



**Doctor of Business Administration**

**(DBA)**

**ZCAS University**

An investigation of the effectiveness of social media marketing on the marketing performance of  
Selected Higher Education Institutions in Zambia

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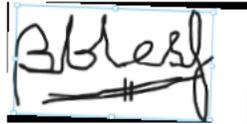


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## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to my wife Wilma Nyasha Mukosa and my children Angela Mutale Mukosa, Anashe Chebo Mukosa, Akudzwe Lumba Mukosa and Lutanda Anesu Mukosa who have always been around me during the period I took up this study. I would also like to dedicate this research to the memory of my late brother Ian Kangwa Mukosa and my Late Mother Thresa Mukosa who were ever passionate about my education and encouraged me to excel in my schoolwork.

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CONTENTS	
COPYRIGHT NOTICE .....	i
DECLARATION .....	ii
Certificate of Approval .....	iii
DEDICATION .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xiii
LIST OF TABLES .....	xv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xvii
RESEARCH TITLE.....	xviii
ZCAS-U THEMATIC AREA.....	xviii
ABSTRACT.....	xix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	1
1.1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Background of the study .....	2
1.3 Statement of the Problem .....	4
1.4 Purpose of the study .....	5
1.5 General research Objective .....	6
1.5.1 Specific objectives and questions.....	6
1.6 Hypotheses .....	7
1.7 Justification of the Study.....	8
1.8 Scope of the Study.....	9
1.9 The research concepts .....	9
1.10 Dissertation/Thesis Outline .....	10
1.11 Chapter Summary.....	11
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	12
2.1.1 Introduction .....	12
2.2 The meaning of social media .....	12

2.3	Higher education Institutions (HEIs) .....	13
2.4	The concept of marketing and social media.....	14
2.5	The advent of social media.....	14
2.6	Social media and interactivity .....	15
2.7	Definitions of social media platforms .....	15
2.8	Social media adoption in the education sector .....	16
2.9	The use of social media in HEIs in the USA .....	16
2.10	The use of social media marketing in HEIs in Wales (Europe).....	17
2.11	The use of social media in Australia .....	18
2.12	The use of social media in HEIs in India (Asia) .....	19
2.13	Studies on the use of social media in HEIs in Kenya (East Africa).....	20
2.14	Studies on the use of social media in HEIs in Nigeria (West Africa).....	20
2.14.1	Influence of social media in Nigeria .....	21
2.15	Studies on the use of social media in HEIS in Morocco (North Africa).....	21
2.16	Studies on the use of social media in HEIs in South Africa (Southern Africa) .....	22
2.17	Studies related to social media in Zambia.....	23
2.17.1	Social media regulation .....	25
2.18	Limitations of Legal frameworks in Zambia.....	26
2.18.1	Emerging use of social media platforms .....	27
2.19	Contemporary studies on social media.....	28
2.21.1	Social media marketing poularity during COVID-19 .....	29
2.22	Implication of the latest findings on this research.....	30
2.23	Theoretical framework .....	30
2.24	Synthesis of literature review .....	35
2.24.1	Literature linking social media and marketing concepts.....	35

2.24.2	The concept of social media marketing.....	35
2.24.3	The relationship between Social Media Marketing and Marketing .....	36
2.24.4	Harmonizing Differences in the definitions of social media platforms .....	37
2.24.5	Authors who have provided definitions .....	38
2.24.6	Researched differences in the use of social media platforms in HEIs .....	38
2.24.6.1	Differences in the use of Social media in HEIs in Kenya.....	39
2.24.6.2	Differences in the use of Social media in HEIs in Nigeria.....	39
2.24.6.3	Differences in the use of Social media in HEIs in South Africa .....	40
2.24.6.4	Comparisons of the differences in use of social media.....	40
2.24.6.5	Harmonizing the findings on Social media usage.....	41
2.24.7	Researched similarities in the use of social media marketing in HEIs .....	43
2.24.7.1	Most popular social media platform in different countries.....	43
2.24.8	Convergence of the social media theory and the brand loyalty theory .....	44
2.24.9	Incorporating the social media theory .....	45
2.24.10	Implication of the literature on the research objectives .....	46
2.24.11	Mapping of objectives in the literature review .....	46
2.24.11.1	Research objective 4 .....	46
2.24.11.2	Research objective 3 .....	47
2.24.11.3	Research objective 2 .....	47
2.24.11.4	Research objective 1 .....	48
2.25	Conceptual Framework .....	48
2.25.7	Measuring effectiveness.....	49
2.25.8	Social media effectiveness .....	50
2.25.9	Marketing effectiveness .....	51
2.25.10	Explaining the independent variable.....	52

2.25.11	Outcomes of social media marketing studies in Zambia .....	53
2.25.12	Implications of COVID-19 and the Adoption of technology .....	54
2.25.13	The role of social media in branding HEIs .....	54
2.25.14	Explaining the intervening variables .....	55
2.26	Measures of social media marketing performance.....	55
2.27	Social media marketing and marketing performance.....	56
2.28	The relationship among the variables.....	58
2.29	A summary of the social media intervening variables .....	59
2.29.7	Engagement.....	60
2.29.7.1	Engagement in this research .....	62
2.29.8	Reach.....	62
2.29.8.1	Social media and referral marketing.....	63
2.29.8.2	Reach in this research .....	64
2.29.9	Conversion .....	65
2.29.9.1	Conversion and referral marketing .....	66
2.29.9.2	Conversion in this research.....	67
2.29.10	Lead.....	67
2.29.10.1	Lead in this research .....	69
2.29.11	The Relationship among the social media variables.....	69
2.29.12	Explaining the Dependent Variables .....	71
2.30	The shift from traditional Marketing to Social Media Marketing.....	72
2.31	Measuring Marketing performance .....	72
2.31.7	Increased student numbers .....	73
2.31.8	Increased Revenue.....	75
2.31.9	Increased Market share.....	76

2.32	Gaps identified in the literature .....	76
2.33	Chapter summary .....	78
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....		79
3.1	Introduction .....	79
3.2	Research Onion .....	80
3.3	Research Philosophy .....	80
3.3.1	Philosophical choice .....	81
3.4	Nature of Research .....	81
3.5	Research Approach .....	83
3.5.1	Deductive and inductive .....	83
3.6	Methodological choice .....	83
3.7	Qualitative Data collection Techniques .....	84
3.8	Quantitative Data Techniques .....	85
3.9	Sampling Plan .....	85
3.9.1	Sampling Plan - Qualitative study .....	85
3.10	Justification of the sample size.....	90
3.10.1	Quantitative study .....	90
3.10.2	Qualitative study .....	91
3.10.3	Research Design.....	91
3.11	Time horizon .....	92
3.11	Triangulation design.....	93
3.12	Data Analysis .....	95
3.14	Ethical considerations .....	97
3.15	Chapter summary .....	98
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS .....		99
4.1	Introduction .....	99

4.2	Actual qualitative data collected .....	99
4.3	Actual quantitative data collected .....	100
4.4	Data reliability test .....	100
4.5	Data normality tests.....	101
4.6	Survey responses and analysis .....	104
4.6.1	General information about respondents .....	104
4.7	Demographic data of respondents .....	106
4.7.1	Age range of respondents.....	107
4.8	HEIs using social media platforms.....	109
4.8.1	Identifying social media platforms used in HEIs.....	111
4.8.2	Identifying social media platforms that respondents are signed up for .....	113
4.8.3	The most common social media platforms in HEIs .....	114
4.8.4	Common social media platforms used for Marketing HEIs .....	116
4.8.5	Other social media platforms used in HEIs .....	117
4.8.6	Relationship between age and social media platform signed up for.....	118
4.8.7	The relationship between social media platform signed up for and Gender.....	120
4.9	Social media and student numbers .....	122
4.9.1	Social media platforms influencing the choice of learning institutions.....	126
4.9.2	Social media platforms providing information .....	127
4.9.3	Social media platforms and student interactions .....	129
4.9.4	Social media can increase sales revenue.....	130
4.9.5	Social media makes it easier to make payments to HEI .....	131
4.9.6	Correlation analysis- Can social media increase revenue and make it easy for students to make payment.....	132
4.10	Effectiveness of social media on marketing performance .....	133
4.10.1	HEIs social media platform designs .....	134
4.11	Identifying Social media platforms used in HEIs .....	136
4.11.1	The Most effective social media platform to market HEIs in Zambia .....	137
4.11.2	Normality test.....	140

4.12	Extent to which SMM leads to higher market share in HEIs .....	157
4.13	CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	168
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....		169
5.1	Introduction .....	169
5.2	Common social media platforms in HEIs .....	169
5.2.1	A model for SMM in HEIs .....	172
5.3	Social Media and Student numbers .....	174
5.3.1	Adverts and information influence student numbers .....	175
5.3.2	Contribution of social media marketing to overall marketing performance.....	176
5.4	Social media increasing market share .....	178
5.5	Return on marketing investments.....	179
5.6	Research implications .....	181
5.7	Contribution to the body of knowledge.....	182
5.7.1	Effectiveness of social media marketing .....	183
5.7.2	Development of a model for marketing HEIs.....	183
5.8	Conclusion and Recommendations .....	184
5.8.1	Reccomendations to HEIs .....	184
5.8.2	Recommendations for future studies.....	185
5.9	CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	186
6	References .....	187
Appendix 1: Non- disclosure agreement.....		214
Appendix 2: Structured Questionnaire.....		215
Appendix 3: Semi structured Interview .....		218
Appendix 4 Summary of main Literature in the study.....		220

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1.1: SIMPLIFIED RESEARCH OUTLINE .....	10
<i>FIGURE 2.2: BRAND LOYALTY MODEL</i> .....	33
<i>FIGURE 2.3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</i> .....	49
<i>FIGURE 2.4: THE ASSUMPTION ON HIGH SMM AND LOW SMM</i> .....	57
FIGURE 2.5: ELEMENTS OF SMM.....	71
FIGURE 3.4: RESEARCH UNION .....	80
FIGURE 3.1: TRIANGULATION MODEL FOR QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA.....	93
FIGURE 3.2: QUALITATIVE & QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH MODEL .....	94
FIGURE 3.3: ANALYSIS OF INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES .....	96
FIGURE 4.1: NORMALITY TEST 1 .....	101
FIGURE 4.2: NON-NORMAL DISTRIBUTION QQ PLOT .....	102
FIGURE 4.3: NORMALITY TEST 2 .....	103
FIGURE 4.4: COMPARISON OF RESPONSES FROM PRIVATE AND PUBLIC HEIS.....	105
FIGURE 4.5: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF RESPONDENTS.....	106
FIGURE 4.6: AGE RANGE OF RESPONDENTS .....	108
FIGURE 4.7: SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS.....	110
FIGURE 4.8: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS MAINLY USED IN HEIS .....	112
FIGURE 4.9: COMBINATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS SIGNED UP FOR BY THE RESPONDENTS.....	113
FIGURE 4.10: POPULARITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM AMONG STUDENTS IN HEIS.....	114
FIGURE 4.11: COMMON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN HEIS.....	116
FIGURE 4.12: OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED IN HEIS.....	117

FIGURE 4.13: CORRELATION BETWEEN AGE RANGE AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM SIGNED UP FOR .....	120
FIGURE 4.15: EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN IMPROVING STUDENT NUMBERS.....	123
FIGURE 4.17: SKEWNESS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTS .....	142
FIGURE 4.18: SKEWNESS ON THE QUESTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA CAN INCREASE STUDENT NUMBERS .....	143
FIGURE 4.19: HYPOTHESIS TEST RESULTS .....	151
FIGURE 4.19: SOCIAL MEDIA INCREASING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT NUMBERS .....	158
FIGURE 4.20: MEASURES OF RETURN ON INVESTMENT .....	160
FIGURE 4.21: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLANS FOR HEIS .....	163
FIGURE 4.22: MONITORING SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES .....	165
FIGURE 4.23: SOCIAL MEDIA GENERATING REVENUE.....	167
FIGURE 5.1: SOCIAL MEDIA MIX .....	170
FIGURE 5.2: MODEL FOR SMM IN HEIS IN ZAMBIA.....	172
FIGURE 5.3: MEASURES OF MARKETING PERFORMANCE FOR HEIS IN ZAMBIA .....	177
FIGURE 5.4: REVISED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....	180

