from the owners of these operations which made it difficult to get the right information at the right time.

Less developed countries like Zimbabwe are not given much attention when it comes to research of social media such that most research is mainly on America and the more developed countries hence using Deepleague as a case study will ensure that I get results which can be applicable to any other less developed country.

Moreover, due to the lack of trust among these online enterprises, business owners are unwilling to co-operate and supply information as they would be suspecting that it's their competition trying to fork out information from them and use it to their advantage since anyone from anywhere can decide to establish an online company or business without any troubles.

The author approached about five online businesses requesting to use them as the case study without any favorable response with 10ngah which had initially agreed dropped out without a warning, hence this affected time management. Online business operators are very busy people which affected the response speed the author got from the case study as they rarely responded to e-mails and calls that are not business related.

More so, research on social media is a little bit challenging as people tend to lie and there is lack of trust hence they sugar coat their statistics and viewership of their websites and accounts so as to be regarded as the best in the game.

1.12 Structure of the study

Having made my introduction, Chapter two shall explore and critique related literature and the relevant theories that guided the study. Chapter three presents the methods of data gathering, presentation and analysis. Chapter four presents an analysis of the organization under study: *Deeplegue*. Chapter five presents the findings and an analysis of the findings, and the concluding chapter six puts forward conclusion, summary and recommendations.

1.13 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the topic under study and the background to the study. It also presented the questions guiding the research, objectives of the study, the significance of the study, assumptions and the limitations of the study. In addition to the above the theoretical and methodological boundaries of the study (delimitation of the study) have been presented also. Finally the chapter presented the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of writings closely related to the issue of the use of social media for advertising by Deepleague in trying to uncover the benefits and drawbacks of advertising on social media. In other words, literature that helps to show the pertinence of the topic and that also helps to clearly define the problem is critically reviewed. These writings include books, researches and journal articles. Besides a review of related literature, this chapter also examines closely the media theories that will guide and shape this study.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Explaining Social Media Dimensions

Several definitions and descriptions have been put forward to explain the social media phenomenon. Social media are widely defined as online based platforms that enable users or followers to create and share content while also allowing other members or users of those platforms to add on or critique the content presented establishing exchange and interaction between users. (Blackshaw 2006) sheds more light by defining social media as Internet-based applications that carry consumer-generated content which encompasses “media impressions created by consumers, typically informed by relevant experience, and archived or shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers” .

While also another scholar argues that social media are all about sharing of content and exchange of information. Social media can be defined as online applications, platforms and media which aim to facilitate interactions, collaborations and the sharing of content (Palmer & Koenig-Lewis,2009). However, another scholar, Evans (2008:37; Plessis 2010) defines social media as “participatory online media where news, photos, videos and podcasts are made available via social media web sites via submission and are normally accompanied by a voting process to make via media items become more popular”. This scholar therefore gives power to the content such that without the content, there is no social media. Social media can be the content which is updated on online platforms. However, there has to be content uploaded on online platforms for other users to see to enable them to respond to the content uploaded by another user.

The main thrust in the understanding of social media is the fact that the emergence of Web 2.0 which enabled the introduction and creation of these media and also the fact that social media is mainly about the exchanging and collaboration of information, ideas etc. between people. People

sharing stories, videos with their peers or businesses selling their products to consumers online on a World Wide Web platform qualify this as an exchange and collaboration.

Websites like Facebook are for the ordinary internet users while LinkedIn is focuses on establish professional relations and business interactions. Sites that enable sharing of media like YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Flickr or blogging platforms such as Word Press and BlogSpot also constitute and make part of the social media (Kietzmann et al, 2011).

The social media concept is gaining more ground and significance in the day to day activities of people rapidly tremendously and in various ways. (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009:89) explain in detail social media's essence, meaning and origin:

When talking about social media, it is important to mention two related concepts - Web 2.0 and User Generated Content. Web 2.0 is a term that first appeared in 2004 to illustrate the new way in which software developers and end users started operating with the World Wide Web. It's a platform whose content is modified not by the single individual but by all the users in a collaborative manner. Examples of applications that belong to the Web 2.0 group are all the blogs, wikis and collaborative projects. This all leave behind the personal web pages and Britannica Online Encyclopedia that refer to the platform of Web 1.0. As a conclusion, it must be emphasized that Web 2.0 is considered as the platform for the evolution of social media.

The introduction and advent of Web 2.0 resulted in the possibility of the formation of these social media. It is worth pointing out that social media includes all the platforms, applications and projects on the internet that enable the exchanging of information or giving back of feedback with regards to content that would have been posted. A large number of people in Zimbabwe still regard social network sites as the only example of what social media are, mainly Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and Snap Chat among several others.

This is probably due to the fact that it is what they have been mostly exposed to and chose to make use of. While social media is a broad term, social network sites mentioned above are only a type of social media meaning social media incorporates all the blogs, websites etc. as long as they enable interaction of users. There are several groups and types of social media that have been suggested by (Cosme,2008: Plessis 2010) which are social network sites, social

bookmarking sites, social news sites, video sharing communities, photo sharing communities, professional networking, community answer sites, blog networking communities, social media aggregators, micro blogging, blog publishing, social web content discovery, social media search, social event calendar and mobile phone platforms. Thus, there are several types of social media and people use different types to suit their tastes and needs. Overall, social media can be concluded as the environment in which social interaction and communication takes place where users can create their own content for others users to either view or add comments or ideas.

However in accepting and integrating social media, power is mainly in the hands of the consumers as they are the ones who determine whether they can use a certain application or not to suit their own needs leading to some types of social media being deserted as soon as they secure a better type which suits the services that they need for example a lot of users in Zimbabwe are mainly focused on the use of social network sites while corporate organizations etc. are more into the websites and blogs. (Campbell et al,2011:87) asserts that social media has much more to do with what people are doing with the technology than the technology itself, for rather than merely retrieving information, users are now creating and consuming it, and hence adding value to the websites that permit them to do so.

Therefore, the use and adoption of a social network site is more about what the consumer wants to use it for and its availability to those consumers. People choose and use social media for different needs and the choice is mainly up to the consumer. This is in the sense that people do not just decide to use social media but some use it for advertising, while others use it for interaction and sharing of ideas. Organizations have to make their platforms and websites more attractive for consumers for them to get more traffic and audience. In order to attract consumers to participate in an online community, the community should be created in accordance with its members' needs and not with those of the organization (Plessis 2010). Hence in social media advertising and business operations, consumers have more power as organizations have to actually earn approval and support from them unlike in mass media advertising where the consumers have no option but to tolerate all types of advertisements.

It is necessary to know the background of social media and how it was introduced. Most people confuse social media with anything or any platform that can be found on the internet hence

(Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009) bring to light the many different types of social media and how they are classified so that people can know exactly which type of social media they will be comfortable with using and the one which will bring more traffic to their platforms and accounts even before starting an online business.

It is worth noting however that with the continuous development of these social media applications, the definition and explanation limits these networks with the emergence of social media sites like Snap Chat which only focus on sharing pictures and videos unlike all the other applications that were introduced earlier on.

2.2.2 Social Media Advertising

Several aspects have been used for a long time now in trying to express and explain the concept of advertising and these include the fact that it has to be paid for in mass media. However as social media and internet advertising is gaining momentum, the definition of advertising has proved to be flawed and needs to be re-addressed to include all types of advertising. Since the start of 2004 due to the emergence of the Web 2.0 market, User Generated Content has created a plethora of markets in the media industry generating more than \$450 million in advertising revenues (Verna, 2007, p.2)

Advertising is commonly defined as paid for, one sided promotional communication in any mass media (Luten, 2012). While a broader definition and explanation of advertising is offered by the American Marketing Association (2011) which defines advertising as:

The placement of announcements and persuasive messages in time or space purchased in any of the mass media by business firms, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and individuals who seek to inform and/or persuade members of a particular target market or audience about their products, services, organizations, or ideas.

While a lot of definitions confirm that advertisements are paid for, this definition is both limiting and exclusive of the virtual advertising aspect of the social media. The internet has led to the creation of a world of endless possibilities where social media were merely platforms of exchanging ideas, and several other aspects. The interactive manner and eager adoption of these social media by the public resulted in businesses and companies adapting to these social media in pursuit of their consumers.

Hence this definition is limiting and has to incorporate the aspect where businesses are now opening accounts and platforms on social media paying certain amounts of money for web hosting services and several other services to make what they are selling more attractive and alluring to the consumers so as to eventually draw them in and achieve consumer loyalty. In contrast to the era of exclusive mass media advertising where consumers were continuously bombarded by advertisement without any choice, consumers now have a lot of power to determine the advertisements that are exposed to them giving them more control.

Moreover, advertisements no longer necessarily have to be paid for but with the low rates of data needed to access the social media platforms, businesses are creating their own platforms that they only have to maintain and keep attractive enough for consumers for a small amount of money. The main idea in defining advertising on social media platforms is the fact that the amount or size of the followers or users should not be used as the defining factor of advertising (Tuten, 2008).

The definition of advertising with the inclusion of social media however continues to be flawed as there is usually the fact that scholars emphasize on the availability of a larger audience and their interactivity. This is not always the case as businesses or individuals can advertise in closed virtual communities with a small audience. The main thrust is in identifying the target audience and advertising to them.

2.2.2.1 Types of Online advertisements

Advertising on social media is not exclusively different from mass media advertising and is believed to be taking over the marketing world although advertising on mass media is still significant. Some of the online advertisements are placed on social network sites like Facebook as Facebook social ads, sponsored stores, branded profiles known as Facebook pages and Facebook developers among several others.

While advertising online might mean one-to-one advertising through permission-based, targeted e-mail messages, or it might mean mass coverage using a display ad on a behemoth search engine like Google. Online advertising includes, among others, direct response tactics like permission e-mail and interactive, on-page rich media; targeted tactics like key-word or

behaviorally targeted search engine advertising; and brand-building tactics that build upon social-media marketing. (Tuten, 2008) says:

‘Even the varying forms of advertising change in a virtual environment. While mass media focuses on print and broadcast media, online advertising includes, among others, direct response tactics like permission e-mail and interactive, on-page rich media; targeted tactics like key-word or behaviorally targeted search engine advertising; and brand-building tactics that build upon social-media marketing.’

It is essential to differentiate and distinguish the difference between advertising on mass and online media as they encompass totally different aspects. The introduction of online advertising has resulted in the involvement of customers such that they now have a choice in the advertisements that they receive and see. Unlike on mass media, consumers now have the freewill to choose the type of advertisements that they need to see, advertisements about things that they could actually consider buying instead of viewing all of them.

The differentiation of the types of advertisements on mass and social media is important in trying to bring out the benefits and drawbacks of the use of social media as an advertising platform. It is also worth noting that there are certain types of advertisements that are used online with more guarantee of a bigger audience than others therefore the success of a business can also be determined by the type of advertisements used by that certain business. Hence is it not of great importance for a business to know about all those different types of social media advertisements and which ones exactly the target market could actually give attention to?