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 2.1 MAIN STUDIES RELATING TO SOCIAL MEDIA IN ZAMBIA.....	23
TABLE 2.2: LITERATURE AUTHORS ON THE SOCIAL MEDIA CONCEPT .....	36
TABLE 2.3 : AUTHORS ON THE DIFFERENCES ON SOCIAL MEDIA DEFINITIONS .....	38
TABLE 2.4 : AUTHORS ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN HEIS .....	42
TABLE 2.6 : POPULARITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN EUROPE, ASIA, AMERICA & AUSTRALIA	
TABLE 2.7 : EXPLAINING ENGAGEMENT, REACH, LEAD AND CONVERSATION .....	59
TABLE 3.1: SELECTED SAMPLE FROM THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES .....	87
TABLE 3.2: SELECTED SAMPLE FROM THE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES .....	88
TABLE 3.3: ESTIMATED STUDENT POPULATION IN HEIS .....	89
TABLE 4.1: CRONBACH ALPHA TEST.....	100
TABLE 4.2: NAME OF HEIS AND FREQUENCY RESPONSES .....	104
TABLE 4.3: STATISTICS WHAT IS YOUR GENDER.....	107
TABLE 4.4: STATISTICS ON WHAT IS YOUR AGE RANGE .....	108
TABLE 4.5: STATISTICS ON DOES YOUR INSTITUTION USE SOCIAL MEDIA .....	111
TABLE 4.6: DATA SET FOR THE MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM AMONG STUDENTS IN HEIS .....	115
TABLE 4.7: CORRELATION RESULTS.....	119
TABLE 4.8: CORRELATION BETWEEN GENDER AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS SIGNED UP FOR ...	121
TABLE 4.9: SOCIAL MEDIA INCREASING STUDENT NUMBERS.....	122
TABLE 4.10: RESPONSE WHETHER SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTS CAUSE RESPONDENTS TO VISIT PARTICULAR LEARNING INSTITUTIONS.....	124
TABLE 4.11: SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF LEARNING INSTITUTION.....	126
TABLE 4.12: SOCIAL MEDIA PROVIDING INFORMATION .....	127
TABLE 4.13: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND STUDENT INTERACTION.....	129
TABLE 4.14: SOCIAL MEDIA INCREASING SALES REVENUE .....	130
TABLE 4.15: SOCIAL MEDIA MAKES IT EASY TO MAKE PAYMENT .....	131

TABLE 4.16: CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INCREASING PAYMENT AND INCREASING SALES REVENUE.....	132
TABLE 4.17: SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS OVERALL EFFECT ON MARKETING HEIS .....	133
TABLE 4.18: INSTITUTIONAL PAGE DESIGN .....	134
TABLE 4.19: SOCIAL MEDIA NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR DECISIONS TO ENROLL IN COURSES .....	135
TABLE 4.20: WHICH IS THE MOST COMMON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM COMBINATION USED IN YOUR INSTITUTION.....	136
TABLE 4.21: WHICH IS THE BEST SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM FOR MARKETING HEIS IN ZAMBIA...	137
TABLE 4.22: SUMMARY OF STATISTICS .....	138
TABLE 4.23: EVIDENCE OF SKEWNESS AND KURTOSIS .....	141
TABLE 4.24: CORRELATION BETWEEN DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES .....	142
TABLE 4.25: CODING QUESTIONS FOR CORRELATION.....	145
TABLE 4.26: CORRELATIONS BETWEEN DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES .....	146
TABLE 4.27: REGRESSION ANALYSIS SUMMARY .....	147
TABLE 4.28: MODEL SUMMARY OF REGRESSION.....	149
TABLE 4.31: CHI SQUARE ANALYSIS .....	155
TABLE 5.1: STATISTICS ON SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT IN HEIS IN ZAMBIA .....	173
TABLE 5.2 : TRIANGULATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA INCREASING STUDENT NUMBERS.....	174

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

Gross Domestic products (GDP). .....	10
Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) .....	4
Educational Services export (ESE),.....	10
Higher Education Authority (HEA).....	6
Institutions (HEIs).....	4
Marketing Investment (RMI).....	19
ROI: Return on Investment.....	23
Social media marketing (SMM).....	16

## **RESEARCH TITLE**

An investigation of the effectiveness of social media marketing on the marketing performance of selected Higher Education Institutions in Zambia

## **ZCAS-U THEMATIC AREA**

This research falls under theme 2 of the ZCAS University thematic area, which is Business Innovation, since it seeks to provide a business solution to the educational industry by creating a social media model for marketing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Zambia. The research also aims at developing a social media marketing strategy for HEIs and makes recommendations on the best social media tools that HEIs can use to increase online presence and revenue through social media marketing. The research area fits into the ZCAS University research areas under business and innovation of growth and innovation as well as strategic business model, since social media marketing is transforming into a strategic partner for the implementation of strategic business goals.

## **ABSTRACT**

HEIs in Zambia have adopted the use of social media in advertising, online learning and also for administrative purposes. Social media has developed in the recent years to a level where it presents itself as the biggest virtual market with the potential to increase geographic markets and revenue for organizations. While cases of HEIs that have used social media marketing for purposes of marketing exist in other places, there is no significant research in the *Zambian* environment that shows empirical evidence that the use of social media marketing can impact marketing performance in HEIs.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of social media marketing on marketing performance in HEIs and the findings are meant to build a model for social media marketing for HEIs in Zambia in (see figure 5.2 in Chapter 5). Data in this research was collected from twelve HEIs using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, since this research is a mixed research with both deductive and inductive arguments. The data collection techniques included a semi structured interview for qualitative data and a semi structured questionnaire for the quantitative data. Data analysis was carried out using different techniques in SPSS for the quantitative data and content analysis using Google analytics for the qualitative data.

The implications of the findings in chapter four mean that HEIs in Zambia must begin to use social media not only for administrative or advertising purposes but they must use it effectively as a tool to increase their market share and increase their revenue. The findings and data analysis in this research indicated that social media is effective in marketing HEIs in Zambia, however these institutions must adopt the suggested model in Figure 5.2 in Chapter 5 if they are to enhance social media performance for marketing

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **1.1.1 Introduction**

Digital marketing is defined as the involvement of online channels and methods that enable businesses or organizations to track success of their marketing campaigns in real time (Minculete & Olar, 2018). Digital marketing has become a strategic partner in the delivery of modern marketing strategies. Digital marketing has become the new media for marketing communication. According to Cizmeci and Ercan, digital marketing has brought about a great transformation in marketing practices (Cizmeci & Ercan, 2015). Traditional marketing has been enhanced by the introduction of digital marketing and this has given rise to the development of social media technologies which are a means of conducting marketing online (Abbas *et al.*, 2019). Digital marketing channels have become a useful tool to promote products and connect with customers since this is the place they spend most of their time to seek information and even entertainment.

This thesis is based on the study of Social Media Marketing (SMM) and its effects on the marketing performance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Marketing performance in this thesis refers to the outcome of high student numbers, increased revenue and increased market share as a result of social media activities.

The advent of social media has brought about huge changes in marketing practices with further enhancement of E-commerce applications, especially in the education sector. This Chapter covers the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, the research objectives, justification of the study and the hypotheses. It also brings out the research questions framed to achieve the purpose of the study. The background section brings out information on the research interest and subsequently the statement of the problem.

A study of the effectiveness of social media marketing on the marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia is an area of prime interest as it enhances understanding of how HEIs have incorporated social media in their marketing planning. Social media has the capability to enhance customer interest in the organization and help in building effective relationships between institutions and their customers (Don & Andrew, 2014).

## **1.2 Background of the study**

The education sector in Zambia has sixty registered HEIs (Higher Education Authority, 2022); this number includes nine public institutions. Since the Higher Education Act of 2013 was enacted, there has been an increase in the number of both private and public HEIs. The increase in the number of HEIs implies increased competition and a possible shrink in the market share. Increased competitive trends in the education sector have caused HEIs to step out of their traditional marketing approaches and embrace new marketing media platforms. Social media marketing has become the most effective marketing tool; and in the era of digital technologies, it has become purely impossible to define marketing strategies without considering social networks (Bashar & Wasiq, 2012).

According to Mone and Pope (2013), marketing performance is the accountability of marketing returns on marketing investments. This means that whatever institutions put into the marketing function, there must be a return on investments in building social media platforms and online tools and skills to manage these must translate into effective marketing performance. The expectation is therefore that HEIs that incorporate social media marketing must achieve a return on this investment. In the researcher's view this means that social media marketing must translate into marketing performance since there is a relationship between social media marketing strategies and marketing performance.

Competition causes market share to shrink and ultimately it creates the need for institutions to become more innovative in the way they conduct their marketing. Accordingly, marketing innovation has a relationship with competitiveness, as probed by using the complexity theory (Gupta *et al.*, 2016).

Innovative marketing includes the adoption of social media as an effective tool to enhance marketing performance. Because of the aspect of competition, HEIs have adopted smarter ways of marketing using social media rather than flashy marketing campaigns (Aditya, 2019). Columbia University, for example, has been able to use social media to improve relationships between the institution and the students through what they refer to as 'the online social community' (Dosanjh, 2017). The online social community brings together staff and students from different cities and

campuses to share information and to communicate on one common platform. The result of the online social community is increased student retention. Student or customer retention is one of the key indicators of marketing performance and this is influenced by the application of social media effectiveness. Social media is affected by cultural trends and these are different in Zambia and in New York where Columbia University is located, and therefore the observations in social media usage by that institution cannot be generalized to HEIs in Zambia.

Social media is the use of internet-based applications such as blogs, interactive sites and mobile Apps for communication and information sharing (Ezeife, 2017). Most social media sites and platforms are free and this has caused budgets for marketing in many organisations to reduce, it has become the modern method of reducing the marketing expenditure while improving efficiency in organizations. Facebook, for instance, is the largest virtual market in the world with over 140 million businesses on its Apps while the media itself has over 1.5 billion people (Corrigan & Alhabash, 2018). Virtual markets represent a huge opportunity for institutions to expand their markets beyond geographic borders and in the case of HEIs this includes online learning through e-learning platforms. The increase in e-learning or virtual environments has caused market share to further shrink forcing HEIs to adopt more aggressive marketing strategies especially on media such as Facebook since it is almost free and provides a higher reach. During COVID-19 the use of social media for marketing became a prominent tool for marketing because of government restrictions imposing less physical interaction.

In 2016, Klaus Schwab gave a speech at the World Economic Forum (WEF) which he titled “The 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial revolution”, this became a trend in the management of world economies particularly that the emphasis was on cyber or virtual means of achieving economic goals (Human integration with computer neural networks). The advent of COVID-19 is an example of the application of the concepts of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial revolution, particularly in the education sector. During the time the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial revolution set into motion, the Higher Education Act in Zambia was also amended to allow for an increase in the number of both Private and Public HEIs, giving rise to higher competition and shrinking of market share. The increase of HEIs in Zambia causes these institutions to incorporate social media marketing (SMM) to improve their marketing performance.

The Higher Education Act has been in existence in Zambia since 2013, and this means that all HEIs in Zambia must register with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to be considered a legal

entity (Higher Education Authority, 2018). Many HEIs in Zambia have been more involved in traditional marketing, but since social media is becoming the new media in marketing, many of these institutions have also incorporated SMM in their marketing activities.

Most HEIs largely use Facebook as their primary tool for SMM, and this is the area of interest for this research. HEIs in other countries such as the UK and the USA have used SMM effectively to engage customers and expand their marketing reach; but how effective has the utilization of social media been on their marketing performance?

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Social media started as far back as the early 1990s when the Department of Defense in the USA commercialized internet protocols (Edosomwan & Kouame, 2011). Since its introduction, social media has transformed business communication in that its interactive nature has allowed for customer feedback to be obtained in a second and wider markets to be reached by a click of a button. It has introduced more interactions between firms and their customers and through social media channels, blogs and platforms.

Due to its collaborative and interactive nature, social media is highly suitable for relational marketing; however, the tools available for social media applications may have limitations for marketing educational institutions (). Contrary to this view, Helgesen and Klassen (2008) argued in their research that the relational marketing approach is the best model for educational institutions, and social media provides the ability for this approach to enhance marketing. These two contradictory views from the two authors raise concern and research interest on whether SMM is effective for marketing HEIs.

Studies conducted previously show that social media is effective for marketing, one such study is by Appel who conducted a research on the future of social media and found that it had a positive effect on marketing (Appel *et al.*, 2019). The Findings by Appel was conducted using a sample in the commercial sector but creates research interest to investigate if the same findings can be extrapolated to the marketing of HEIs.

In Zambia HEIs have utilized traditional marketing approaches and incorporated social media approaches in their overall marketing strategies. However, the inclusion of social media in the marketing planning must imply that HEIs must grow their market share and incur lower marketing

cost and efficiency in the marketing processes. Once the means to measure the effectiveness of social media marketing on the performance of marketing for HEIs is determined, the question of the effectiveness of social media in marketing HEIs needs to be investigated. In the USA, research conducted by the Hanover Research indicates that from 2002 to 2019 social media student recruitment increased from 11% of total students enrolled to 32% representing an 11% increase (Hanover Research, 2014). The percentage increment from 2002 to 2019 is relatively low pausing questions around how effective SMM is on marketing performance and creating the problem of utilization of social media for marketing purposes. Social media in HEIs appears to be a cost-effective alternative to traditional marketing; but how can the marketing spend be justified for using such media if there is no measure of how effective it is on marketing performance? The problem therefore, that arises is that when HEIs implement SMM, is there a means by which the performance of their marketing can be measured in terms of its effectiveness? Are these HEIs able to justify their marketing spend on social media by means of its effectiveness? This problematic area creates an interest to investigate the effectiveness of SMM on marketing performance in HEIs in Zambia.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of SMM on marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia. Given that there is no model or mobile app that has been developed to measure the effectiveness of SMM on marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia, the study set out to develop such a model and make recommendations for effective use of SMM in HEIs in the country. In the 21st century, most millennials spend their time on social media, in actual fact research shows that there is an addiction to electronic gadgets such as phones and tablets mostly linked to social media usage (Gustav & Alexandra , 2020). HEIs can take advantage of the fact that most of their target market is in the millennials and use social media for branding and market share growth.