2.2.3 Interactivity of social media and Impacts on online advertisements

One of the biggest and main reasons why social media advertising rose to popularity was its interactivity, businesses and organizations are given an opportunity to actually communicate with their consumers and get feedback from them. According to (Thorson and Leavitt, 1986:11), "unless advertising is understood in terms of consumers and their goals, there is no adequate base for dealing with complex behavior such as responding to persuasive communication."

These scholars give credit to the consumer and place them as the main focus of advertising. However, when it comes to social media, persuasive communication has no power over the consumer as the consumer has the power to choose what she wants to see and what she does not want to see.

Mangold and Faulds however give power to the social media and believe it is the makeup of social media that has influenced the consumers in expressing themselves freely to the businesses. Social media has also influenced consumer behavior from information acquisition to post-purchase behavior such as dissatisfaction statements or behaviors (Mangold & Faulds, 2009)

However, it is worth noting that the consumer chooses what he or she wants to use social media for and therefore due to the interactivity of social media, consumers choose to give feedback to businesses while some choose to simply ignore and lastly other consumers use the social media to interact with other consumers of a certain brand gaining knowledge and experiences with that certain brand. Organizations can benefit from spontaneous discussions by having planned for the online community and by stimulating more interaction (Plessis 2010). Therefore, organizations should provide platforms and communities that encourage users and consumers to participate and interact with them.

The interactivity of social media platforms however is a double edged sword as they give consumers more power and one bad comment about a brand from one consumer to the other could turn out to be fatal for a business as word travels fast on these platforms. Other functions of social media involve affecting and influencing perceptions, attitudes and end behavior (Williams & Cothrell, 2000), while bringing together different like-minded people (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997).

The above statements are true as people who like the same brand are united in virtual communities (social media groups) in which they can choose to discuss anything without any boundaries. The sharing and interaction of these like-minded people can strongly affect and influence how other consumers feel and act towards a certain brand or business which can either positively or negatively affect the business. Nowadays there is substantial evidence that online word of mouth affects peoples' attitude toward the product or the brand and respectively that affects the purchase behavior of the consumer (Chen, 2011).

In an online environment, (Laroche,2012) pointed out that people like the idea of contributing, creating, and joining communities to fulfill needs of belongingness, being socially connected and recognized or simply enjoying interactions with other like-minded members.

Therefore, the interactivity of social media platforms gives more power to the consumer as they can discuss about issues collectively and shape perceptions and attitudes towards a certain brand. There is also the Electronic Word of Mouth (EWM) where consumers share their different experiences with another consumer or consumers with a certain brand. EWM has a lot of power and can affect other consumers' perception towards that brand either positively or negatively depending on whether it was a good or bad experience.

2.2.4 Consumers and their Attitudes Online

Consumers play a huge and vital role in the success of advertisements which are clearly meant for them. Advertisers seek to understand their potential and already existing consumers to make them happy determining the success of the business. There are however different types of consumers and several studies have been conducted in trying to understand these consumers and their behavior especially their attitude towards the advertisements that they see online.

A research conducted on the different types of online consumers by (Keller,2012) came out with this conclusion: The conclusions obtained from our research have important implications for the academic research, derived principally from the analysis of four new types of social media consumers, namely Engagers, Expressers and Informers, Networkers, and Watchers and Listeners. This study proved that consumers come for different reasons on the internet and it is not everyone who uses the internet who gets to use and buy products online.

Another scholar, McDonald also came up with different types of consumers found online: starting from consumers' motivations to use the Internet, McDonald (1996) segmented the Internet audience as "avid adventurers," "fact collectors," "entertainment seekers," and "social shoppers."

While (McDonald1996) was not only focused on classifying online consumers, he went on to define and classify all internet users according to what they do on the internet in which consumers can also be included.

Several factors are considered in putting internet users or online consumers into these different groups.

Brengman et al. (2005) performed a cluster analysis based on seven factors, such as 'Internet convenience', 'perceived self-efficacy', 'Internet logistics', 'Internet distrust', 'Internet offer', 'Internet window-shopping'.

These factors are accurate in determining how people make use of the internet for example consumers can either purchase a product or service from an online business depending on whether they trust the internet or online businesses.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The following theories shall be used in this study.

2.3.1 Diffusion of Innovation Theory

. The diffusion of innovation theory can be traced back to the early 1950s. According to Gross and Ryan (1943), the idea of a diffusion of innovation theory emanated from the need to study how the US department of Agriculture effectively diffused their farming innovations to American farmers to encourage effective Agricultural productivity. Diffusion of innovation theory was developed by Rogers (1983) to trace the process by which a new idea or practice is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system. This theory therefore helps in understanding how different people in society adopt and embrace new ideas or practices in society.

Innovations are not adopted by all individuals in a social system at the same time. Instead, they tend to adopt in a time sequence, and can be classified into adopter categories based upon how long it takes for them to begin using the new idea. Adoption of a new idea is caused by human interaction through interpersonal networks. If the initial adopter of an innovation discusses it with two members of a given social system, and these two become adopters who pass the innovation along to two peers, and so on, the resulting distribution follows a binomial expansion. Expect adopter distributions to follow a bell-shaped curve over time (Rogers, 1971).

Due to the introduction of the internet and social media, opinion leaders can simply share ideas to a lot of people easily. Thus an opinion leader can simply create a group on social media addressing or introducing a certain idea which the people will then choose to adopt or not depending on their attitude towards the innovation or idea suggested.

Therefore, in adopting the use of social media as both an online business and an online shopping mall for consumers, people go through different and various stages which determine the type of attitude that they have towards online businesses.

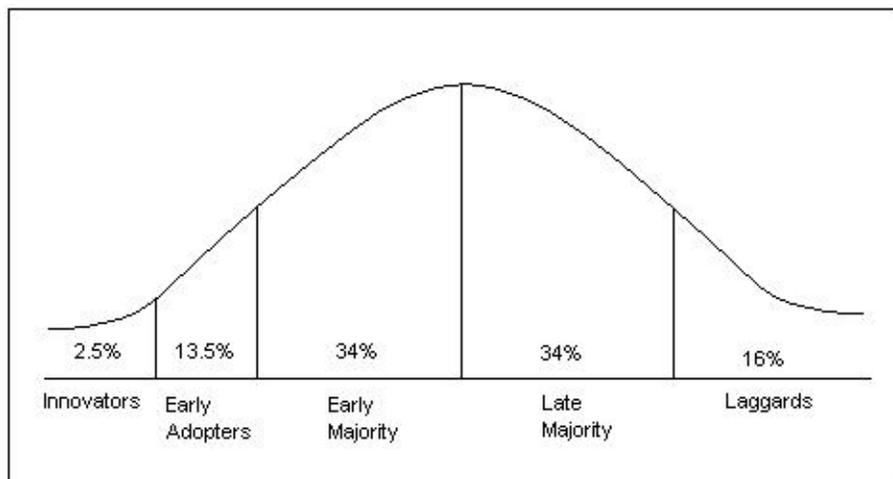


Fig. 1 - Adopter categorization on the basis of innovativeness

Adopter distributions closely approach normality. The above figure shows the normal frequency distributions divided into five categories: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. Innovators are the first 2.5% of a group to adopt a new idea. The next 13.5% to adopt an innovation are labeled early adopters. The next 34% of the adopters are called the early majority. The 34% of the group to the right of the mean are the late majority, and the last 16% are considered laggards (Rogers, 1971).

Even in the adoption of the internet, people are still going through these five different stages especially when it comes to online shopping and businesses such as Deepleague. However, not everyone necessarily goes through those stages but each and every person might adapt to using online services in businesses because of their own personal reasons. People are entitled to their choice and preferences and not everyone will adopt social media advertising just because opinion leaders are using it. According to (Creamer, 2011) One of the biggest telephone manufacturing

companies Apple, does not have an account on any of the social media sites, but yet it is still one of the most popular brands in the world. This goes on to explain the fact that the diffusion of innovation theory is not accurate as people and business owners are not passive however they adopt a certain innovation or idea in this case (social media advertising) to suit their needs and in consideration of what is best for the business to the extent where some companies completely shun the whole idea.

2.3.2 Marshal McLuhan's Global Village

The late Marshall McLuhan, a media and communication theorist, coined the term “global village” in 1964 to describe the phenomenon of the world's culture shrinking and expanding at the same time due to pervasive technological advances that allow for instantaneous sharing of culture (Johnson, 1992)

The global village phenomenon is mainly centered on the coming together of all cultures into one global village without any differences. This also could mean a global marketplace where businesses from all around the world coming together and people from different countries buying products from anywhere without any problems

McLuhan saw the expansion and coming together of different cultures through the internet and many other technological advances. Today people can communicate or become friends with someone from as far as Europe while they are here in Zimbabwe, Africa. The internet has enabled the people to overlook boundaries and enabled the sharing of ideas and innovations.

This global village theme is however inspired by American countries whose culture is now one of the legitimate and most widespread of them all.

The internet i.e. social media was initially introduced in America with the main use of social media back then being interaction of people overlooking distance barriers. However, as time passed, it is the American companies such as Starbucks that initially introduced online advertising and shopping. Later on, African countries and other continents started to follow suit to present day where a lot of people are trying to do online shopping, either selling of products or buying products or services online.

Therefore, the concept of global village by McLuhan proved to come to pass as people are now getting together through the social media especially the social networking sites which enable the communication and interaction of people.

However, on the business aspect, indeed marketplaces have also come together however with the domination of the weaker markets especially in Africa by the more dominant countries such as China and America such that the only markets and businesses which will be benefiting the most will be the dominant countries.

Thus the idea of a global village by McLuhan was accurate as seen through the social media however there is no equality as the dominant countries continue to dominate in all aspects from the businesses to culture and several others.

2.3.3 Social Shaping of Technology Theory

The theory emerged as a critique of the technological determinism theory and emphasizes on the fact that people should not ignore what the technology does to the people and vice versa since people respond to the push and pull factors.

Propounded by (MacKenzie and Wajkman, 1999), social shaping of technology emphasizes on human choice and action in technology change. The theory specifies that technology is not neutral and is shaped by the dominant social, political and economic values of society. As a result, changes in values lead to different technological outcomes, and as a result, social science considerations can be used to shape technologies.

Technology is neither good nor bad but depends with the society. From the social shaping of technology point of view, to talk about 'impacts' of technology on society as though technology is the hammer and society the nail is to accept implicitly the basic premise of technological determinism

Social shaping of technology takes a particular philosophical view of the technology rather seeks to formulate the benefits of science and technology.

In the use and uptake of business operations online, most people adopted this channel to suit to the economic needs for example, others did not have funds to pay for advertising on mass media while others simply adopted to reach a wider audience. Hence this shows that contrary to the

ideologies of this theory, people are not shaped by the technology but adopt technology to suit their own needs and different situation. In this case businesses resort to advertising online due to different reasons that they need for their businesses.