## **1.5 General research Objective**

To determine the effectiveness of SMM on marketing performance in HEIs in Zambia, the study identified the social media platforms that HEIs in Zambia are using that are seemingly part of the marketing strategies in such institutions. Whereas HEIs have used digital marketing in their marketing activities for a significant number of years, it is not certain as to whether this implies enhanced marketing performance. The study focuses on determining the effectiveness of SMM on marketing performance by critically analyzing how social media has affected the performance of marketing for HEIs in Zambia.

### **1.5.1 Specific objectives and questions**

To fulfill the aim of this research, the study was designed to address the following objectives:

1. **RO1:** To identify the social media marketing platforms used in higher education institutions in Zambia.
2. **RO2:** To investigate the extent to which social media marketing leads to higher market share in higher education institutions in Zambia.
3. **RO3:** To determine the best combination of social media platforms that enhance effectiveness of social media marketing in higher education institutions in Zambia.
4. **RO4:** To establish the extent to which social media marketing contributes to the overall marketing performance of higher education institutions in Zambia.

To fulfill the aim of this research, the study is designed to answer the following research questions:

1. **RQ1:** What social media marketing platforms are higher education institutions in Zambia using in their marketing strategies?
2. **RQ2:** To what extent does social media marketing lead to increase in student recruitment and market share in higher education institutions in Zambia?
3. **RQ3:** What is the best combination of social media platforms that enhance effectiveness of social media marketing in higher education institutions in Zambia?
4. **RQ4:** To what extent does social media marketing contribute to the overall effectiveness of marketing performance of higher education institutions in Zambia?

## **1.6 Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were designed to answer RQ2 and RQ4:

### **Hypothesis 1**

H<sub>0</sub>: Social media platforms do not have an effect on marketing performance in HEIs.

H<sub>1</sub>: Social media platforms have an effect on marketing performance in HEIs.

### **Hypothesis 2**

H<sub>0</sub>: Social media marketing does not lead to an increase in student enrolment in higher education institutions in Zambia.

H<sub>1</sub>: Social media marketing leads to increase in student enrolment in higher education institutions in Zambia.

### **Hypothesis 3**

H<sub>0</sub>: Social media marketing does not lead to an increase in market share of higher education institutions in Zambia.

H<sub>1</sub>: Social media marketing leads to an increase in market share of higher education institutions in Zambia.

#### **Hypothesis 4**

H<sub>0</sub>: Social media marketing does not contribute to the overall effectiveness of marketing performance of higher education institutions in Zambia.

H<sub>1</sub>: Social media marketing contributes to the overall effectiveness of marketing performance of higher education institutions in Zambia.

#### **1.7 Justification of the Study**

This research is necessary for HEIs in Zambia to create effective SMM strategies that would give them a competitive advantage. The research identifies SMM platforms that are relevant to an HEI and provides recommendations for these platforms. Terry's research on challenges and opportunities for use of social media in HEIs states that before new technology is adopted in such an environment, there is need to examine both its effectiveness and challenges (Terry, 2019) . The use of SMM is a new concept of marketing in many learning institutions in Zambia, especially for those that have been in existence since before the advent of social media. Many of these institutions have no empirical evidence of the effects of SMM on marketing performance or they may not have a model to measure marketing performance of social media.

It is envisaged that this research shall benefit HEIs in Zambia by firstly enabling them choose the correct SMM strategies. Secondly the outcome of the study will enable HEIs to link SMM to their marketing performance and their overall marketing research. Empirical evidence exists in developing countries on how Universities and HEIs have fully used SMM to drive student recruitment and enhance marketing performance. However, in the case of Zambia, the relationship between SMM and marketing performance has not been adequately measured.

## **1.8 Scope of the Study**

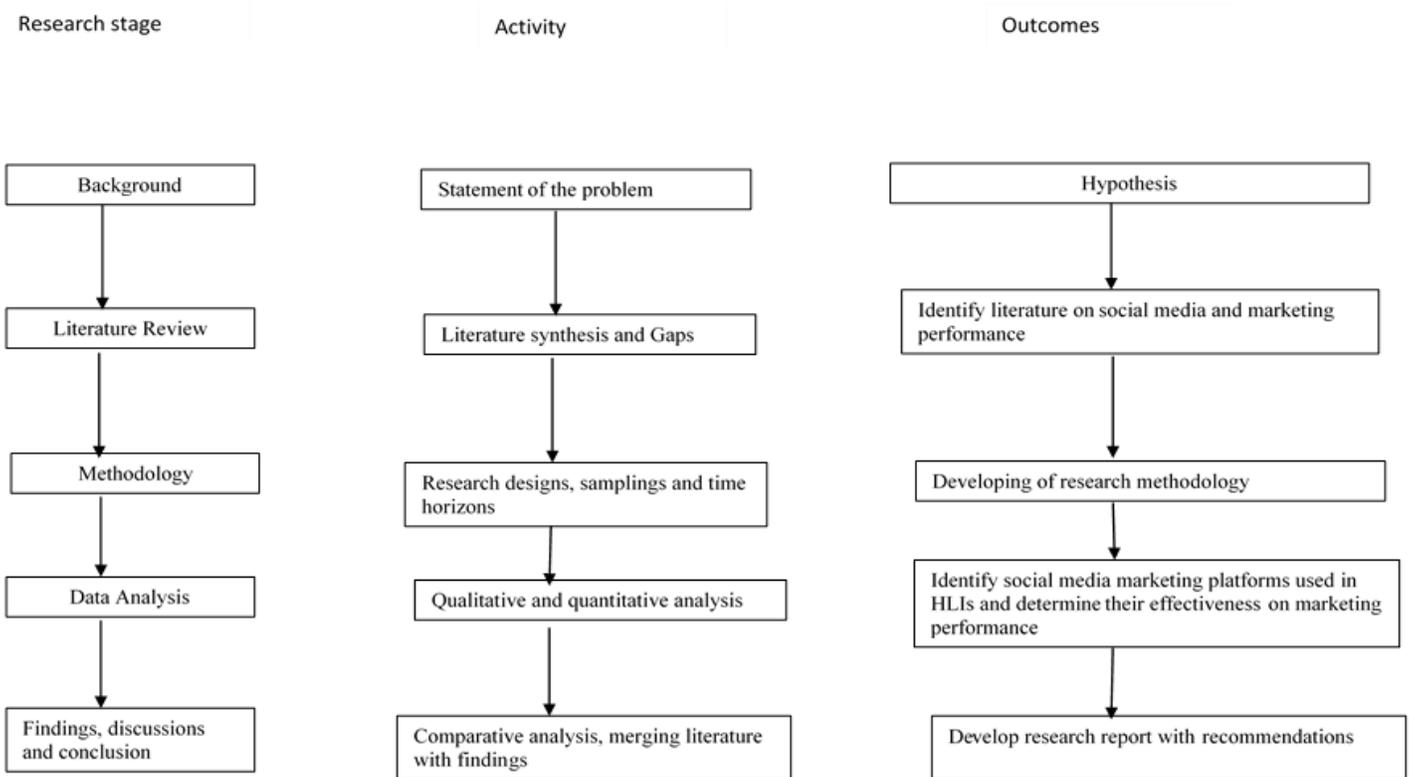
The research investigated the effectiveness of SMM on the marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia. Its focus was to study HEIs and how they are using social media for marketing performance. The first phase of the research included establishing how HEIs in Zambia have used social media in their marketing planning and whether they have measured this against their marketing performance. The second phase compared information from various institutions defined in the sample and determined how best they could use social media for marketing purposes.

## **1.9 The research concepts**

The research investigated how effective SMM is on marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia. The research compared how SMM has been used in different HEIs in order to develop a model for SMM of these institutions. Marketing performance is the dependent variable while SMM is the independent variable. The assumption was that SMM must result in increased marketing performance for HEIs and that the tools for social media marketing should be able to result in business growth for these institutions in Zambia. For example, in Australia and the USA, the use of SMM has resulted in a huge success for the University of Western Australia and Columbia University respectively (Aditya, 2019). The success of social media in Australia and in the USA in HEIs leads to the assumption that it can produce similar results in the Zambian environment. However, research is required in order to provide empirical evidence of the effectiveness of social media marketing in HEIs.

## 1.10 Dissertation/Thesis Outline

The main stages in the research project areas are outlined in Figure 1.1 below :



**FIGURE 1.1: SIMPLIFIED RESEARCH OUTLINE**

The thesis consists of five Chapters as follows: Chapter 1 Introduction and Background, Chapter 2 Literature Review, Chapter 3 Methodology, Chapter 4 Research Findings and Analysis and Chapter 5 Discussion and Recommendations. After outlining the overview of the overall research program in this Chapter, Chapter 2, the literature review, critically reviews research findings from other authors and also published work and theories that support the study. The research methodology is covered in Chapter 3. This Chapter outlines and justifies the methodologies employed in the study. Chapter 4 presents and analyses the findings from the study. Chapter 5, the final Chapter, draws conclusions from the preceding Chapters. This encompasses theoretical and managerial implications with limitations and directions for future research also being noted.

## **1.11 Chapter Summary**

This Chapter has given an overview of the thesis regarding the effectiveness of SMM on the performance of marketing in HEIs. It has provided the background and justification for the study to investigate the effectiveness of SMM in marketing HEIs in Zambia. The Chapter further outlined research objectives, hypotheses and questions that should be answered in order to provide answers to the study undertaken. The next Chapter reviews the literature which informs the study.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this Chapter is to review the literature that informs the study and provide direction to the development of the study by identifying literature that supports the study and also helps to identify the gaps in existing studies. Many writers and researchers have presented findings that either support some aspects of this study, or argue against this study's concept. The literature on SMM has developed aggressively especially in the last ten years because of the advancement in digital technologies. SMM is regarded as the future of marketing and it is taking over traditional marketing. Facebook is the biggest virtual market of all social media platforms. It is the world's biggest social media platform with over a billion subscribers (Ozanne *et al.*, 2017). This Chapter reports on the journal articles, research papers, and books by different authors that were interrogated to satisfy the research arguments. The latest reports on social media have indicated that social media represents the fastest growing media technology in marketing, with Facebook alone recording an estimated 2.8 billion active users monthly (Appel *et al.*, 2019). SMM therefore becomes more associated with the concept of social media.

The Zambia Institute of Marketing (ZIM) calls SMM the new media in marketing (ZIM, 2020); this is because social media has enhanced traditional marketing. A review of research conducted in Zambia shows that many publications in this area have focused on social media as a teaching or learning aid and not necessarily as a marketing tool. This Chapter explores literature that has been published in line with the topic and mainly focuses on journal articles and research papers as the main source of the literature.

### 2.2 The meaning of social media

Social media refers to the means of interaction, among people in which they create, share and exchange ideas and information in virtual communities and networks (Tufts University , 2021). While Tufts University uses the word interactive in the definition of social media, Merriam Webster on the contrary uses the word communication (Merriam Webster, 2022). Perhaps a much broader definition of social media is by Aichner *et al* who defines social media as an umbrella that includes a variety of online platforms including blogs, business networks and collaborative networks (Aichner *et al.*, 2021). In spite of the differences in definitions, it appears that

interactivity, collaborative and networking are terms that have characterized most of the definitions of social media.

The concept of social media is therefore based on interactivity and exchange, which are achieved through engagement, lead, reach and conversion. In the Zambian education sector social media is slowly becoming a strategic tool for communication (Mwalimu *et al.*, 2017). Education managers and academicians are using social media Apps to organize their students and, in many instances, to also deliver meetings and lectures. Amongst fears that social media is a threat to pedagogy, it is also able to facilitate learning and teaching (Dominic, 2017). The researcher is an academician with practical experience in the use of Chat in classroom delivery through student portals as a result of COVID-19 restrictions by the ministry of health in 2020

### **2.3 Higher education Institutions (HEIs)**

The term Higher Education Institution (HEI) is used in this thesis to mean a University or a college offering both University level qualifications and high-level professional college qualifications. In Europe they refer to HEIs as Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs), but in Zambia these are referred to as HEIs. IGI Global defines HEIs as Universities, Colleges and educational institutions delivering higher education including traditional Universities (IGI Global, 2017). The term HEI has been used mainly in research work in Eastern Africa and Southern Africa, examples of which include Willey & Masue who investigated acceptability of E-learning in HEIs in Tanzania (Willy & Masue, 2020) and the other is Kayombo in his Doctoral research thesis that investigated measurement and competitive positioning of a higher education institution brand in Zambia (Kayombo, 2014). The abbreviation HEIs earlier appeared in a report produced by the Ministry of Education in Malaysia as a blue print for education in that country (Ministry of Education, 2015). It appears the abbreviation HEIs is highly acceptable in different parts of the world and the researcher adopts it for use in this research with its implied meaning.

## **2.4 The concept of marketing and social media**

Social media refers to websites that allow profile creation and visibility of relationship creation between users (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). The ability for social media to create visibility of relationships makes it suitable for interactive and modern marketing. Marketing is the creation of long-term beneficial exchange relationships between buyers and sellers of goods and services (Richard & Kotler, 1975) as cited by Kaplan (2020). Since marketing was redefined in 1975 as an exchange process, the term interactivity becomes visible in the application of marketing and since social media increases interactivity, it has become the most commonly used platform for marketing activities. The recent definitions of marketing include aspects of social media and interactivity between buyers and sellers of goods and services and this makes SMM a significant component in the process of marketing (Brunswick, 2019).

## **2.5 The advent of social media**

The advent of social media can be traced as far back as when e-commerce platforms were introduced and since then the definitions of social media have shifted to include digital technologies and internet technologies. According to a publication by Kaplan & Haenlein, social media is a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideology and technological foundations of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 also allows the exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2017). The definition of Social media by Kaplan and Heinlein indicates that there has been a progression and improvement in social media since it was first defined by Loudon and Loudon as the process of conducting business using electronic means or internet technologies (Loudon & Loudon, 2005). Marketing using social media, therefore, is a concept that started way back since the advent of electronic commerce applications and Web 2.0. SMM also known as “marketing using the new media” (Whiting & Deshpande, 2014) is the new approach of marketing communication for both tangible and intangible products.

The advent of digital technologies creates a new need for information and a new method of marketing goods and services. Social media allows individuals to interact freely and it also offers various ways of engaging with customers, which is why globally the total number of social media users by 2022 is expected to be 3.29 billion which represents 42.3% of the world’s total population (Gil *et al.*, 2020). The forecasted numbers on social media represents a new market for HEIs and

thereby creates the need to build strategies and models for SMM in the education sector, particularly for HEIs in Zambia.

## **2.6 Social media and interactivity**

Social media allows people to freely interact with others and offers different ways for marketers to engage with customers (Gil *et al.*, 2020). This makes social media the most effective tool for online interaction and obtaining feedback from customers. The most powerful aspect about social media is that it has reduced marketing costs but increased the ability for organizations to be able to grow their markets beyond geographic boundaries. Since social media reduces costs and increases access to markets, it is also likely to improve profitability for organizations (Ming & Yazdanifard, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, social media becomes one of the platforms that creates social relationships among people in different locations. People signed up for the platform are able to communicate, to order essentials and pay for goods and services on different platforms, including accessing health care (Wong *et al.*, 2020). This means that social media becomes the most powerful tool for both interactivity and marketing of goods and services. A report by Facebook indicates that there has been a 70% increase in time spent on Facebook in Italy where they effected a lock down in the early stages of the pandemic (GSM, 2020). Social media is not only a means of allowing social interactivity among people, it has also become a powerful marketing tool since it allows organizations to easily recognize needs of their customers through engagement (Susanto *et al.*, 2021). The key aspects of social media that connect it to the marketing concept are; engagement, lead, reach and conversion: these are building blocks of interactivity on any social media platform.

## **2.7 Definitions of social media platforms**

Social media platforms according to Kaplan & Haenlein (2017) are web-based podiums that allow users to consume and publish content in real time independent of physical location (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2017). Svetlana & Philipp, defined social media platforms as an online meeting place (Svetlana & Philipp, 2012). Both definitions indicate that a social media platform is virtual and independent of physical location. The implication of this is that social media platforms are a common podium on which users from different locations regardless of type of device they are using, come together to interact, share ideas and communicate. Svetlana & Philipp argue that the first social media platforms that were ever created were the Bulletin Board systems. Bulletin Board

systems were created in the early 1990, while other researchers argue that social media networks were invented at the same time that World Wide Web (WWW) was created. The two definitions by Kaplan & Haenlein as well as by Svetlana & Philipp seem to belong to the same school of thought. Latest definitions of social media platforms include the aspect of mobile technologies since these were recently developed (Kawaljeet *et al.*, 2018).

Social media platforms are the most common online markets in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and particularly during the COVID-19 era, since they have capability to increase interaction between those offering services and those hoping to acquire services (Ana *et al.*, 2020). The definition of Social media platform adds new meaning to the use of SMM, since they have become the biggest virtual markets (Gil *et al.*, 2020). HEIs in Zambia need to define the best combination of SSM platforms that would achieve their marketing and sales objectives if they have to effectively link SMM to their marketing performance. Weak research findings in the Zambian environment do not seem to point to social media as a marketing tool and it becomes challenging to conclude that SMM has an effect on the marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia.

## **2.8 Social media adoption in the education sector**

SMM in the education sector took advantage of the introduction of social networks (SN) that were originally designed to encourage students to create and maintain networks of friendships (Nyangu & Bado , 2012). Research indicates that admission officers in various HEIs are using social media to capture potential students. Competition is increasing in the education sector and thus resulting in the aggressive use of social media for student recruitment, retention, and attraction. In a research conducted in the hospitality and tourism sectors, SMM came into play as a result of increased competition in the sectors forcing institutions to become more innovative in their recruitment process ( Vukic & Vukić, 2019). The reality is that competition has forced HEIs to adopt SMM in their overall marketing strategic planning (MSP).

## **2.9 The use of social media in HEIs in the USA**

There are numerous studies on the use of social media in HEIs in the USA. Even though differences exist in the findings of many researchers the commonality is that most studies indicate that social media users use it for interactive purposes (Hruska & Maresova, 2020). One research shows there is potential for social media in higher education marketing (Singhal, 2019). The findings of this

research are linked to the case study of Columbia University, which is perhaps the most successful University in the world in terms of the use of SMM to grow its student base.

Further research in the USA indicates that Facebook is the most popular site in terms of students getting course information at 74.85%, followed by YouTube at 24.56% and then google+ at 22.75% (Reddy, 2014). This research was investigating the impact of social media on student choice of programs and was based on a sample size of less than 200. The research was also within a single University and this means that the findings may not be conclusive in terms of generalization. It can also be argued that the USA has a different advanced technological and cultural environment compared to Zambia where this research was conducted. However, the case of Columbia University leads to an assumption that SMM has a huge potential for marketing HEIs.

### **The case of Columbia University**

Columbia University in the USA is perhaps the leading HEI in terms of using social media for its marketing activities. It has increased its student numbers up to 61% through social media engagement and online student recruitment in less than two years of usage (Singhal, 2019). The case of Columbia University creates the opportunity to explore the uses of social media in marketing HEIs. The case of Columbia University also provides further opportunity to explore how effective social media platforms can be in the marketing of HEIs especially in Zambia.

### **2.10 The use of social media marketing in HEIs in Wales (Europe)**

Wales is one of the territories within the European Union (EU) that has aggressively used online platforms, including social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Fotis states that consumer behavior is highly influenced by social media and this enables marketing processes to work more effectively (Fotis, 2015). The findings by Fotis bring out the fact that SMM has been used effectively. Further studies in Wales show that social media and particularly Facebook and Twitter have worked effectively in learning, delivery and student recruitment programs for Universities (Qingya *et al.*, 2011). Other studies by Lai show that Facebook is the largest social media platform used in Universities, followed by Twitter and then YouTube (Lai, 2011). The findings in this research have also identified Facebook as one of the most influential social media platforms in Marketing HEIs. Wales is a highly advanced country in terms of social media technologies and has a more robust ICT infrastructure compared to most African countries,

including Zambia. This means that these findings cannot be extrapolated to Zambia and the findings in the current study may bring out a completely different outcome, since cultural influences, the choice of social media platform and cultures are different from one region of the world to the other.

### **2.11 The use of social media in Australia**

Australia is one of the countries in the world that has placed ICT at the center of national development and as a strategic partner in the education sector (The world Bank, 2020). A literature review by Nyangau (Kent University) and Bado (Ohio University) in Australia reveals that a total of 534 students in both Universities were recruited in 2008 after 453 interviews on social media. The result showed an over performance of 15% in the marketing activity (Bado & Nyangau, 2012). This finding provides empirical evidence that SMM is effective in the marketing of HEIs in Australia. This finding brings out an interesting dimension to this research as it forms a successful case study on the concept of this research and provides a basis for comparison.

The research by Nyangau & Bado was a desk review and did not include primary data collected from a primary research sample. The research was also based on two Universities namely Kent and Ohio Universities and therefore the findings cannot be representative of the use of social media in the whole of Australia

Research conducted in Australia reveals that the top 10 Universities in Australia have accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube (Maresova *et al.*, 2020). This finding indicates that Facebook is the most popular social media platform used in Australian HEIs. This is an important finding in the discussion of the popular social media platforms at global level and also in the findings of this research.

### **The case of Western University**

The University of Western Australia is another HEI that has used social media to capture students, especially international students in Africa and Asia (Collyer, 2019). According to the study, SMM has increased University's market presence internationally by 3%. The similarity between Columbia University and Western University is that for both Universities Facebook and twitter have been the biggest platform used for SMM. However, it is not clear whether these platforms are likely to be as effective in the Zambian scenario despite evidence showing that these have

worked effectively in Australia and the USA. The USA and Australia have more advanced ICT infrastructures compared to Zambia and cultures and social behaviours are completely different, this makes it difficult to generalise the findings in those environments to the Zambian environments. Social media as a platform for marketing requires that institutions using them define clearly their marketing objectives and they must align the appropriate platforms with their marketing strategies. The current study focused on the HEIs and how effective SMM platforms are on their marketing performance.

### **2.12 The use of social media in HEIs in India (Asia)**

Significant research in India reveals that younger people are adopting social media at a higher pace than never before (Abbu *et al.*, 2012). The findings firstly bring out the possibility of social media being one of the effective SMM tools since the main target market of HEIs are younger people intending to take up study at any HEI. The study also concludes that social media is highly effective as a marketing tool. Another research shows that Facebook globally and in India had close to 2.65 billion people by 2018, worldwide and the number of social media users in India stood at 318 million people (Singh, 2019). The research by Singh shows that Facebook, twitter and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms used by younger people between the ages of 16-25.

The findings show that more students in India were influenced to select a University abroad as a result of SMM. This finding in India confirms that SMM has impact on marketing of HEIs in India, however what is of interest is that the study was not focused on the effectiveness of SMM for marketing HEIs but rather the impact of social media on decision making of Indian students to study abroad. The sample size used in this research was more than 150 respondents making the research very authentic and its findings acceptable to form part of the literature to inform this study.

### **2.13 Studies on the use of social media in HEIs in Kenya (East Africa)**

In East Africa, and specifically Kenya, the most commonly used social media platform is Facebook which represents 71% of internet users (Langat, 2013). Latest research in 2020 shows that the use of social media chat such as WhatsApp has increased to over 75% among students in Universities since the research by Langat (Statista, 2019). East Africa and specifically Kenya is placed among the most technologically developed countries in Africa and especially in the education sector where 90% of HEIs have incorporated the use of SMM in their learning processes (Economist, 2018). In Zambia there has not been research on the most popular social media platforms in Universities. Akakandelwa (2017) carried out research at the University of Zambia but this study did not cover all the registered HEIs in Zambia and at the time it was carried out the number of HEIs in Zambia was relatively small. Akakandelwa *et al* focused their study on social media and its impact on the social life of students at the University of Zambia. This study is different because it focusses on the use of social media as a marketing tool as opposed its impact on social life of students.

### **2.14 Studies on the use of social media in HEIs in Nigeria (West Africa)**

Studies elsewhere have been carried out on the use of social media for marketing of HEIs, however the conclusions drawn on these studies cannot be generalized. An example of such a research is in Nigeria, where a study was conducted to investigate the attitudes and responses of youths towards social media adverts. The study found that youths were highly active on social media and that this was the most effective method of advertising services offered by educational institutions (Otugo *et al.*, 2015). Further a study by Chukwudi in south east Nigeria showed that Facebook was the most popular social media site in the education sector and should be integrated in the learning activities in all the four Universities that were the focus of this study (Nwazor & Godwin-Maduiké, 2015). These studies compared to studies carried out in Zambia have linked SMM to advertising and they have also identified the most popular social media platforms for marketing HEIs in Nigeria. However, most of the studies in Nigeria, just like in Zambia, have focused on the use of social media among students and in the learning process; an example of this is the study by Ekwueme & Okoro (2018) who examined the use of social media among selected online businesses including Universities (Anthony & Ngozi, 2018). Another study by Mathias investigated the use of social media and the academic performance of students in Nigeria (Mathias,

2019). The studies by Ekwueme & Okoro was in a different industrial environment compared to this study and that of Mathias which were primarily in the education sector, however Mathias investigated academic performance while this study is inclined to social media marketing in the education sector.