It is worth noting that in line with this theory, technology does not have that much power to influence what people do with it however they adopt and make use of a certain technological innovation in the event where they realize it will be of good use and efficiency to them.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter the relevant literature and the theories that will guide the study have been presented. The literature presented helped to expose the pertinence of the problem under study. On the other hand, the theories presented here help to clearly show the methods of data gathering, analysis and presentation that can be used to best answer the problem under study.

Chapter 3: Research Methods and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on presenting the methods of data gathering, research methodology and analysis. The research seeks to uncover the benefits and drawbacks of the use of social media as an advertising platform by Deepleague, hence it will include much of empirical research. Also, because social media is an area that has not received much attention and established published literature, it requires the researcher to apply methods of getting accurate information with regards to this topic. Qualitative methods are used in trying to bring out the benefits and disadvantages of advertising online judging with the way respondents and potential consumers responded to the

questions and how they respond to these adverts that they get or see on Deepleague's online accounts and platforms.

Quantitative methods were used minimally in trying to get the actual numbers of views, website visits and traffic that the company gets after advertising a product or service so as to accurately determine the results of the research.

3.2 Research Approach

Empirical qualitative research approach was used in trying to uncover the benefits and drawbacks of using social media as an advertising platform. Qualitative research approach in the form of a case study is key in trying to explain and gain insight and understanding of phenomena through intensive collection of narrative data. Qualitative research is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, behavior and opinions. Research in such a situation is a function of researcher's insights and impressions (Kothari 2013). In this case, the researcher assessed the behavior of the target audience of Deepleague while also closely monitoring the advertisements of Deepleague and how the audiences reacted to these advertisements in trying to determine whether online advertising is more beneficial or challenging for online businesses.

3.3 Research Methodology/Design

The science of studying how a research is carried out scientifically is known as research methodology (Kumar 2011). A research design combines all the elements of the research together allowing the research problem to be resolved correctly. According to Burns and Groove (2003), a research design is a plan that guides a researcher on how he or she wants to conduct his or her research in eliminating factors that may affect the validity of the data. In this study, the researcher mainly used qualitative methods and minimally used quantitative methods in trying to establish the number and traffic for the social media accounts. Several methods were also used for data collection including content analysis whereby the researcher examined the types of advertisements aired by Deepleague on their social media accounts and how the consumers and

potential consumers responded. The research design is exploratory in nature. The purpose of an exploratory research is the formulation of problem or the development of hypothesis. These can also be knowledge enhancing in nature (Kumar 2011).

3.4 Research Population/Universe

This refers to the main focus of the study, the exact group of people or objects under study. In this case, the researcher focused on the employees of Deepleague and its advertisers and consumers like Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe (CBZ), Technology Unzipped (Techunzipped) among several other consumers of Deepleagues' services. The study will be from the period where Deepleague was introduced in 2013 to present day in trying to determine how successful and lucrative the business of advertising on social media is.

3.5 Unit of Analysis

Unit of analysis refers to the main focus of the study, the actual elements that need to be closely given attention in trying to bring out the results of the study. These can also be said to be the ones that actually answer the questions guiding the research. In this study, the unit of analysis is the actual advertisements posted by Deepleague in trying to lure in more consumers and traffic to its social media accounts and pages. Also, the responses and marketing strategies of the company will be closely analyzed.

Moreover, the clients of Deepleague will also be of interest and concern in revealing the satisfaction and attitude that they have towards the services they got from working with Deepleague. Audiences and consumers of the advertisements of Deepleague on social media will also be of interest in trying to bring out what their perception and attitude is towards these online advertisements.

3.6 Sampling Methods and Techniques

Sampling is a process of choosing a group of individuals, events, performances or other elements in the study to be conducted (Polit et al, 2001). A sample design is a definite plan determined before any data are actually collected for obtaining a sample from a given population (Kothari 2013). There are two types of sampling which are probability and non-probability/judgment/purposive sampling. In probability sampling everyone has an equal chance of being selected while in non-probability sampling, the researcher basically chooses based on his/her judgment on how well the selected will represent the whole group or population. In this research both non-probability and probability sampling are used in selecting the clients of Deepleague and selecting the consumers and audience of the organization's social media accounts and pages.

In selecting the clients of Deepleague I used purposive sampling where I specifically picked certain companies and clients whom I decided would bring the best results like Zimdef, CBZ, National Tickets and several others listed below. I specifically chose the most frequent clients and the ones that rarely advertised with Deepleague to determine whether they were satisfied with the services they got or not. Random sampling was used however to pick the audiences/consumers/potential consumers of Deepleague who followed the company on their Facebook page and those that frequently visited the company's website. This was done to get the overall view and perception of consumers towards the advertisements that they saw on Deepleague.

3.6.1 Simple random sampling

This type of sampling is also known as chance sampling or probability sampling where each and every item in the population has an equal chance of inclusion in the sample and each one of the possible samples, in case of finite universe, has the same probability of being selected (Kothari 2013). This method of sampling was used in selecting the advertisements that were put across by Deepleague in trying to lure in more audiences and advertisements for their social media accounts so as to determine the viewer's responses and comments to these advertisements.

Simple random sampling was also used to select the advertisements that were then put across on social media pages for clients by Deepleague to also monitor how the audiences reacted to these

advertisements and also get to ask those certain organizations if the advertisements that were done by Deepleague for them proved to be fruitful and profitable or not. The researcher selected a total of 100 advertisements from all social media platforms of Deepleague and assessed how the audiences reacted to these advertisements from their comments and how they replied and also the amount of time they took to reply these advertisements, These adverts were taken from two timeframes, the first 50 were taken from the period between 2012-2014 while the other remaining 50 was taken from the period of 2015-present moment 2017.

3.6.2 Cluster Sampling

This type of sampling is done when the population or the unit of analysis is very large. In this case, Deepleague's Facebook followers are at 240 000 followers while the website boasts a traffic of about 4 000 users who visit the website just to either see the products being advertised while also some will be clients who then advertise on the website.

Cluster sampling is used to divide these followers and audiences into groups especially on Facebook where people's information is available to make the cluster process easier. People use social media for different reasons and age is a very good influence in determining the reasons why some people use social media and in this case visit and follow Deepleague's social media accounts. Therefore, people are classified into clusters according to their age in trying to discover why they are following Deepleague's social media account pages and if their aims and needs had been satisfied.

This is so because some people simply follow or join virtual communities just for curiosity and virtual window shopping while others will actually be interested in the whole procedure and participate in the whole process. This type of sampling is employed because audiences differ in their reasons for using social media especially with age; same applies to the followers of Deepleague. They may be following the same organization but for different reasons and requirements.

The researcher sampled the followers into 3 clusters whereby they were classified according to their age in determining what they have in common. The clusters were of the following age groups:

- 18 - 30 years
- 30 – 45 years
- 45+

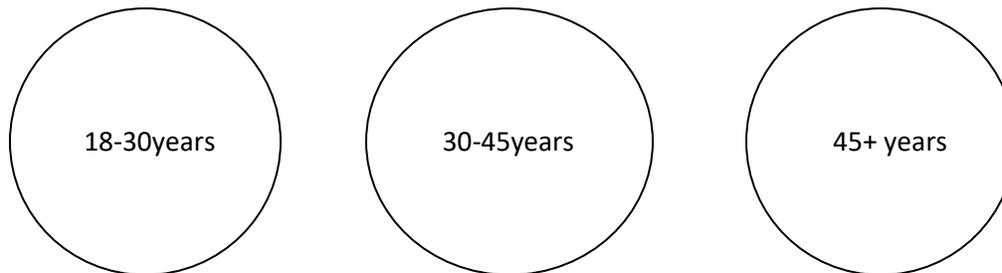


Fig 2.Clusters of followers of social media followers

3.6.3 Purposive/ Relevance Sampling

This sampling method involves purposive or deliberate selection of particular units of the universe for constituting a sample which represents the universe (Kothari 2013). This method of sampling is done on the researcher's terms in choosing which ones would represent the population better and give the best results that will shape the hypothesis. Since 2013, Deepleague has advertised for a lot of organizations and individuals and thus can be difficult to interview each and every one of these clients. Hence for convenience and time's sake, the researcher chose Zimdef, National tickets, CBZ, Anita Matemarufu, Silas Choga, Timeless books and several others who are clients of Deepleague which she felt will give accurate information.

Moreover, online organizations have an added advantage and don't necessarily need a lot of employees as most of the things they do are done online on a computer or phone. As a result, Deepleague has only four employees who do all the work including the founder and owner. The researcher then decided to interview the owner, Sean Moyo and one of the remaining three employees, Stephen Denga who is the information technology administrator. This was to avoid repetition and save time since every employee of Deepleague's number one goal is to market Deepleague advertising services. This was to get more information on how they operate online

and how they get their clients, the techniques and methods that they use and also the challenges that they face in the process of online businesses.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

3.7.1 Interviews

Interviews are one of the commonly used techniques of data collection. Different questions, sometimes called stimuli are presented, to the respondents to record their responses (Kumar 2011). Due to the advent of the internet, several convenient ways of conducting interviews are introduced saving time and resources.

3.7.1.1 E-mail Interviews

Due to the advent of the internet, interviewing has been made easier. Deepleague is an online organization where the headquarters are based in Harare and in some case the researcher would have travelled to Harare to interview the founder of Deepleague, Sean Moyo who oversees all departments of Deepleague and also the head of marketing social media propagation of content. Also one of the employees, Stephen Denga who is responsible for the information and technology department of Deepleague was interviewed. However the researcher put together different interview questions for both Sean and Stephen which were then e-mailed to them on their individual e-mail addresses which they responded to as soon as they got the time. As a follow up the researcher asked more questions and clarifications on answers where she did not understand or things she felt the interviewees did not answer to. The interview questions were structured differently for the two in trying to bring out two different angles of these employees since their duties are different.

The researcher conducted interviews with the employees of Deepleague and got to know how they draw traffic and audiences to their social media platforms. This type of data collection is of great advantage to the researcher as more information at a greater depth could be obtained especially where there is need of clarification, the interviewee (Kumar 2011). Setbacks and mistakes like lack of response/reply or poor responses are minimized. Thus this type of

interviewing enabled the researcher to have follow ups and actually remind the interviewees about answering questions in situations where they replied late. However, this method has also its downfalls because it is time consuming. The researcher had to travel to a place where there was a stable internet connection so as to log into her e-mail just to communicate with the interviewees of which sometimes the interviewees would reply late meaning the researcher had to wait and make several trips back and forth to check the responses.

3.7.1.2 Chatting

With the increasing use of Internet facilities, chatting has become the most popular way of communicating among people. Various groups with common interest have come into existence, making use of the facilities (Kumar 2011). Chatting is a method that was used by the researcher to interview the followers and audiences that were selected in the process of sampling.

This method enabled the researcher to interview the followers easily as these are people who have different locations nationwide and even beyond and thus it enabled them to answer questions with them feeling secure in an interactive manner. This method also saves time and resources as interviewees answered questions conveniently by replying to questions at the same time. This shed light on how the targeted consumers responded and felt about the advertisements and also if they actually got to make purchases of the products and services that they saw and continue to see being advertised.

This method of data collection saves time for the researcher as it made it easier for the researcher to get answers and information from respondents at the same time leading to discussions which shed more light for the researcher. However the fact that this needed internet connection was also a setback for the researcher while also some participants will be offline at the time of discussion and therefore were left out. Also, this method required respondents to be members of a closed group of which not everyone joins closed groups, some respondents declined invitations to join the group.

3.7.2 Interviews using Questionnaires

A questionnaire is prepared befitting to the objective of the study and sent generally by post to the respondents with a request to answer the questions. The researcher structured questions which were then sent to the clients of Deepleague. The researcher set the questions in such a way that the respondents had an idea about the logical sequences and chronology of the questions. This is known as structured questionnaire (Kumar 2011). The questionnaire was structured and non-disguised meaning the clients knew exactly that the questions they were asked were for educational purposes and it was structured to obtain uniformity and consistency. These clients are those organizations that make use of Deepleague's services. The questionnaires were then mailed to these organizations.

These questions were structured in a way to make it easier for these organizations to answer at the same time bringing out the answers of why exactly these organizations make use of these services and if the services were of benefit to them and their business. While also interviews were conducted on the clients (advertisers) of Deepleague and got to understand exactly what these businesses go through in trying to advertise and reach out to their online customer base. This method is great as interviewer's influence was reduced meaning the interviewees could answer honestly in their own time. However, this method has poor response rates as not every participant gets to answer these questions in time while some actually chose not to reply or respond.

3.7.3 Online Focus Groups

Online focus groups were also a key concept in trying to get to reach out to customers and get their opinions in a discursive manner and get their sentiments on certain online businesses. This was done through the creation of online groups on social media which are WhatsApp and Facebook.

Deepleague has a WhatsApp group where organizations and individuals advertise and as mentioned in Chapter two, has applications for Mobi-homes and Mobi-jobs where audiences and advertisers come together on one platform. So the researcher created online focus groups where she invited anyone who wanted to participate in these focus groups where the researcher

presented topics and questions for discussion in trying to understand the relationship and attitudes between the audiences and advertisers.

This gave the researcher an opportunity to interact with respondents and getting more in depth information and data at the same time saving money and time since WhatsApp can be used any time and any day as long as WhatsApp data bundles were available which are quite affordable. However there was lack of seriousness in these groups as people tend to focus more on jokes and irrelevant issues therefore required the researcher to keep everyone in check by always presenting a topic or subject of discussion.

3.7.4 Participation and Observation

The researcher monitored and observed the accounts and website of Deepleague getting to actually see the types of responses that they got from their targets and also observed how they run their business on a day to day basis. Participation was in the sense that the researcher purchased some of the products advertised and actually got to experience the whole process first hand.

The researcher followed all of Deepleague's social media accounts and platforms to get a better understanding of how exactly they lure in consumers and clients. Moreover the researcher actually made use of an advert that she saw on Deepleague and purchased a product in trying to see how the whole process of buying products online goes for consumers. This method gave the researcher firsthand experience of how the process of buying products online goes for consumers. However it may present one sided information or conclusions based on that one experience thus it was not that accurate.

3.7.5 Website Interception

The research actually required the researcher to quantify the number of people who visited the company's website and those that actually got to respond for the benefit of the business. This was done by simply using software that monitored the activities of people who visited the organization's website. This software follows the track record of all users who visit the website

and then quantifies the numbers of those that visited the website for a certain period of time until it got stable established numbers.

3.8 Methods of Data Analysis

Information and data collected through the interviews, questionnaires and online focus groups etc was then analyzed and assessed through several methods of data analysis in trying to determine the benefits and drawbacks of using social media as an advertising platform for products and services.

3.8.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis can be known as the study of recorded human communication such as books, websites, paintings and laws. (Lasswel 1969) formulated the core questions of content analysis as: 'Who says what, to whom, why, to what extent and with what effect'. Hence in this case, the advertisements on Deepleague social media platforms were closely analyzed. This was in trying to understand how they structured and constructed their advertisements to attract more traffic at the same time satisfying their clients whom they will be advertising for.

The study however both used qualitative and quantitative content analysis. Quantitative content analysis was used to actually look at the numbers of respondents to advertisements, how many people on social media talked and knew about Deepleague and lastly the number of people or users that visited the organization website.

3.9 Conclusion

The chapter explores the research approach, design, methods of data collection and data analysis. A case study approach was used in trying to bring out the benefits and drawbacks of using social media as an advertising platform. Qualitative methods were mainly used in the research in the investigating and researching on the use of internet by Deepleague. Quantitative methods were also used minimally in collecting information about the amount of traffic and users and followers of the organization 'social media platforms.

Chapter 4: Organizational Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the structure and business operations of Deepleague as an organization. The organization's historical background, organogram, funding mechanism, objectives, vision and administrative structure among several other aspects shall be explored.

4.2 Background of social media in Zimbabwe

Social media was first introduced in Zimbabwe through the popularity of Facebook. Most used social network in Zimbabwe is Facebook with the usage of about 97.34%. Twitter ranks second with 1.78%, Pinterest ranks third with 0.56%, Tumblr ranks fourth with 0.2% and the remaining social networks holds 0.12% using Mobile internet(www.statsmonkey.com).

The use of social media in Zimbabwe has been mainly to communicate with friends and loved ones and until this period companies and organizations are said to be skeptical about social media marketing for their businesses. An article on the website www.voazimbabwe.com published in 2013 continues to show that back then businesses were still not eager about online businesses. “A few international and local firms in Zimbabwe appear to be using this type of media to sell their brands and market various commodities.” (www.voazimbabwe.com). By then, the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange had launched a website. However it was not fully making use of all the other types of social media such as Twitter and Facebook.

Several factors can be attributed to the poor uptake of social media concept by businesses. The economic situation in the country does not really give businesses the luxury of installing data cables at their companies or rather leaving allowance for data as an expense especially when the benefits of using social media are vague. Companies as a result would rather stick to using the mainstream media that they have been using all this while.

Interestingly, non-governmental organizations in Zimbabwe are at the forefront of using the social media in reaching out to their audiences and disseminating information to them. An example is the National Youth Development Trust which boasts thousands of followers on Facebook accessing community issues, youth programmes and voter registration daily. Indications are that there are still few companies in Zimbabwe compared to countries like South Africa and Nigeria who use social media to develop their brands and market various commodities (www.voazimbabwe.com).

Present day, an article that was recently published this year on www.theindependent.co.zw this still shows businesses are skeptical of using social media due to lack of proper knowledge on the how to. It is worth noting that it is the small businesses and startups that are tapping into the social media and using it to market their goods and services while the bigger and established organizations are still lagging behind in fully grasping this concept and idea.

4.3 History of Deepleague

Deepleague is an E-commerce platform. It's essentially an enabler of trade, albeit online, to the generality of the public. It has an online classifieds website: www.deepleague.co.zw, a Facebook page and several closed and open communities, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and WhatsApp groups and accounts. According to www.googletagmanager.com, E-commerce websites are sites that facilitate business or commercial transactions involving the transfer of information over the internet. Types of e-commerce sites include but are not limited to: retail sites, auctions sites, music sites, business-to-business services and financial management sites.

The platform was first introduced in the year 2012, starting off as a General Classifieds Facebook page. It then transformed into an established organization in 2013 after realizing the value that could be created owing to the growing followership. It is registered under the Zimbabwe Online Content Creators (ZOCC) which is made up of over 60 different online media organizations. This board safeguards and represents the interests of online organizations and also promoting ethics and professionalism in the online sphere (www.Techunzipped.com).

Deepleague's main focus is to enable trade between consumers and businesses by simply allowing businesses to advertise on their website, advertising on behalf of other businesses. It is worth noting that Deepleague is not limited to any types of services or products but allows any business with any product to make use of their services.

4.4 Deepleague Vision

To be the leading E-commerce in Zimbabwe and beyond. It maintains that it wants to be the go to platform when one thinks of wider reach and bigger audience for their products while for consumers being the go to platform for easy access to products, services and quality trustworthy advertisements (www.deepleague.co.zw).

4.5 Mission Statement

To produce the most profound and established E-commerce platform that caters for each and every business's advertorial and marketing needs while also providing consumers and followers

with the most reliable first hand advertisements (researcher; Sean Moyo; 27th February 2017 via e-mail)

4.6 Deepleague's Objectives

- To establish a profound online platform in Zimbabwe and beyond
- To maintain good relations with the audiences and followers of all social media platforms
- To make every encounter profitable and beneficial for the organization
- To provide consumers with the best experience possible
- To give satisfactory coverage and opportunities for all advertisers on the website and all other social media accounts
- To keep followers engaged and interested
- To get the biggest possible number of advertisers and sponsors for the organization
- To continuously embrace and increase skills in the technology department for the success of established social media accounts and more innovations to come (Researcher ; Sean Moyo; 27 February 2017 via e-mail)

The organization's objectives are profit orientated like any profit making organization. Deepleague is an organization that seeks to give all advertisers; from small, individual or large businesses opportunities to make their products and services get the biggest and widest reach possible to their satisfaction. Since it is an online organization where consumers have more power, the organization seeks to make sure consumers are satisfied, happy and engaged always.

4.7 Core Business

Deepleague is an E-commerce platform. This means that it is a facilitator of trade between consumers and businesses. The organization's main business is to provide consumers or rather audiences for the advertisers who advertise on the organization's social media platforms. Deepleague's backbone is the www.deepleague.co.zw website where organizations and individuals get slots to upload their advertisements for a period of time. Other social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are the fishing points which attract customers and

followers to link to the website. Besides providing a big audience, Deepleague also advertises for organizations. This is in the sense that, the employees engages organizations and then gets to advertise on behalf of these organizations on the social media platforms, from the website to Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and WhatsApp (Researcher; Sean Moyo; 27th February 2017 via email)

On this website different people and companies come to display their various products and services by simply login in, opening an account and uploading their adverts, so as to tap into the strong traffic that visits our website on a daily basis, currently at a daily average of 4 000. Buyers visit the site in order to look through the various adverts, so as to buy whatsoever they need. A lot of trade therefore is facilitated by the website. Deepleague also has several Value Added Services (VAS). These are services that are an extension of the larger business, as they are derived from the main service but choose a particular niche to focus on for example they have a product called Deepleague Mobi-Homes. This product is mobile based, meaning it essentially is accessed through mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets.