#### **2.14.1 Influence of social media in Nigeria**

Recent research in Nigeria has looked at the influence of SMM platforms towards online purchases and findings indicate that most of the students at Port Harcourt in Nigeria spent a lot of time on social media. The spending of more time on social media by students therefore means that social media is an effective tool to use in marketing HEIs in Nigeria (Andy *et al.*, 2020). The research on SMM, particularly in the recent research provides a good comparative to this study that has been undertaken in Zambia. Zambia has different environmental factors, different ICT infrastructure and a different cultural dimension from Nigeria. However, the findings in Nigeria cannot be generalized since the findings in this research are different, for example in Nigeria research indicates that Facebook is the most common social media platform while in studies such as those by Azafia in the USA show that Youtube is the most common social media platform. This study on the other hand has brought out Facebook and WhatsApp as the most common social media platforms in HEIs.

Nigeria has had a well-developed social media legal infrastructure since it passed its social media laws in 2019 (Abdullateef, 2021). The implication of Nigeria passing its social media laws is that social media is well regulated in that country and can be adopted for use in the education sector. This means that contrary assertion by Balkin that social media is poorly regulated and cannot be used for marketing structured businesses remains a poor argument (Balkin, 2020).

#### **2.15 Studies on the use of social media in HEIS in Morocco (North Africa)**

The internet in Morocco was introduced in 1995, and since then reports show that there has been increase on its usage (The Moroccan Regulator, 2020). The introduction of the internet in Morocco and generally in North Africa was earlier than in Southern Africa, East Africa and West Africa. The implication of this is that North Africa might have a more developed internet infrastructure

with significant influence on social media. In one of the studies at PhD level carried out by Anass Sedrati and published by the Institute of Asian, it was discovered that YouTube was once the most popular social media platform in Morocco (Sedrati, 2017). This research was a case study of three cities in Morocco and had a sample size of more than 200 respondents. The finding that YouTube is the most common social media in Morocco can lead to the assumption that it could be a suitable tool for marketing HEIs in that country.

There have not been many studies on SMM in HEIs in Morocco; however there have been studies on its usage as a learning or teaching aid. A study carried out to investigate the use of social media in learning English in Moroccan Universities found that Facebook was the most popular social media platform used in the delivery at Universities offering training in English.

Studies in Morocco have largely been around the use of social media in enhancing learning abilities. Findings in some research indicate skepticism around the use of social media due to some cultural influences (Sedrati, 2017). A study at the University of Hassan II with a target sample of 500 respondents and a 62.5% response rate, revealed that 49.2% of students are using Facebook and share personal information online (Mansour & Youssef, 2013)

The findings in Morocco are very similar to the findings in Egypt where Facebook and YouTube are the most widely used social media platform in Universities (Mostafa & Nehale, 2020). The findings in Morocco provided very useful literature in this research as they formed a strong benchmark to hypothesise that SMM platforms are useful in marketing of HEIs. The findings also show that there is a gap in the study of SMM in both Morocco and Zambia.

## **2.16 Studies on the use of social media in HEIs in South Africa (Southern Africa)**

In Southern Africa the use of social media in the education sector has gained popularity since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of ICT infrastructure support (World Bank Group, 2020). In South Africa research shows that social media is being used greatly to influence the behavior of learners (Manzira & Tsvara , 2019). In South Africa, just like Zambia, most of the research that has been carried out focusses on the use of social media in learning and not really in the marketing of HEIs. One such research was conducted at University of Zululand where they investigated the use of social media and academic performance of undergraduates (Nisizwana & Tshabalala, 2017).

## 2.17 Studies related to social media in Zambia

There has not been so much study in the area of social media in Zambia, and especially in the education sector. A study by Mambwe (2019) at the University of Zambia investigated the use of social media in the news room (Mass communication). The researcher concluded that there was an increase in the usage of social media in Zambia. This is supported by the findings in the study by Kunda, Chembe and Mukupa (2018) who researched on the factors that influence Zambian higher education Lecturers' attitude towards integrating ICTs in teaching and research. Both research works are pointing to the fact that there is an increase in the use of social media as confirmed by ZICTA who reported that 55% of Zambia's population is now using mobile devices and are on the internet and on social media (ZICTA, 2018). As literature reveals, most of the research on social media in Zambia, and particularly in the education sector, is on learning and teaching. There is as yet no study that has focused on the use of SSM to enhance marketing performance.

The main studies related to social media so far published in Zambia are listed in Table 2.1 below, which also shows the outcome of the study and the area of study.

<b>TABLE 2.1 MAIN STUDIES RELATING TO SOCIAL MEDIA IN ZAMBIA</b>			
<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Sample size</b>	<b>Area of study</b>	<b>Main outcome</b>
Akakandelwa & Walubita (2017)	Survey research 240	Education	"Social media has an impact on social life of learners at the University of Zambia and it is a relevant tool for course delivery"
Mwalimu, E. C., Mulauzi, F., & Mwiinga, T. M. (2017)	Survey research based on qualitative sample (30 Lecturers purposively selected)	Education	"The study brought out the fact that Lecturers use social media in the delivery of lectures at the University of Zambia particularly the younger one"
Mambwe (2019)	50 newsroom Journalists	Mass Communication	"The study found that journalists in Zambia are aware of social media are using them in their work"
Kunda, Chembe & Mukupa (2018)	173 respondents in four HEIs	Education	"Lack of ICT resources and skills among Lecturers was the main barrier to integrating ICT in teaching and research"

Lungu, 2018	100 respondents	Public Relations and Mass Communication	“Many Zambians around Kwamwena area are exposed to Social media”
Mulauzi (2018)	Literature review	ICT (Social Media)	“There has been wide spread use of social media in the work place in Zambia”
Wyche & Baumer (2017)	37 group interviews	Social media	“Non-users of social media are interested in its use”

The studies outlined in Table 2.1 are not in marketing and are not focusing on the effectiveness of SMM on marketing performance in any sector. Studies on social media in the education sector have not brought out the use of social media in marketing and this significantly justifies this research. Zambia does not have much literature on social media except for reports published by the Zambia Information and Communications Authority (ZICTA). These reports are general reports and not specific to the education sector. A knowledge gap is when a particular research interest is the first of its kind in a particular study and in a particular environment, even if the same study has been conducted somewhere else (Leite et al., 2019). However, the studies by other researchers in Zambia on social media are highly useful since they have been used to inform the study and they provide some concepts which this study has used to build a framework for the concept of this research.

A study conducted by Wyche and Baumer (2016) from Michigan State University and Cornell University, investigated perceptions of non-users of social media in the rural areas in Zambia. The study showed that non-users of social media were interested in the communication platform and in its income generating possibilities. This research provided helpful information linked to the growth of social media in marketing and its effectiveness on income generation, and is perhaps among the main studies related to social media in Zambia. The study is also the only study that specifically looks at social media for business growth. However, the study is also not in the field of marketing and not in the education sector and therefore a knowledge gap still exists in the study area.

## **Limitations in social media studies in Zambia**

In Zambia, not much research has gone on around the issue of the effectiveness of SMM on the marketing of HEIs. Most research in Zambia around this topic is centered on the use of social media in teaching and learning (Mwalimu *et al.*, 2017). The research in Zambia carried out mostly at the University of Zambia is based on the usage of social media as a learning aid than its usage as a marketing platform. Chawinga in his research focuses on bringing social media into the classroom and particularly using twitter and blogs for class room delivery (Chawinga, 2017). The research by Mwalimu, Mulauzi & Mwiinga and also the research by Chawinga forms a strong basis for exploring the use of social media in HEI's including for purposes of marketing.

Further study carried out by Mulenga and Marban focused on exploring the use of social media and social media platforms in teaching and learning among pre-service mathematics teachers (Mulenga & Marbán, 2020). There is so far no research in Zambia that has been conducted in relation to the use of SMM in HEIs in Zambia. The closest research to this was perhaps the research by Akakandelwa who at least in his research included the impact of social media use on the social life of students (Akakandelwa & Walubita, 2017), since the topic in this research is based on marketing and cannot ignore the aspect of consumer behavior.

### **2.17.1 Social media regulation**

In Zambia the government has embarked on regulating social media by introducing the cyber security bill which was asended in 2021 (Zambia reports, 2021). The laws controlling social media in Nigeria are highly different from the laws in Zambia and therefore the application on the usage of social media for marketing HEIs maybe different from those in Zambia, for example in Zambia the laws demand that age limits for the use of social media are 16 and above while in Nigeria the age limit is 13.

In Nigeria the use of social media in HEIs can be drawn as far back as 2004 when the use of digital devices was implemented in that country through the National policy of education (Aniefiok & Gbemisola, 2016). While the use of social media in the education sector in Zambia can be traced back to as early as 2006 (Mwalimu *et al.*, 2017), Nigeria has an upper hand. The earlier implementation of social media in the education sector in Nigeria implies that the digital

environment in Nigeria could be more advanced than that of Zambia. Countries such as Tunisia and Morocco in North Africa implemented digital platform in their education system as early as 2002 and 2004 respectively (Oxford Business Group, 2017). The trend seems that those countries that implemented social media early in their education are utilizing social media more effectively in their education system.

## **2.18 Limitations of Legal frameworks in Zambia**

Legal frameworks on the use of social media in many countries including Zambia are not well developed. According to MISA Zambia regulating social media should be opposed as it would be equivalent to suppressing freedom of expression (MISA Zambia, 2019). The argument by Anderson (2008) relates to the view of MISA Zambia in that if social media does not have a legal framework then HEIs must not use it for their marketing activities since these must conform to legal and ethical requirements in their marketing activities. The alternative view is that SMM is as good as using bill boards, flyers or press releases as the only difference is that one is physical and the other is virtual (Barrere, 2021). In 2021 Zambia enacted the Cyber Security bill which controls social media and this might mean that the arguments by Anderson or even by MISA Zambia may no longer be as valid.

Social media is gaining popularity as a marketing tool globally and around Zambia; globally 30% of registered HEIs are using social media either for teaching purposes or marketing purposes (Tahani *et al.*, 2020). In Zambia it is not clear how many HEIs are using social media for marketing or teaching purposes as this data forms part of the findings for this research. The findings in Zambia so far are focused on the use of social media for teaching purposes and not on marketing purposes, even though the use of social media in marketing is becoming popular. The perceptions of the use of social media in marketing are beginning to change with many HEIs registering presence on social media so that they can tap into the existing 2.30 million users of social media in Zambia (Digital 2020 Zambia, 2021).

Literature indicates that from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and America, Facebook is the most commonly used Platform in many sectors including the education sector (Lai, 2011). However, the statistics do not interpret the use of social media for marketing purposes in the education sector. This research takes an interest in investigating the effectiveness of SMM on the marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia and research papers by other researchers especially in Zambia on the topic of social media becomes very useful. According Higginbottom & Liamputtong (2015), any research that must draw an acceptable conclusion should depend on literature previously published both in the same environment where the research is conducted and other studies in different environments (Higginbottom, 2015). This research reviewed literature from researchers in Zambia on the subject of social media and also researchers on the same subject in other regions of the world so that the outcomes of the study are authentic and acceptable

### **2.18.1 Emerging use of social media platforms**

Research Centre in the USA reveals that Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are among the most commonly used social media platforms by adults in the USA (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). According to the research by Perrin and Anderson adults between the ages of 18-29 form 68% of the population for social media usage in the USA.

The success of Columbia University leads to the assumption that the use of social media in HEIs in Zambia could result in a higher effect on the marketing of HEIs, but the two technological environments are different and therefore may lead to totally different findings.

In Nigeria the most commonly used social media platform is Facebook which represents 87% of all internet users in that country, followed by YouTube at 76% and Instagram at 67% (Statista, 2019). WhatsApp is the most commonly used messaging software standing at 94%. Research conducted in six Universities in Nigeria further indicates that the usage of social media is very high among undergraduate students (Kanelechi *et al.*, 2014).

The statistics in the popularity of social media platform in Nigeria is viewed to be inaccurate since the population of Nigeria changes dynamically and that it is usually not conducted across all Universities in Nigeria. Nigeria is also regarded as a technologically advanced environment compared to Zambia and therefore its use of social media in the education sector is wider since the

student population numbers are higher. The popularity of social media platforms in Nigeria generate research interest to investigate whether there might be a similarity in the use of social media in Zambia and Nigeria. This research focused on investigating the effect of SMM on the marketing performance in HEIs in Zambia and therefore studied the most commonly used social media platforms in Universities in Zambia. The research brought out recommendations of the best social media combinations for HEIs in Zambia.