This product focuses on real estate services, and therefore targeted at people interested in Properties, be they home seekers, lesser, buyers and sellers. This enables those that are interested in property to get content that is strictly property, and this has allowed them to monetize as niching results in payment for services. There is also another Value Added Service called Deepleague Mobi-Jobs, which is specifically suited for those seeking employment or employees. It is worth noting that Deepleague caters for both the consumers/audiences by bringing all types of advertisements to them while also catering for the advertisers through giving them a big audience and wider reach for their products. Although the core business is making profits for the organization.

4.8 Deepleague's Organizational Structure



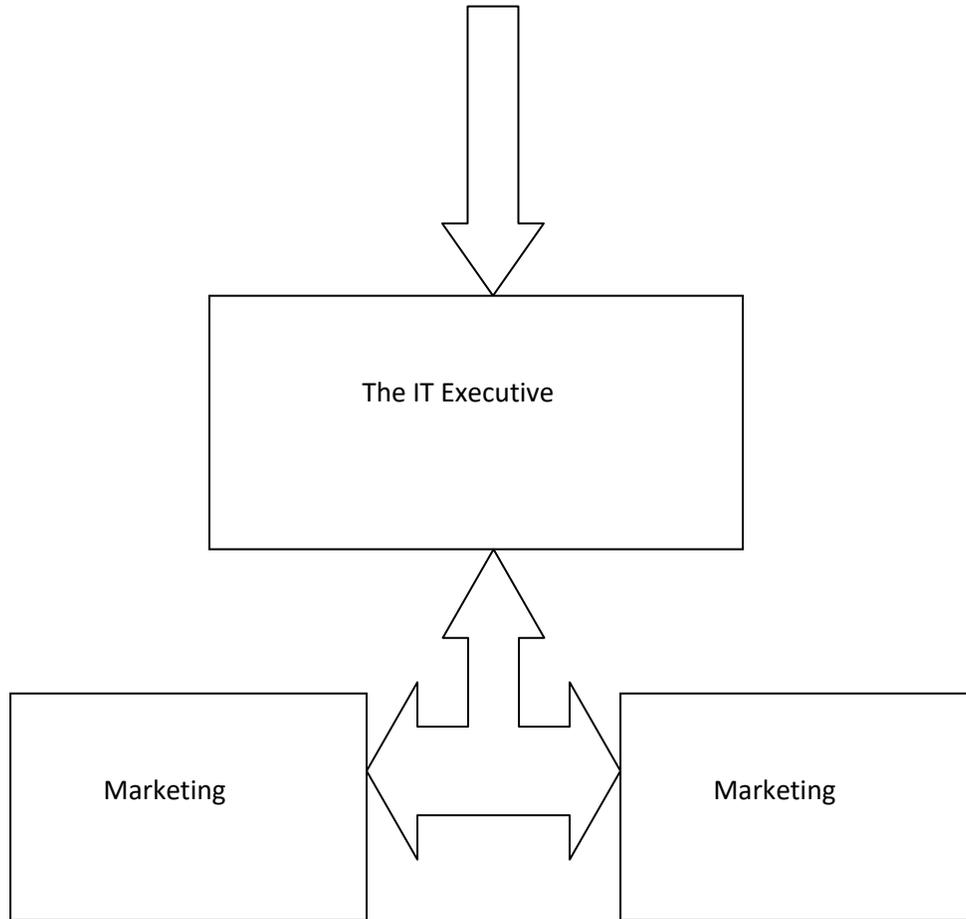


Fig3. Deepleague Organogram

4.8.1 Founder and C.E.O

The founder and Chief Executive Officer of Deepleague is the overall chief in command for everything. Since Deepleague is an online organization, there is no need for a lot of employees because most of the work is done on the computer. The founder oversees the financial administration, marketing and advertising and also the propagation of content on all social media accounts. Usually the founder takes care of the meeting up and negotiations with the clientele while also taking care of the public relations department.

4.8.2 The Information Technology Executive

This is the person who is responsible for the running of all social media accounts and platforms of Deepleague. He ensures that everything is up to date; all the advertisements are uploaded at the right time and given enough coverage. His duty is also to make sure that the backbone of the organization, Deepleague's website is up and running all the time and social media administration and propagation. Without him, any technical error that affects Deepleague online platforms could mean disaster for the whole organization.

4.8.3 Marketing

The marketing team comprises of two people whose main duty is to lure in as many advertisers as possible. Their role is to approach several organizations and individuals informing them about advertising on Deepleague and the benefits they could get. Besides this, they also take care of the propagation of content on all social media platforms. An online organization requires online presence most of the time to respond to e-mails from clients, reply to comments and questions about posts and also making sure that the advertisements for that certain day have reached to a bigger and wider audience as possible. This team answers to both the C.E.O and IT executive. It is worth noting that this team is paid on a commission basis whereby they are paid depending on the advertisements and clients that they bring in for the organization.

4.9 Links with Other Organizations

Deepleague has links with several organizations since it is a facilitator of trade and also an advertising agency for some of these organizations. Organizations such as (Zimbabwe Development Fund)Zimdef, Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe (CBZ), Kwese TV, National tickets and Mukuru advertise their products and services on the website for a certain period of time while some let Deepleague do the advertising for them on www.deepleague.co.zw and also on all the other several online social platforms to get a wider reach.

Deepleague is also a member of the Zimbabwe Online Content Creators (ZOCC) which ensures ethical professionalism among these organizations. It boasts more than 60 members who come together in expressing their grievances and serves the interests of all these organizations.

Moreover, besides its advertisers, Deepleague is usually invited by other established mainstream media organizations for seminars and interviews on social media advertising and also on how to tap into the big social media following. Some of these media houses include Star FM and also Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC).

4.10 Funding Mechanism

Golding and Murdock (2000) and Herman and McChesney (1997) argue that advertisers act as a latter-day licensing authority. Deepleague's main concern is to get profits from advertisers. Organizations that advertise on the website pay advertisement fees while also those who let Deepleague do the advertising on their behalf also pay an even bigger incentive. He who pays for more advertisements gets more advertising space on the website. It is worth noting that Deepleague gives businesses free slots where they simply log in and upload their organizations. This is a way of drawing in more clients after they see the consumers they get, the organizations will continue to want more and will definitely come back for a more permanent slot.

In addition, Deepleague is usually consulted for seminars on social media since most organizations and businesses are still trying to grasp the aspect of social media advertising hence pay for Deepleague to give them insight on how to go about the whole business of advertising and drawing in consumers on social media.

4.11 Structure of Deepleague Website

The organization's website is set up in such a way that organizations and businesses choose the placement of their advertisement depending on the amount of money they want to pay. Just like in mainstream media, the amount of money paid determines the coverage and position the advert will be given. The website has several categories in which advertisements can be placed into. These categories include the kids section, Housing and property, vehicles, clothing, electronics and several other categories to make sure every advert has a space to fit into.

4.12 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter gives a deeper understanding of Deeleague and the business' political economy which determine how it goes about in its operations and functions. The organization's core business, objectives, mission statement and several others are also presented to give a better understanding of the organization's functions.

Chapter 5: Data Presentation and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and results from the research procedures and field work I carried out as mentioned in Chapter 3. Qualitative data analysis methods are used in this chapter in trying to explaining the results of the research question. Where necessary data is presented using visual aids like bar graphs, pie charts and many other methods shown below. It is worth noting the results are qualitative with a little bit of quantitative aspects in explaining some of the findings.

5.2 Review of Advertisements on Deepleague

Semiotics is the study of signs, symbols and meanings. Priest (1996) defines semiotic analysis as the science of signs hence the advertisements on Deepleague were subjected to semiotic analysis whereby the structure, positioning and several other aspects of the advertisements were closely analyzed in trying to determine whether they were alluring enough to bring in more consumers on their own besides the fact that they were advertised on Deepleague social media platforms.

The first advertisement (Fig.1) is that of Africa University August 2017 intake. The advertisement is advertising the August 2017 intake for conventional programmes with small text written in black and red to fit in to the rectangular top banner on the website. The advert is constructed in such a way that it has a slide of tabs presenting different types of information which include the postal address, social media platforms where interested people can follow and also the contact and e-mail address that applicants can e-mail to. There is also a picture of smiling graduates on the banner, university logo and motto and silver jubilee sticker on the corner.



Fig4. (Advertisement for Africa University August 2017 intake)

This advert is strategically placed on the website in such a way that whoever visits the website views the advert whether they want to or not because it is on the top of the webpage with the bright colour of orange also drawing attention to this advert. Moreover, the sliding banner makes the advert interesting though its shortfall is that it provides less information and one has to look at the advertisement for more than once to actually read what each banner is written. Overall, the advertisement was effectively positioned on the website. The problem however was that the sliding motion was too fast and provided less information about this August 2017 intake especially on the requirements for application.

The sliding banner space is also too small for this advertisement but could be justifiable by the fact that there is a link to the university website where one can get more information on the

available degree programmes. The researcher is not impressed with the sliding banner advertisement and would prefer it if the banner was larger to provide more information and moving slower to give consumers a chance to actually read properly the advert. I would definitely consider using the sliding banner advertisement space if I have a link to a webpage of my own products or if I had less details to give out for my products because it has a better advantage over all the spaces on the website since that is the first thing every visitor to the website sees.

Furthermore, Fig.2 is an advertisement by National Tickets (<http://www.deepleague.co.zw/2017/05/ticket-sales-phone/>) which specializes in organizing and planning trips for consumers in the comfort of their homes without any need to go to the airport or bus terminus to book a seat or flight. It is more of a travel agent or planner. The advert is placed on the top row of advertisements near the sliding banner. There are several small pictures and text on the initial picture of the advert with purple being the dominant colour. Interested consumers then click on the picture and a larger page providing information on promotions and process on trips is provided.



Fig5. (Advertisement for National tickets)

After providing information on the available trips and prices, consumers are then encouraged to send a message on WhatsApp to the numbers that are provided below the page to book their trips. It also shows the number of views for the advertisement and location of the advertiser on

top of the page. This is efficient as it saves time for consumers in getting information. However, the advert is boring and has texts without any colours to keep the reader interested. It is also too long and does not specify if the services are also open to those consumers outside Harare.

The advert is also strategically placed as most of the consumers that get to visit the website will view the advert and click on the tab which will then give more information. The initial tab/picture however is crowded and does not give consumers an idea what it is exactly and therefore no encouragement to actually see what the tickets are for hence the initial banner was supposed to be visible and give consumers an idea of what these tickets are for. There are tags at the bottom of the page which gives consumers options on choosing what they want to know about exactly instead of reading everything.

Fig 3. is an advertisement on the bottom row of the website homepage advertising cypress trees (<http://www.deepleague.co.zw/2017/05/cypress-trees-for-sale/>). The advertisement is stamped 'free' indicating that it is a new user who is still using the free advertisement space. The initial picture of the advert is that of cypress trees and like all row advertisement requires a consumer to click on the picture and get more information on the trees. Unlike some of the advertisements where prices are provided on the picture, this advert will give accurate statistics on the actual number of consumers who clicked on the advert to get more information.