### **2.19 Contemporary studies on social media**

The latest studies on social media have placed SMM as the biggest frontier of customer engagement and interaction (Potena, 2022). Social media is the best method to reach customers and convert them (Wright, 2021). The findings by Wright are highly useful in this research as they seem to support the research hypothesis that social media is effective in marketing HEIs, since it constitutes the most effective tools that can be used to reach customers and grow revenue. Further research by Mason who investigated how SMM has gained importance during COVID-19, brought out findings that COVID-19 has led to increase in consumer social marketing behaviors in the United States (Mason *et al.*, 2021). The findings by both Wright and Mason support this research highly in that they link SMM to marketing performance. These studies were in different sectors other than the education sector and were also done in a different environment, implying that the factors may vary based on industry and also that the findings cannot be generalized.

DeBios writes that social commerce has come of age during the COVID-19 pandemic and has now answered the question of justifying ROI on social media by organizations as they are now forced to establish presence online (DeBois, 2021). This research by DeBios focuses on how COVID-19 has caused institutions in different sectors to use virtual means for marketing and management. In HEIs the marketing of their services and products can no longer fully depend on traditional marketing but shift to digital marketing which also includes the selection of specific SMM strategies so that they can increase customer retention and increase revenue. The research by Wright links SMM to marketing performance. The connection with DeBios' finding is firstly that SMM is strategic to marketing during the COVID-19 pandemic and secondly that behaviors of consumers has changed during the pandemic to respond as they depend more on online platforms for information and access to goods and service. The study of social media in HEIs needs to

address the question of whether SMM is effective for marketing HEIs and this is an angle that both research from Debios and Wright focused on.

Henry DeVries describes social media as the next biggest channel for purchase and not just for discovery (DeVries, 2022). This confirms the findings by Debios that social media has come of age particularly in the COVID-19 pandemic and that it now represents the biggest market globally. While social media is growing in usage and effectiveness for purposes of marketing, can the same concept be applied in its use for marketing HEIs in Zambia?

### **2.21.1 Social media marketing popularity during COVID-19**

Research already shows that in Universities such as Columbia in the United States, social media has increased their student retention. This means that social media has high potential for higher effectiveness in marketing of HEIs, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In almost all the studies carried out in the last quarter of 2020 and in 2021 the trends seem to be pointing towards the fact that social media is gaining popularity and that it is a powerful tool for marketing (Mason *et al.*, 2021). This popularity is especially that consumer trends are changing as a result of lock downs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The lock downs are triggering an interest to develop research in the education sector on whether HEIs in Zambia are able to use social media for the marketing and that this use will result in increase in student numbers, increase in market share and their overall marketing performance.

A study recently done on student behavior on social media networks has found that students have developed addiction to social media (Maslin *et al.*, 2021). The addiction imply that students are mostly on social media and HEIs in their SMM strategies may assume that this represents an opportunity for them to attract these numbers to their social media pages.

This study is highly useful in this research since it is dealing with the behavior of students on social media, a variable that is linked to the social media variables that were interrogated in this research. This study greatly informs the current research, particularly that it creates a link between the theoretical frameworks and the conceptual frameworks. The study also informs this study because it covers consumer behavior, brand awareness and the concept of social media effectiveness which form the basis for developing the conceptual framework and selecting the theoretical framework that fits with this study.

## **2.22 Implication of the latest findings on this research**

The latest studies on SMM reveal that social media currently is the biggest marketing tool that organizations including those in the education sector can use to maximize revenue and grow their markets. This assumption is supported by the growth of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn which are expected to grow from \$94.83 billion in 2020 to \$104 billion in 2021 (Reporter Linker, 2021). During COVID-19 most organizations and businesses have reinvested into digital technologies and SMM since traditional marketing has been greatly affected especially physical contact marketing such as door to door campaigns or seminar type events. The implications are that HEIs should be able to invest in SMM but before that, there must be information available for them to make such decisions. This research brings out justification for investments into SMM since it measures the effectiveness of SMM on marketing of HEIs in Zambia.

A report released by the entrepreneur online suggests that in 2021 the best marketing strategies for social media is high investment in targeted Ads, and video marketing (Paul & Nafez, 2021). The question that may arise as a result of this is how can organizations justify the high investment in social media technologies? The reports by Reporter link and also by the entrepreneur as cited by Paul & Nafez did not capture any institutions in the education sector and therefore the strategies suggested may not be applicable for HEIs.

## **2.23 Theoretical framework**

This section of the paper discusses the theories that were identified to support the study and build arguments that were linked to the conceptual framework of this study. Three theories were used to explain the research phenomenon and synthesis of the literature. The theories identified were used and accepted as part of the body of knowledge in the study of SMM in general.

### **2.23.1 The Social Media Marketing concept**

The concept of SMM emerges from the fact that many businesses have successfully used social media to build a network of customers and as an instrument for customer engagement, retention. Communication and sales. The concept or theory first started when companies began to publish online and share their contents on social media to increase traffic to their site in the hope that they can capture customers. Studies show that 70% of social media visitors come in to obtain information and 49% of these have decided to purchase (ElAydi, 2018). The findings in this

research indicate that social media is a potential tool for marketing HEIs. The research though was done in the mobile services sector in Egypt and it is not conclusive that these findings apply to the education sector. Since the study by ElAydi was not carried out in the education sector, this research will use the empirical findings from this research to develop a conceptual framework based on the social media marketing concepts.

The social media concept fits into this research because it provided a basis to interrogate the fact that commercial business sectors have been successful in marketing using social media. There is evidence of its successful use in the education sector by institutions such as Columbia University in the USA and Western University in Australia. Statistics show that Africans spend more time on social media platforms, mainly Facebook and YouTube using their mobile phones (Jamme, 2011). This leads to the assumption that educational institutions in Zambia can then identify the common social media platforms and use them in their marketing strategies. However, the assertion of how effective SMM is on the marketing performance of HEIs requires empirical evidence to verify it.

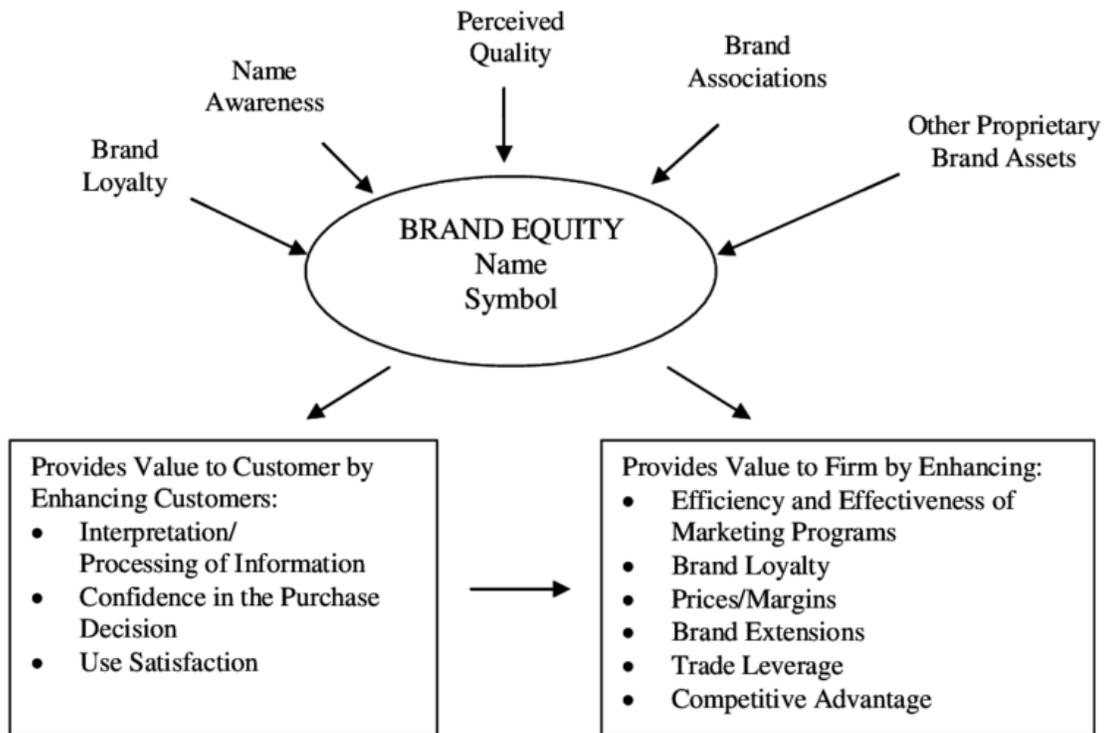
### **2.23.2 Higher Education Institutions and the social media concept**

HEIs in Zambia have been using SMM for a significant number of years as observed from their online presence on social media sites. They have invested in online platforms and this expenditure is part of the overall marketing expenditure. The marketing expenditure on social media needs justification and analysis using Return on Marketing Investment (RMI). Research shows that SMM budgets must target to spend close to \$100 per week to have a reasonable outcome of reach, engagement, lead and conversion that is required for a healthy return (Zhao & Zuu, 2010). The research aimed to analyze the impact of this on marketing performance and whether there is a means by which HEIs can measure their social media expenditure against performance. The social media concept states that presence is a must for institutions and commercial organizations and HEIs are not an exception. Areas of research interest then arise and these are; how sufficient are the budgetary allocation for SMM for HEIs and how effective are the social media platforms being used to market HEIs online?

### **2.23.3 Brand Equity Model by Aaker**

The theory is taken from Aaker (1991), as cited by Steenkamp (Steenkamp, 2020). The model states that brand loyalty must be placed at the core of brand equity (Aaker, 1991). According to Aaker, brand loyalty is tied closely to the customer's experience since it cannot exist without prior purchase history. Brand loyalty therefore according to Aaker's theory can be achieved through non-digital means or simply traditional marketing methods, but the theory adds that brand loyalty is influenced by three major dimensions of brand equity. The dimensions of brand equity are; awareness, association and perceived quality and this is what makes this theory highly suitable for this research.

Social media makes it easy for institutions to create awareness of their products and services. Additionally, communication using the internet seems to move from B2C to C2C as most consumers are more likely to respond more to internet-based communication. Social media is also able to create perceived product quality and this is why most companies that conduct their marketing using social media are associated with a strong brand presence depending on their branding and digital marketing strategy. Social media or internet presence is now more of a necessity for corporates (Sheehan, 2010). Customers are now associating social media presence with product quality and this is why the theory of Brand awareness maps well with the research concept.



(Source Aaker’s model (1991) Cited in Steenkamp (2020))

**FIGURE 2.2: BRAND EQUITY MODEL**

Brand association is easier with the use of social media platforms such as Facebook since most of these online media have the combination of audio, visual and motion to be able to support the

inclusion of co-branding. Other than co-branding, brand endorsement from influencers is also necessary on such media. HEIs that have used SMM seem to have achieved their marketing objectives, but what social media platforms have they employed to create a strong brand presence and how efficient are these online? could these same SMM platforms be generalized to any HEIs regardless of culture, environment, and business model?

#### **2.23.4 Brand loyalty and Higher Education Institutions**

HEIs thrive in their markets mainly as a result of student retention, as shown by a recent survey at the University of Eastern India involving more than 360 students which was carried out to investigate student perceptions of social media and mobile devices. The findings indicated that more students and educators become more aware of social media and the use of social media since they respond more to the brand online than the use of traditional marketing (Nasir Ansari & Khan, 2020).

In the study of HEIs, brands form part of consumer decisions and they influence whether students want to study with a particular institution or not (Kayombo, 2014). This means that if social media assists HEIs to achieve higher brand awareness or presence then the effectiveness of social media on marketing performance for HEIs is a relevant area of study.

The brand loyalty theory can, therefore, be used to explain the fact that HEIs have succeeded in blending social media with their traditional marketing practices with some even diversifying their range of program offering. The perceived value of social media in studying their marketing activities becomes relevant to this study. Social media therefore can help HEIs in creating brand awareness using online platforms and also associate their brand name with perceived quality and these are all key aspects of the theory.

Social media, therefore, may be a huge opportunity for the institutions to expand their markets and grow their presence into international markets. Social media is the channel by which many

businesses can achieve business growth through market expansion and market penetration (Pourkhani *et al.*, 2019). The questions that remain unanswered are;

- i) Are social media platforms efficient for HEIs in Zambia to achieve their business growth through SMM?
- ii) Would SMM impact marketing performance of these institutions like it has for Columbia University and Western University in Australia?

## **2.24 Synthesis of literature review**

### **2.24.1 Literature linking social media and marketing concepts**

The literature review in this study started off by firstly looking at the concept of social media, which according to Boyd & Ellison (2008), is linked to development of websites that allow profile creation and visibility of relationship creation. This concept of social media is highly important in this study because it forms a foundation for the research assumption that SMM is effective in the marketing of HEIs in Zambia. Obviously, the development of dynamic websites with profile creation ability paved way for the birth of interactivity in web technologies. The concept of social media by Boyd & Ellison is supported by the findings from Shipps & Phillips, who stated that interactivity in web development creates huge growth for social networks (SN). Shipps & Philips observed that SNs are rapidly expanding including for purposes of marketing (Shipps & Brandis, 2013). It would be very difficult to conduct any study in social media without understanding the concept of social media and then linking this to the effectiveness of SMM in the education sector.