Fig6. (Advertisement for cypress trees)

Since it will be a free trial advert, it is not given top priority and also provides less information to lead on consumers but actually requires consumers to put in more work to get the information.

Hence this advertisement is poorly constructed and has nothing besides the picture and caption to draw in consumers. Also the position of this advertisement does not do any justice and has poor chances of drawing in consumers thus free trials on the website are not as effective compared to those spaces that are paid for.

It is worth noting that, advertisements are crowded on the homepage of the website hence each advert is given limited space which does not do justice to some advertisements since the aim would be to draw consumers at first glance. However the facility which enables consumers to get more information after clicking on the advert banner/picture justifies the small spaces initially provided. I would definitely use the services of Deepleague especially due to the fact that it provides statistics on the views I get on the advertisement, although I would definitely make sure I get the top banners and spaces so that I get the attention of consumers before they get bored on the website or find what they are looking for.

Lastly ,advertisement are put in different categories from latest ads, popular ads and random ads which will automatically give better coverage to the latest and popular ads disadvantaging the random ads. Also, advertisements are put in sections of business to business ads, baby and kids ads, fashion ads, community ads, electronics etc which makes it easier for consumers to get what they are targeting. As a consumer I would definitely visit Deepleague website to look for certain products as it is easier due to the categories however it can be confusing and overwhelming due to the different and numerous categories.

5.3 Consumers Perception of Deepleague Advertisements

In the world of online existence, what determines a business' success is its ability to draw in as many followers as possible and be able to keep them engaged so that they do not get bored and leave. These platforms have empowered consumers to connect, share, and collaborate, creating spheres of influence that have deeply distorted the way marketers engage in influencing activities (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011). Consumers on social media have a lot of power, and therefore determine whether they like the route being taken by any online organization by simply increasing in numbers or simply unsubscribing to that certain organization's website or account in the case where they lose interest.

In this research, consumers were put into clusters according to their age groups of 18-30; 30-45; 45 and above, a survey was then conducted through social media focus groups where they were asked several questions including why they follow and are members of Deepleague virtual communities and also what they think about the actual advertisements that they are exposed to. These clusters were made up of 60 members each to make a total of 180 members altogether. The clustered were then put in different virtual focus groups where the researcher was the moderator and asked several questions in a discursive manner as the respondents gave their perceptions and views.

Clusters were then put in separate virtual focus groups where certain issues were discussed through chatting to make everyone feel comfortable. They were asked more or less the same questions in all different clusters of different age groups. The results were that most individuals joined the virtual communities of Deepleague on social media to be on the lookout for advertisements of employment and properties while the remaining 20% were just virtual spectators waiting to see if they might come across something that they may like or needed as far as advertisements were concerned.

I classified the overall respondents into three groups which are: the advertisement seekers, advertisers and lastly the virtual window shoppers and spectators.

Age groups of clusters	Advertisers Seekers	Advertisers	Virtual Window shoppers and spectators
18-30 years	47%	30%	23.3%
30-45 years	33.3%	42%	25%
45+ years	22%	65%	13.3%

Fig7. Categories of Deepleague followers

The table above shows three different types followers of Deepleague social media accounts as classified by the researcher. This was after realizing that besides interacting with friends, people use social media for different reasons and in this case these people followed Deepleague social media account for different reasons. The three categories of Advertisement Seekers, Advertisers

and Virtual window shoppers and spectators are not the only specific explanations and reasons but were chosen by the researcher after getting answers from the clusters through online chatting where most of the people explained the reasons which fell into mostly these three categories.

Moreover, the researcher selected her clusters from the age of 18 because most of the people following Deepleague accounts are older and mature people ranging from that age while the teenagers mainly use social media for interacting with friends (Swetoslova 2013) and therefore one would rarely find teenagers following a business platform like this.

Respondents of the younger generation of 18-30 years old dominated mostly in the advertisement seekers group meaning their main reason was to view the advertisements looking for something of interest. Most of them expressed that the main reason why they were following Deepleague was the job vacancies section whereby they would be looking out for any advertisements for job opportunities while 70% of them actually admitted to even using the Mobi-jobs application. Advertisers in this age group cluster are usually the small business enterprises and startups who said they did not have much revenue to advertise on mass media while others were tapping in to get a bigger and wider coverage on their advertisements, while others were tapping in to get a bigger and wider coverage on their advertisements.

Virtual window shoppers are those people that just join for the sake of joining hoping to come across something of interest while some joined just because they heard about Deepleague and just wanted to see what it is about in passing.

In the middle-aged cluster of 30-45 years, advertisement seekers are less compared to the advertisers. This is because most of them have stable jobs and have established their businesses and careers or are only seeking to get more coverage of their advertisements for their products and services. Window shoppers are also limited in this cluster probably because most of the users of social media in this age group use social media to get their business done and a little bit of time wasting.

Lastly, the 45+years cluster boasts the biggest number of advertisers because they, like the middle aged cluster have established careers, finances, and businesses so are mainly trying to market their products and services as widely as they can. It is worth noting that most of them actually got to hear about Deepleague through electronic word of mouth and would rather prefer

Deepleague do the advertising for them since they do not know much about social media and advertising. Advertisement seekers and Window shoppers are very limited in this cluster mainly due to the fact that this age group does not really understand how to go about in using social media and therefore only joined Deepleague to advertise and market their goods and services.

It is worth noting that the consumers visited and made use of Deepleague services because of different reasons but however were mostly favorable of advertisements that did not require them to put in extra work in trying to get information and access. They however cited that most individual businesses that uploaded their own advertisements were not so good at making these adverts alluring to consumers and that they could actually tell if it was Deepleague which created the advert or not.

Conclusions drawn from this research shows that the younger generation of 18-30 years are versatile in their use of Deepleague and are following the organization's platform for their own benefits and opportunity seeking in employment or other opportunities, while others are just window shoppers. The middle aged and older age group however have more of an established and fixed reason why they are following Deepleague social media accounts which is to mainly advertise their small or bigger businesses. Also, online consumers prefer straight to the point advertisements that did not seem like work for the consumers as consumers quickly give up if the advert has too many links and processes. The advertisements need to be fun and also able to incorporate videos, audios and sliding banners to differentiate them from the adverts found on mass media.

5.4 Deepleague and the Process of Attracting Audiences

The researcher conducted e-mail interviews with the employees of Deepleague whereby she sent the founder, Sean Moyo and Stephen Denga who is the information technology administrator of Deepleague questions in trying to understand the labour and work they put in trying to get traffic to their website and social network sites. As mentioned before, Deepleague has only four employees: the founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the information administrator and lastly a team of two marketing executives. Hence there was no need for interviewing the marketing team since Sean Moyo is also part of the marketing team and oversees everything that goes on at the organization so this was a way of avoiding repetition.

5.4.1 Marketing Techniques in Online Advertising

The founder and CEO of Deepleague, Sean Moyo was able to shed more light on how they managed to get such a big following on social media and the work that they put in to continue getting more of their consumers and clients. The interview questions were mainly in trying to understand the marketing techniques that they use to get audiences and followers in the first place.

The main question was: How does Deepleague reach out to its potential customers and clients who then make use of these services?

He revealed that the only time they had to put in extra effort and work was when they had started back in 2012 and 2013 trying to get clients since a lot of people were still trying to grasp the concept of social media marketing and advertising. Since it is an online organization, he further explained that their profound presence on all the social media platforms played a part while also making sure that they were very active in engaging the audiences. As it grew in popularity and online presence, eventually the power of electronic word of mouth worked in their favor as they made sure that each client who made use of Deepleague services was left satisfied and always came back for more.

He attributes the growth in their following to electronic word of mouth whereby satisfied clients told other clients who then told other potential clients increasing the popularity of Deepleague in the process. In social media operations, electronic word of mouth is so powerful because the audiences and consumers tend to trust more what they hear from other audiences and consumers instead of what they hear directly from the business. This is mainly due to the fact that there is lack of trust on social media between consumers and businesses due to high number of cases related to scam. Hence potential consumers prefer to hear the good works about a business from a colleague, friend, or another member of a virtual community for them to actually get to use the services of that certain business.

As a way of getting positive electronic word of mouth being spread about Deepleague, the employees of Deepleague make it their number one priority to make sure the client is satisfied and always comes back for more for example on their website they give consumers free

advertorial trials where new visitors to the website can register and advertise their products and services for free so that they can get to try out how consumers will reach out in response or not.

Their services are advertised primarily online via the website, other websites by way of mutual link exchanges as well as the various social media particularly Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and LinkedIn. They also get advertised by default when they are invited to speak or exhibit at workshops, and also via radio interviews and talk shows. The brand also approaches potential clients in trying to secure advertisements.

The interviewee however explained that the social media business has also its limitations particularly in the issue of data tariffs in Zimbabwe which are very high such that too many expenses are accrued in securing a stable cable network which they can use any time since an online business requires attention 24/7 (researcher ; Sean Moyo; 27February 2017;via e-mail).

5.5 Challenges and Drawbacks in Social Media Advertising

Stephen Denga is the Information Technology ‘guru’ behind the brand Deepleague. The researcher interviewed him to get an understanding of the technical ‘nitty gritty’ associated with running an online business. The interviewee articulated that the information technology part of social media business required perfection to protect the site and accounts from hackers, viruses and scam workers. He is the one responsible for propagation of content, meaning all the advertisements are supposed to be posted and uploaded on all social media accounts while also ensuring that the website is up and running all the time so that advertisers do not face challenges in uploading their advertisements.

Asked about the challenges they face technically, the interviewee explained how the control of the government sometimes affect their business and gave an example of the July shut down of networks.

In July 2016, the government through the Ministry of ICT shut down all networks as a way of countering the #Thisflag demonstrations that were being organized and planned on social media such that the whole day we were just idle at work without any business to do since our clients and audiences were offline while also our cable network was affected (researcher; Stephen Denga; 29 February 2017; via e-mail).

The interviewee also cited another case where the online business was affected early January 2017 where mobile operators were involved in data tariffs wars whereby Postal Telecommunications Regulation Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) set high floor data margins for telecommunication companies to charge their consumers. Econet was quick to increase the data charges and received major backlash from the public and other Telecommunications companies which was then reduced after three days. This incident was also a setback according to the interviewer because some followers and advertisements could not afford the data charges that were set by the telecommunications companies.

Information gathered from both interviews proved to be helpful and insightful for the researcher as she got to understand the work behind running an online business and also managed to get pointers on how to make a success out of the online business by simply giving the audiences and clients first preference since they have more power and can determine the success or failure of a business.

However through these interviews, the researcher got to understand that online business is not as rosy and easy as it appears to be especially in Zimbabwe where data is expensive and also continuous risk of government intervention. One big challenge of social media especially in Zimbabwe is that it is not fully recognized and therefore is not given much credit or representation when it comes to their needs and grievances. The only board in existence is the Zimbabwe Online Content Creators (ZOCC) which has not yet done anything profound as far as solving social media operations problems and challenges (www.TechUnzipped.com).