### **2.24.2 The concept of social media marketing**

The concept of SMM is applied and used in marketing and in this research specifically what was under investigation was the effectiveness of SMM on the marketing performance of selected HEIs in Zambia. This means that to fully determine marketing performance of HEIs as a result of SMM, the concept of marketing should be brought into perspective.

The literature by Richard & Kotter (1975) and cited by Kaplan (2020) brought out the definition of marketing as the creation of long term beneficial and exchange relationships between buyers and sellers of goods and services (Richard & Kotler, 1975). This definition of marketing creates a concept of marketing that makes it highly possible to link marketing to social media because of interactivity and visibility (Kaplan, 2012).

### 2.24.3 The relationship between Social Media Marketing and Marketing

The relationship between SMM and marketing led to the development of the dependent and independent variables used in this research, in this case the independent variable was SMM and the dependent variable was marketing performance. This means that literature relating to marketing performance should be also brought into perspective in this study. The study of marketing deals to a larger extent with consumer perceptions and behaviors towards product services and technologies including social media (Alves *et al.*, 2016). The literature reviewed indicated that the study of social media and marketing is relational in nature and that the two concepts are highly linked to each other, especially that social media enhances marketing. Table 2.2 below shows the main literature on the concept of social that was reviewed

<b>Table 2.2: Literature authors on the social media concept</b>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Key concepts from literature</b>
Boyd & Ellison, (2008)	USA	“Social media is linked to the development of websites”
Shipp & Brandis, (2013)	Worldwide study	“Interactivity in web development creates huge growth for social networks”
Kaplan (2020)	USA	“Marketing is an exchange process between buyers and sellers of goods and service”
Alves, Fernandes, & Mario, (2016)	Portugal	“The study of marketing deals with consumer behaviours”

Alves & Mario recently conducted a study in 2020, in which they synthesized literature on the implications of SMM (Fernandes *et al.*, 2020). This study analyzed 40 studies on SMM and found that most of the studies focused on consumer perceptions of social media. This is an important

finding because it justifies the inclusion of consumer behavior studies in the literature that was reviewed in this study. Studies on consumer behavior were relevant in informing this study because they linked the use of social media to student behavior in HEIs in Zambia and also helped to close the gap in cultural differences on the use of social media in Zambia and other environments covered in the literature.

Boyd & Ellison carried out a study in 2020 on social media sites, in which study they brought out the fact that SN are attracting the attention of academics, as a result of the reach that social media is able to achieve (Nicole & Boyd, 2020). This finding had an implication on this research since it made an important conclusion on the use of social media in the education sector.

Kaplan, Shipps & Brandis, have not done any studies beyond 2020 and 2013 respectively, but their studies were relevant to this study since they linked studies on marketing to SMM and mapped it on the marketing concept. The research topic was social media and this is under the umbrella of marketing.

#### **2.24.4 Harmonizing Differences in the definitions of social media platforms**

There are not so many variations in the definitions of social media platforms as most definitions seem to belong to the same school of thought. This makes it easy to draw a focus on the independent variable (SMM). The definitions by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) and that of Carolyn & Philips (2016), all link social media platforms to web technologies and in a larger way these fit with the concepts of social media by Boyd & Ellison (2008). According to latest research on social media 53.6% of the world population uses social media (Smart Insights, 2021), this finding led to the assumption that social media is taking a different dimension in its use as it becomes more widely used.

Social media supports many fields including marketing and health. Social media platforms definitions may change in the future to include other aspects not limited to only interactivity, networking and connectivity. This research in its **RO1** identifies the social media platforms that are commonly used in HEIs but without a definition of social media platforms it would be very difficult to understand what is classified as social media platform and what is not. Identifying the social media platforms used in HEIs led to resolving **RO2** and providing answers to **Q3** which is

seeking to investigate the best combination of social media platforms that HEIs can use in their marketing.

### 2.24.5 Authors who have provided definitions

Table 2.3 below shows the three main authors who have provided definitions for social media that were adopted in this study.

<b>Table 2.3: Authors on the differences on social media definitions</b>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Key concepts from literature</b>
Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)	USA	“Social media is an internet-based application built on web 2.0 technologies”
Smart in sights (2021)	Global study	“Social media is taking a new dimension”
Carolyn & Philips (2016)		“Social media is a platform that increases interaction and sharing online”

The differences in definitions of social media are largely on the foundation of social media. Carolyn & Philips link social media to web technologies and even though the argument by Kaplan varies from it a little by stating that web 2.0 is the original foundation for the development of social media.

Another argument that can be brought in, is the aspect of regulation of social media which is very important for this study as it may have affected some outcomes of this study. According to Ghosh in his recent publication in the Harvard business review, the regulation of social media implies that the use of social media is entering a new era (Ghosh, 2021). Ghosh’s concept agrees with what Smart insights observed on the use of social media. In the researcher’s view the regulation of social media and particularly in Zambia means that they now become a useful tool in marketing of formal institutions such as HEIs.

### 2.24.6 Researched differences in the use of social media platforms in HEIs

Research so far shows that there are different social media platforms that are used in different HEIs, these have been identified through different research that has been carried out in different studies and in different countries. In a study at the University of Nairobi involving 160 respondents across six college Universities, the findings were that Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were the most popular social media platforms used across all six Universities (Moraa, 2015). This finding by Moraa is identical to what Maweu & Omondi (2020), found at the University of Kabianga who

investigated the use of social media platforms among science students with 103 respondents. They found that the most popular social media platform was Facebook followed by Twitter and YouTube (Maweu & Omondi, 2020). These two research studies used survey samples and came up with similar outcomes. However, the outcomes even though identical were done in single institutions in comparison to this research whose sample size is in thirteen institutions and this might bring out a result that is more representative. The methodologies used in by Moraa and Maweu & Omondi are different from this study, the former used a closed questionnaire with descriptive research while the latter used a mixed research approach which is somewhat similar to the methodology in this current research.

#### **2.24.6.1 Differences in the use of Social media in HEIs in Kenya**

A recent research report presented at the international symposium of social media in Kenya in 2020 indicates that Twitter and YouTube are the leading social media platforms in Kenya and in Universities with 68% assuage in comparison to other social media platforms (Wamuyu, 2020). This report however was a general landscape report looking at the use of social media generally across Kenya and was perhaps wider than the perspectives in Moraa, Maweu & Omondi. These findings are vital to this research since they enable the development of a conceptual model for this research and also that the findings may be compared and the gaps perhaps identified and used to draw conclusions in order to satisfy the research title and provide answers to the research questions.

Kimani & Obwatho (2020), is one of the main literature sources in this research on the use of social media in Kenya. They studied the influence of SMM on student enrolment among private Universities in Kenya with a sample size of 230 respondents in a mixed research approach. The research found that SMM had an influence on student enrolment in private Universities and its findings are highly important to this research since they enable comparisons between this research and the Kenyan one. In Kimani & Obwatho's research they found that Facebook was the most popular social media platform for SMM in Kenyan private Universities and this is in full agreement with the findings of Moraa and Maweu & Omondi.

#### **2.24.6.2 Differences in the use of Social media in HEIs in Nigeria**

A study carried out in Nigeria by Amos Mathias (2019) on the use of social media and academic performance of students at Taraba state University reveals that Facebook is the most popular social

media platform at the University, followed by Twitter and then Google+ (Mathias, 2019). This finding is similar to the findings in Kenya except that this study brought out Google+ as the third most popular social media platform instead of YouTube. Another study in Nigeria by Eric Chikweru Amadi (2018), found that Facebook was the most popular social media platform at Port Harcourt (Amadi & EWA C.J, 2018).

#### **2.24.6.3 Differences in the use of Social media in HEIs in South Africa**

In South Africa it was discovered that the most popular social media platform is Facebook according to a study at the University of Kwazulu Natal (Zondi, 2014), though a recent research indicates that Twitter and WhatsApp are becoming more popular in South African Universities (Manzira & Tsvara, 2019). This study brought out a similar finding with other studies in Nigeria and in Kenya but the limitations or the gap in these studies is that they all did not take the angle of SMM in HEIs and therefore qualifies this study as a new area of knowledge on the subject of social media studies. Findings in these studies however are of great use and importance to this study since they form part of the significant literature that informed this study. This research could not proceed without a careful scrutiny of studies in different parts of the world, Africa and in Zambia which is the home country for the population under study.

#### **2.24.6.4 Comparisons of the differences in use of social media**

The interesting aspect of the research carried out in Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Zambia is that most of the studies carried out are focused on the use of social media in academic performance or as a learning aid and not necessarily as a tool for marketing. In Zambia particularly, there is no study which focuses on the use of SMM in HEIs and this is similar to most studies in other African countries. In Uganda at Makerere University research shows that Facebook is the most commonly used platform (Kabaseke, 2014). In Zimbabwe the closest study on the use of social media in HEIs, investigated social media technologies in Universities (Dlamini *et al.*, 2015). The study did not bring out any popular social media platforms but simply brought out the finding that social media technology is growing in its use in HEIs in Zimbabwe. This research has taken a different perspective from all these studies carried out in different countries since it is mainly focused on the marketing side of social media and not necessarily on library use or student performance. The

results from the analysis and review of literature even in Zambia shows few indications of studies around SMM in Africa and particularly in Zambia, where the most prominent research was done on the use of social media but only at the University of Zambia (Akakandelwa & Walubita, 2017). There has been an increase in private universities in Zambia and this means that the dynamics surrounding the use of social media have changed since 2017 when the study by Akakandelwa & Walubita was done and requires more study in the area and especially in the use of social media for marketing of HEIs.

#### **2.24.6.5 Harmonizing the findings on Social media usage**

The literature review in this study showed that no study has been carried out in Zambia to show how effective SMM is on the marketing performance of HEIs. The literature does show that research has been conducted elsewhere in Australia and the USA and case studies are available to show that SMM can be very effective in marketing performance. Studies by Anderson and Gina show that SMM in HEIs is highly regulated and may not be suitable for marketing higher education institutions (Anderson, 2008). The argument by Anderson is highly in conflict with other studies by Boyd & Ellison who suggest that social media's ability to create strong networks makes it suitable for marketing of HEIs (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

The two case studies of Columbia University and Western University in Australia are also an indication that social media is a powerful tool for marketing HEIs. The conclusions from the literature review are supported by the arguments by Ruforum which has engaged the use of social media in marketing agricultural education institutions (AEI) across its partner institutions in Africa. The research shows that they have been able to engage prospecting students online and the numbers indicate a positive growth (Ruforum Communication, 2017). The similarity between the research by Ruforum and this study is that indicators show that SMM can be used by HEIs to enhance marketing performance, but on the other hand the literature review identifies gaps that suggest that further research is required to fully understand the effectiveness of SMM on marketing performance.

The literature reviewed so far indicates greatly that most studies are biased towards the use of social media in delivery in HEIs than in marketing, examples of such literature is the study by Akakandelwa at the University of Zambia and another is the study by Mwalimu and Mulauzi who

both studied social media as a tool in delivery of lessons. There are also very loose research findings on SMM in Zambia and particularly in HEIs, though research shows that many students in HEIs in Zambia are using social media (Mwalimu *et al.*, 2017). If most students are using SMM in HEIs, then it is raises interest to investigate how effective SMM is on the marketing performance of HEIs.

Literature on SMM indicates that social media is becoming the biggest virtual marketing platform and that many businesses should be able to register presence on these platforms and use them effectively for revenue generation (Paul & Nafez, 2021). The implications of the findings by Paul & Nafez is that HEIs should not be left out on registering their presence on social media, but how does their presence on social media impact their marketing performance? There is already an indication that HEIs in the United States have used social media effectively in their marketing activities and have yielded results (Aman & Hussin, 2018). In Australia, the studies also indicate that Universities have been able to generate more revenue after registering presence on social media. In Nigeria the discovery is that social media impacts marketing activities in a positive way (Newman & Gabriel , 2019).

Table 2.4 shows some of the authors that were reviewed in this study who have carried out research on the use of social media in HEIs in Africa.

<b>TABLE 2.4: AUTHORS ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN HEIS</b>		
<b>Popular social media platforms</b>	<b>Researchers</b>	<b>Country of study</b>
Facebook, Twitter & YouTube	Moraa 2015	University of Nairobi Kenya
Facebook, Twitter and Google+	Mathias (2019)	Taraba state University, Nigeria
Facebook, Twitter & WhatsApp	Zondi (2014)	University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa
Facebook, WhatsApp & Twitter	Kabeaseke (2014)	Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda

In Zambia and Zimbabwe there has not been any studies that have revealed the most popular social media platforms in HEIs, which provokes interest in determining the popularity of platforms in Zambia so that HEIs can select the most appropriate social media platforms for use in their marketing strategies. Latest reports on data portal in Zambia show that there are 2.6 million users

of social media in Zambia representing a 13.9% of Zambia’s population (Kemp, 2021). ZICTA reports in 2021 that 63% of Zambians are using social media (ZICTA, 2020). The two reports by Kemp and by ZICTA are important to this research as they set a clear benchmark to understand the potential of social media for marketing. The two reports however have not brought out statistics on the percentages of social media use in the education sector and particularly in HEIS, which is the area of interest for this study.