Even more disappointingly, the Zimbabwean government seeks to control and regulate the use of social media through the Cyber Crime Bill which is yet to be passed but will definitely limit the power of online operations.

5.6 Clientele satisfaction with online advertisements on Deepleague

I conducted questionnaire interviews with the selected advertisers/clients of Deepleague which are Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe (CBZ), National Tickets, Zimbabwe development fund (Zimdef), Timeless books, Zimtech Quality Bales and several other advertisers. As mentioned in Chapter three, I selected specific organizations that I felt would represent other advertisers well and also be able to answer questions with regards to this research. It is worth noting that not all organizations responded to the questionnaires and therefore had to work with what I had. I selected a total of 30 advertisers whom I emailed questionnaires and received 20 responses hence I ended up working with the responses from these 20 organizations.

The main reason for interviewing and conducting this survey on advertisers of Deepleague was in trying to uncover if these advertisers were happy and satisfied with the services that they got from Deepleague. Of the 20 clients that got to respond to the questionnaires, 12 clients expressed that they were satisfied with the services that they got from Deepleague and would certainly use the advertising services again. They agreed that the advertisements that were posted on Deepleague platforms paid off as they got calls from consumers who wanted to make use of their services. National Tickets actually experienced a 10 percent increase in consumers from social media after advertising on Deepleague considering the fact that it received a total viewership of the advertisement of about 200 views in less than a week.

Furthermore, 5 organizations expressed that they were not so satisfied with the advertising services of Deepleague and they did not see a significant growth in their consumers or calls from consumers trying to purchase the products that they would have advertised. Asked if they would consider using the services again, 3 of them expressed that they will maybe try to use the services again since they were not that bad while the remaining 2 said they would not consider using the services again.

Lastly, the remaining 2 clients from the total of 20 organizations clearly expressed that they did not want to use the services of Deepleague again and were not satisfied at all with the services that they got. No significant growth in their business was noted and therefore do not see any reason why they need to bother advertising on social media again.

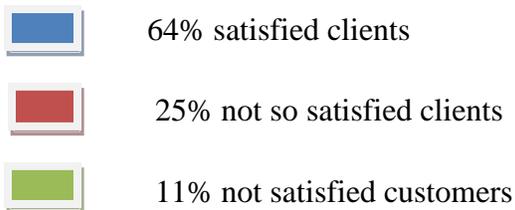
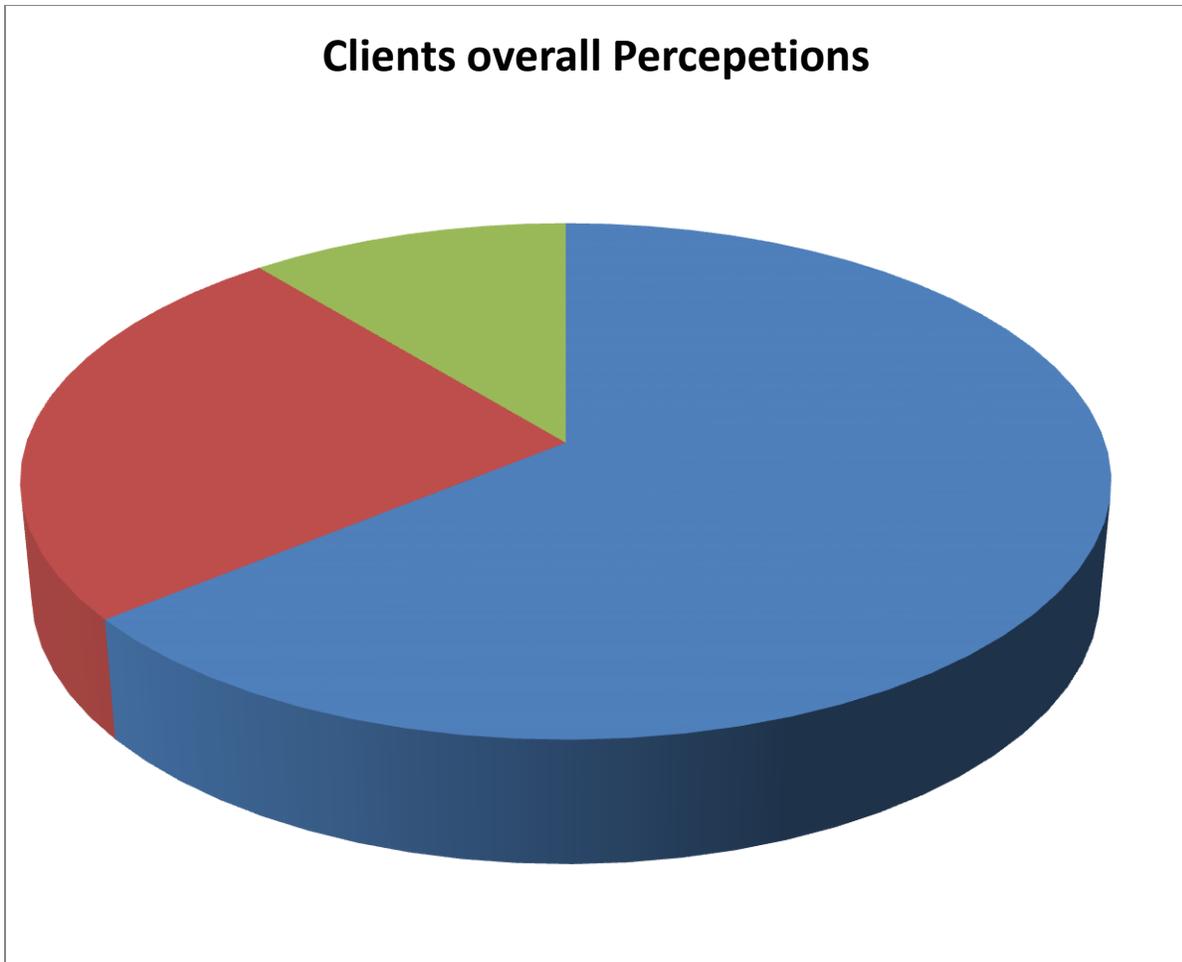


Fig8.Clients satisfaction chart with Deepleague services

It is worth noting that from the results collected from the questionnaire interviews, most of the sampled clients were satisfied with the services of Deepleague and saw a significant growth and response to their businesses either from consumers calling to purchase services or from people asking about their products. They were actually impressed with the fact that they were able to view the numbers and statistics of people who clicked on their advertisement. However some clients said that they were not happy at all with the services and would not consider advertising with Deepleague again and would rather use social media because they were either no significant

growth or progress to their businesses as far as consumers and interest is concerned. The main problem was that even when they received good numbers in the views of their advertisements, a few people actually reached out to purchase the product such that they actually suspected that Deepleague was exaggerating the statistics of views.

It is worth noting that, Deepleague's customer oriented way of business is a very good example of how a business can make it on social media platforms. Social media consumers have a variety of choice to choose from and have nothing to lose hence it is up to the business to make every encounter with a consumer worthwhile to keep them interested. Deepleague posts inspirational Christian videos on its Facebook page to keep clients interested and motivated. In line with (Plessis 2010) organizations should make it a point to try and give consumers what they want to make sure they retain the followers and audiences they have on social media platforms. However, like any normal business, some clients would not be satisfied with services and would choose to do the advertising themselves or use another platform or route as online marketing does not work for all businesses due to several factors which include the product being advertised, target audience and the makeup of that advertisement among several other factors.

5.7 Business Interaction with online consumers

The researcher in this case took part in the participation of the research by interacting with some of the advertisers like any ordinary consumer. I saw an advertisement about Timeline books on Deepleague advertising Facebook page. Timeline books is a small business that sells all types of books from inspirational books to relationship and Christian books by reputable authors like Steve Harvey and several others. The books were sold at \$1 for four soft copies of my choice which would then be e-mailed to me or sent directly on WhatsApp. The advertisement had a link to Deepleague website where I could then see the whole advertisement. I contacted the number that was below the advertisement where the owner, Mr Choga responded rather late and we managed to agree that I would send him the \$2 for 8 books that I wanted and he would send them as soon as he got the money.

To my relief the encounter went well and I received my books. However I realized the whole time I was interacting with Mr Choga I was scared of being scammed and losing my money without getting any books. Also, I did not like the fact that Mr Choga responded to my messages

late and did not try to put any effort in engaging with me as a consumer to make me want more of the product he was selling.

In addition, the researcher took time to observe the interactions that Deepleague had with consumers and also how the followers responded to advertisements that they saw on the social media platforms. I observed that followers responded differently to different advertisements on social media platforms. On Facebook, followers would simply like the advertisement while a few only added comments asking about the service advertised. A lot of followers responded a lot to job offer advertisements by commenting saying they were interested in the jobs and simply put in their contact details for the advertiser to call them.

On WhatsApp, as a member of a group that I joined for Deepleague general advertisements I observed that only small businesses and individuals took time to advertise their products on this WhatsApp group. What shocked me even more was that the advertisers kept sending the same advertisements every time, leaving no space for new advertisements which was quite annoying. On Twitter, followers simply re-tweeted the advertisements that they liked while others continued to ask about the product advertised in response to the tweet. Also web interception proved that visits to Deepleague website increased when they advertised on the other social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter engaging and informing consumers about these advertisements.

The results drawn from these research methods were that small businesses lack knowledge in how to treat online consumers. Unlike big businesses like Econet which respond instantly to messages from consumers on social media, small business owners have not yet mastered the art of customer orientation. Moreover, online customers are lazy and actually need to be continuously engaged for them to respond in time.

Deepleague founder, Sean Moyo keeps consumers and advertisers engaged in conversations even on Deepleague advertising WhatsApp groups to facilitate flow of information and keep the platform running.

5.8 Discussion of Findings

The research proved to be very informative and findings managed to answer several questions that were raised in the research. These findings include:

- Consumers need to be engaged in order to draw in more followers and consumers for an online business. As seen from the way Deepleague interacts with its followers and clients, businesses really need to take time and interact with consumers getting to know what their consumers want and expect from them. Deepleague attributes its popularity online to good consumer orientation which resulted in good electronic word of mouth about the business drawing in more consumers for the business thus leading to its profound presence on social media in Zimbabwe. It is worth noting however that having a big following of people on social media does not guarantee success of the business because any silly mistake, consumers will simply choose to un-follow the platforms.
- An online business in Zimbabwe is not safe from government control. Due to the repressive nature of the mainstream media in Zimbabwe, the ordinary citizens in Zimbabwe are now using social media as a platform where they discuss about certain political issues without fear of being arrested. As a result, the government is continuously seeking ways to control the use of social media by ordinary citizens just like the #ThisFlag incident which happened in July 2017. Moreover prices of data in Zimbabwe are ridiculously high compared to other countries like South Africa such that online businesses in Zimbabwe will continue lagging behind as some consumers still depend on mainstream media and therefore will not get to support the business.
- Lack of trust will always be a challenging factor when it comes to online business operations. This is in the sense that as online businesses are growing, scam workers are also on the rise and cases of people being scammed continue to rise even in Zimbabwe. As a result some online audiences are still skeptical about purchasing goods and services from online businesses especially in cases of making online payments.
- Online advertisements should differ from those of mainstream media to get more attention. The advantage of using social media for advertising is that it has a high level of interactivity where consumers can participate and interact with businesses. Online audiences are not interested with the usual advertisements similar to those on mainstream

media hence businesses should take advantage of this and be able to make use of all aspects of social media such as live advertising, interaction, story advertisements and several other aspects. These types of advertisements interest online communities and therefore will get more attention for the business and products.

- Mass media are still a significant platform when advertising and getting coverage for a business. In as much as social media is gaining in popularity and gaining ground in the advertising industry, businesses still need mass media to draw in consumers who are still oblivious to the uses of social media especially in the business sector. Depeleague sometimes has interviews on mass media platforms such as Star FM and are actually hoping to tap into mass media operations either by opening up a weekly paper to draw in the consumers who have no access to social media. Hence as powerful as social media might be, businesses still need to make use of mass media to strengthen their consumer base. Hence social media advertising can work together with mass media advertising to bring out even better results for a business.
- Not all social media platforms are for businesses. This can be drawn from the fact that Depeleague advertised on almost all of its platforms but received different reactions and responses on every different platform. A business is supposed to target a social media platform that has a high number of its possible consumers instead of wasting time and resources advertising on all platforms.

5.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented the data findings of the research and managed to answer several questions of the research. The results were largely qualitative and needed explaining however there was also quantitative data presentation in trying to determine the number of audiences and traffic of the website. Several themes were outlined to clearly outline the findings and results of this research.

Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The chapter will present summary and conclusions of the use of social media as an advertising platform for products and services by Deepleague. Recommendations for Deepleague will also be presented in this chapter.

6.2 Summary

The research was on the use of social media as an advertising platform by Deepleague for products and services. The main aim was in trying to unveil and articulate the benefits and drawbacks for using social media as an online business in a less developed country like Zimbabwe.

The research was mainly focusing on the benefits and drawbacks for businesses not consumers. Deepleague does a lot of advertising for several companies from banks, schools, universities, bookshops and also individuals on social media. Social media platforms include www.deepleague.co.zw which is the organization's main platform and followed by other platforms on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and WhatsApp.

This was after realizing that businesses in Zimbabwe especially Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) were increasingly emerging however mostly with no significant growth and success. Business owners lack knowledge and skills on how to properly and effectively propagate their content and advertise on social media. Social media advertising has more to it than uploading or posting an advertisement online and hoping online audiences will somehow come across this advert leading to the success of a business.

The study was investigating from the start of Deepleague in 2013 to present day and how it attracted its followers and audiences. Deepleague is rated among the top 3 e-commerce platforms in Zimbabwe (www.Techunzipped.com). It provides businesses with a platform for advertising their products and services while also advertising on behalf of some companies. The main reason why companies advertise on Deepleague instead of just advertising on their own is because

Deepleague has a humongous following on social media amounting to 400 000 followers in total on Facebook only. However not every company that advertises on Deepleague expressed satisfaction with their services and Deepleague still needs to work on several issues as there is need for improvement.

Several factors have been attributed to the profound presence of Deepleague which include the powerful electronic word of mouth from satisfied clients and good customer orientation. The organization also has mobile services like Mobi-Jobs and Mobi-homes which specifically targets consumers interested in job hunting and properties respectively to get advertisements which are strictly on the products and services that they will be looking for exactly. This is one of the main advantages for consumers and reasons why consumers favor advertisements on social media because they give them freedom to choose the type of advertisements that they want to be exposed to compared to mass media where consumers and audiences are just bombarded with advertisements without a choice.

It is of interest to note that however social media administrators and owners however use personal information about users to select the advertisements that are more likely to be of interest for that individual for example a user on Facebook who follows a lot of pages and groups about models and fashion is automatically exposed to adverts of this type. However what is annoying is the fact that social media has a lot of organizations of interest such that audiences now go with what is trending hence if a user switches to liking pages about politics and elections probably because it will be trending, adverts about that certain point of interest are then exposed to the user. The user has more power though because he can choose to like or dislike the certain advert of product.

Social media use as an advertising platform is largely beneficial for businesses as it enables businesses to tap into the global market and overlook geographical boundaries. Businesses can now get consumers from as far as United Kingdom and other countries. Moreover it cuts down expenses as the use of online platforms does not require a lot of manual employees hence a business can be run by a few people and computers saving money. Deepleague has only four employees including the owner.

As discovered through the research, consumers on social media are the backbone of online advertising as everything revolves around impressing and retaining these customers and followers. Consumers have the freewill and freedom to choose what they want or not. If a user does not like a certain page or product or service, they will simply unlike or un-follow the social media page and surf somewhere else so companies give first priority to impressing these consumers and followers.

Therefore it is every responsibility of a business to keep consumers engaged to keep them interested like what Deepleague does through posting jokes, and inspirational videos. However a big following on social media does not guarantee the success of a business, different social media platforms are used by different users with different reasons hence the secret is knowing which social media platform has the highest target audience for that certain product and maximize activity on that certain platform instead of trying to use all of them.

Social media advertising is not as rosy and easy as it appears to be and businesses have to be prepared for anything since anything can happen and social media has no guarantee due to its vulnerability to scams and hackers from all over the world.

Moreover, in Zimbabwe there is an increasing risk of government control of these social media with the revision board responsible of social media being enacted in to office recently in May 2017 proving that government will try to control activities on social media especially with the incoming elections in 2018. Also, the price of data is ridiculously crazy in the long run and requires financial standing to afford to have internet connection every time. The benefits of using social media as an advertising platform are widely acknowledged as its capacity to allow consumers and audiences to interact and communicate freely with organizations. Consumers can express their gratitude and grievances on social media which could prove fatal or profitable for any organization as users trust each other compared to trusting those certain businesses. There is still too much lack of trust between consumers and businesses online. Even businesses are still facing challenges whereby a consumer orders a certain product and later on decides not to go through with the purchasing and in some cases disappears without paying.

Social media use in Zimbabwe as a business platform is still lagging behind as businesses lack skills and proper know how of how to draw in consumers and users. Also, consumers are still

unwilling to make use of these services as there is lack of trust and people would rather interact face to face with a business owner and see products in reality to actually purchase products or services. There is a significant growth however in the use of social media and businesses in Zimbabwe showing that people are now slowly embracing although it is still lagging behind compared to several other African countries like South Africa and Nigeria.

The researcher faced several challenges in this research which included poor response from interviewees, social network sites however facilitated communication because the researcher was able to interview and interact with informers without any need for the researcher to actually travel and get where they are as long as she had internet connection.

6.3 Recommendations to Deepleague

Deepleague has managed to establish a profound reputation online as can be seen through the many followers that it has managed to obtain on its social media platforms. However, the organization is recommended to tap into the offline audiences and be able to get maximum profits. This is in the sense that their products and services cater for everyone but some people in Zimbabwe are still skeptical about online advertisements and buying products online and even believing the advertisements. Hence for the improvement of the business, the organization could maybe at least find ways to cater for these offline consumers probably through a weekly pamphlet with advertisements and gain from both markets.

Moreover, businesses are embracing the process of advertising on social media because it is cheaper and even more interesting because it incorporates live feeds, audios, slide shows and several other aspects that keep the adverts interesting for consumers. Deepleague is recommended to embrace these features and provide spaces for businesses on the website where videos and audios can also be uploaded to keep the whole business interesting.

Lastly, Deepleague tends to neglect some of the social media platforms especially on Twitter and Instagram. This is a disadvantage for the business as some users prefer using other social media platforms over others. Hence in order to cater for all users, Deepleague should not create ghost accounts but should ensure that all accounts on all platforms are active and engaging enough for consumers.

6.4 Conclusion

It is worth noting that social media is increasingly gaining ground and popularity in the business sector and businesses especially in less developed countries should embrace this use and even be able to expose their products and services to the outside world and consumers due to the creation of a global village and global markets. The biggest advantage of using social media to advertise a business is the fact that it does not limit the business to a certain geographical location but anyone from all over the world can tap in and be able to purchase a product online. In Zimbabwe, however businesses should try and embrace the whole concept which enables users to pay online.

Zimbabwean businesses are still lagging behind as far as social media advertising operations is concerned probably due to technophobia problems in people and also lack of resources such that businesses end up just advertising online without knowing what to do exactly. Some businesses make use of opinion leaders to attract attention to their business whereby they get someone with a large following on social media to talk about their product with his or her followers and in the process advertising the product and business.

There is need for social media training for business owners and operators so that they can get more insight and knowhow of how to properly make use of social media to their advantage especially considering the fact that social media advertising is beneficial for the business financially.

The study however could not determine how profitable and successful an online business could be by incorporating mass and social media advertising and therefore leaves room for future studies. It is worth noting that an online business requires just as much technique and skill in advertising and businesses use several techniques such as good customer orientation, use of online opinion leaders, engaging consumers and followers among several other techniques outlined in the research. There is still room for improvement in the online advertisement sector for businesses and are still to fully experience the maximum benefits of this platform hence there is need for training and technological resources.

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Interviews

(Researcher, Sean Moyo, 27 February 2017 via e-mail)

(Researcher, Stephen Denga, 29 February 2017 via e-mail)

Appendix 1

Interview guide for Deepleague CEO, Sean Moyo

1. How was Deepleague initially started and how did the public respond to it back then
2. How do you get your profits and capital?
3. What methods do you use in getting and drawing in consumers who then make use of your services?
4. How much do you charge for an advertisement to be uploaded on Deepleague website?
5. What are the challenges you are facing as an online business?
6. Have you ever tried an offline business and compared to an online business, which one is better?
7. Can you compare the responses from back when you started the business and now towards your advertisements and platforms from both consumers and clients?
8. How can you describe the current attitudes of consumers towards your business, what is the general attitude and towards the advertisements you broadcast?
9. How do you deal with negative feedback and comments from your consumers and followers on social media?
10. Which one can you say is the best online platform for your business?
11. What are the benefits that you have gained from running an online business?
12. Where do you see your business in the next 3 years ?

Appendix 2

Interview guide for Stephen Denga, the IT executive of Deepleague

1. Can you describe and explain a normal work day at Deepleague
2. What technical expenses are involved in the running and maintaining of Deepleague social media platforms?
3. What challenges and drawbacks have you faced so far in the technical department?
4. Can an online business run without any knowledge of the technical stuff?
5. What are the advantages?
6. Where do you see Deepleague in the next 3 years?