**2.24.7 Researched similarities in the use of social media marketing in HEIs**

Table 2.5 shows popularity of social media platforms used in different countries in Africa. The information in the Table indicates similarities in the use of social media platforms in Africa. The Table also shows that there are no research studies on the popularity of social media platforms in Zimbabwe and Zambia (Statista, 2019)

<b>TABLE 2.5: POPULARITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS</b>						
<b>Kenya</b>	<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>Uganda</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	<b>Morocco</b>	<b>Zimbabwe</b>	<b>Zambia</b>
Facebook	Facebook	Facebook	Facebook	Facebook	Unknown	Unknown
Twitter	Twitter	WhatsApp	Twitter	You Tube	Unknown	Unknown
You Tube	Google +	Twitter	WhatsApp	Twitter	Unknown	Unknown

The literature review so far shows that Facebook is the most popular social media platform in African Universities, followed by Twitter and then YouTube. This shows a similarity in the usage of social media platforms in African countries and this should compare with the popularity of Social media globally.

**2.24.7.1 Most popular social media platform in different countries**

A report released by the United Nations reveals that Facebook is the most popular social media platform used among Africans (Essoungou, 2020). The conclusion made is that there are similarities in the use of social media in African Universities and that in Zambia and Zimbabwe there is no research that brings out such important statistics. This study provides an answer to the Zambian scenario as the research instruments include a question on the most popular social media platforms in the Universities selected in the sample. Further research shows that Facebook is the most used platforms in Africa with a 69% usage rate and the rest of the percentages are shared among other platforms such as Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn (Onamu, 2019). Social

media statistics in Zambia though show that Facebook is the most popular social media platform in Zambia with 69.16%, followed by Twitter with 14.89% and Pinterest with 11.79% (Stats counter, 2021). However, this statistic does not indicate usage in HEIs and does not include which percentage of the 69% is from the education sector. This study brings out researched statistics from HEIs and answers the question of which is the most popular social media site in HEIs in Zambia.

Table 2.6 below shows the popularity of social media platforms in Europe, Asia, America and Australia. The information is from selected countries in these regions and it was used in the literature review as case studies excluding China which is brought in to show the variance.

<b>TABLE 2.6: POPULARITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN EUROPE, ASIA, AMERICA &amp; AUSTRALIA</b>					
Wales	Australia	USA	India	Brazil	China
Facebook	YouTube	YouTube	Facebook	Facebook	WeChat
Twitter	Facebook	Facebook	Twitter	Twitter	Sina Weibo
YouTube	Twitter	Twitter	WhatsApp	WhatsApp	Tencent QQ

From the literature review of the popularity of social media, platforms Table 2.5 shows that Facebook is still the most popular social media platform in Universities outside Africa, followed by Twitter and then YouTube. Globally in a recent report, Facebook is listed as the most popular platform not only in the educational sector but also in general use (Statista, 2021). In terms of popularity, it seems that globally Facebook is very common, except in the case of China, which uses different social media platforms

The popularity of social media platforms is highly important in this research, as this created an opportunity at the end of the research to build a model for SMM for HEIs. It is also relevant to this research because it allows the interpretations of the findings to be more useable and visible in providing recommendations on the best combination of social media platforms that HEIs in Zambia should use for their SMM.

#### **2.24.8 Convergence of the social media theory and the brand loyalty theory**

The theoretical framework in this study is built on two theories that fit into the concept of this research and these are the social media concept as defined by ElAydi, (2018) and the brand

awareness theory taken from Aaker's (1991) brand loyalty theory as cited by Steenkamp (Steenkamp, 2020). According to the University of Southern California, a theoretical framework is a theory or a combination of theories that is formulated to explain or understand a research phenomenon (University of Southern California, 2021). The theoretical framework strengthens the study in that it allows an explicit explanation of the study to be made since it connects the researcher to knowledge about the study and leads to the conceptualization of a suitable research design, which in this case is done in Chapter three of the thesis. A theoretical framework is the use of a theory to convey the deepest values of the researcher (Christopher & Stockton, 2018). In this study the researcher has a strong belief that social media has the ability to attract visitors, in this case prospective students. Once they like a particular site marketer are able to position their brands in the customer's mind and these customers are able to develop brand loyalty, since they interact with the brand every time they are online.

Dülek & Saydan (2020) citing ElAydi, (2018), stated that marketing brands in the digital era have become more personal. They have become more fun, more social and more attractive (Dülek & Saydan, 2020). The finding by Dülek & Saydan is the biggest factor that has led to the development of the research hypothesis with assumptions that social media is effective on the marketing performance of selected HEIs in Zambia. The research by Dülek & Saydan was highly valuable to this research since it was done in Universities and strongly supports the assumptions of this research. Dülek & Saydan (2020), researched students currently enrolled in Van Yüzüncü Yıl University with a sample size of 445 students with 390 responses taken into the survey. This survey is highly representative and is clear evidence of the use of the brand loyalty theory in a research project.

#### **2.24.9 Incorporating the social media theory**

Social media theory assumes that businesses that have built their brands and registered their presence online have been very successful in building customer base and achieving customer retention (ElAydi, 2018). This theory fits into this research and with the brand loyalty theory. The case of Columbia University is a clear case of how an HEI has been able to use social media to increase student numbers and student retention and therefore is evidence that this theory used in practical marketing practice and has been able to achieve results. Perhaps the concern is that

Columbia University being in America, the results at this University may not be similar to the results in HEIs in Zambia.

The brand loyalty theory and the social media theory fit into the hypothesis of this research as they both lead to the assumption that SMM is effective in increasing student numbers. The assumption is therefore that they are effective in marketing HEIs. In the Chapter three of this thesis and particularly in appendices 1 & 2, most research questions are targeted at measuring effectiveness since they boarder on questions of whether SMM leads to prospecting students selecting a particular course or whether SMM causes them to select a particular HEI to another. In addition, the questions lead to examining whether SMM leads to students making decisions or making a choice to enroll in a particular HEI or not. The brand loyalty and the social media theories can then be successfully used in this research to support the research concept. In a research involving a sample size of 303 responses, it was discovered that social factors on social media platforms lead to high trust among users of a particular social media platform and the result of this is greater brand awareness (Potgieter & Naidoo, 2017), this is empirical evidence of the usability of both the social media theory and the brand loyalty theory.

#### **2.24.10 Implication of the literature on the research objectives**

The implication of the literature review on the design and formulation of research objectives should be based on a thorough review of existing literature around a particular research concept (Sage reviews, 2018). This means that once the research title has been framed then the researcher begins analyzing literature around that title so that they can frame the correct research objectives and ask the appropriate research questions. This is why in this research there is a mapping between the literature reviewed and the research objectives that have been formulated.

#### **2.24.11 Mapping of objectives in the literature review**

##### **2.24.11.1 Research objective 4**

**RO4** in this research is to establish the extent to which social media contributes to the overall marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia. This objective is important to achieve as it will enable a link between SMM to be measured against marketing performance in HEIs in Zambia. Literature has revealed so far that there is a relationship between consumer behavior and social media. This relationship between consumer behavior and social media leads to the assumption that social media

influences these behaviors and therefore can be assumed to lead to high or low marketing performance (Gustav & Alexandra, 2020). Consumer behavior is a component of marketing and once the consumer behavior is well studied it leads to marketers satisfying the needs of customers. This argument in literature then leads to a conclusion that SMM effect on marketing performance must be studied by exploring or establishing the extent to which it affects the overall marketing performance. While this fact has been established in the USA at Columbia University, this finding is not generalized and conclusive especially after looking at the differences in the use of social media platforms in HEIs from one continent of the world to the other.

#### **2.24.11.2 Research objective 3**

**RO3** in this research is to determine the best combination of social media platforms that would improve SMM in HEIs in Zambia. To inform this study various research findings on the popularity of social media platform have been reviewed so far. The studies indicate that Facebook is the most popular SMM platform but other platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp are also popular (Barrere, 2021). These reviews have been conducted outside Zambia and cannot be generalized into the Zambian context. This research was highly relevant as it brought out strategic information that led to the development of a framework or model for SMM for HEIs. The determination of the best combination of social media platforms adds huge value to the outcomes of the research as it will be highly helpful for HEIs to know which combination of social media platforms to include in their strategic marketing planning.

#### **2.24.11.3 Research objective 2**

**RO2** in this research was to investigate the extent to which SMM can lead to high student recruitment and high market share. This is what was mostly used to measure the effectiveness of SMM on the marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia. Research conducted in Universities in Spain shows that marketing performance in these Universities is linked to how each marketing activity result in high sales revenue through increase in student numbers (Llonch *et al.*, 2006). The ultimate performance for marketing in any organization is to increase profitability through marketing activities. If HEIs in Zambia implement SMM, the expectation is that this should lead to higher performance in their marketing. On the other hand, the question of whether SMM has an effect on the marketing performance in the marketing of selected HEIs has been answered in the findings of this research in Chapter 4.

#### **2.24.11.4 Research objective 1**

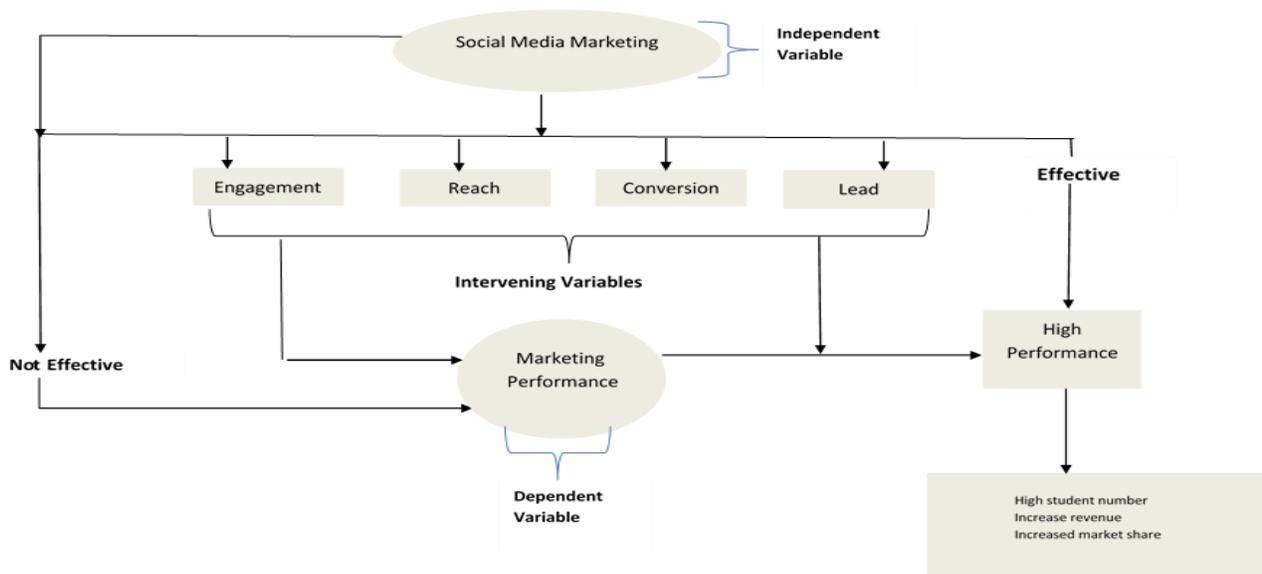
**RO1** in this research aimed at identifying the social media platforms that are commonly used in HEIs in Zambia, this objective was important since every study that has been reviewed in the literature has started by identifying the platforms. This researcher could not study the effect of social media on the marketing of HEIs without first understanding the social media platforms used in HEIs. According to Selltitz, Wrightsman & Cooks (1981), as cited by Emeralds insight publication, the design of a research concept is based on the observation of previously studied literature and the practicality of those studies (Emeralds Insight, 2021).

The literature reviewed so far led to a conclusion that this research built on the subjective arguments of different researches on the knowledge around social media usage in HEIs. This conclusion of the literature implied that the researcher needs to develop a conceptual framework that attempts to fill in the gaps left by other researchers.

#### **2.25 Conceptual Framework**

Based on the concept of marketing performance measurement by Clark and Amber (2001) and empirical evidence provided in other research such as that of Aman and Hussin (2018), the researcher came up with the conceptual model shown in Figure 2.3 below. Clark and Amber stated that marketing measurement aims to assess “the relationship between marketing activities and business performance” (Clark & Amber, 2001). Marketing activities involve the use of SMM tools such as engagement and conversion to achieve the effectiveness of these tools on marketing performance. Aman and Hussin researched the effectiveness of SMM in HEIs in Malaysia and found that SMM is the most cost-effective part of advertising strategies (Aman & Hussin 2018).

In the framework, the variables manipulated to determine the effectiveness of SMM for HEIs are: 1) engagement, 2) reach, 3) lead, 4) conversion. These four variables when effectively managed will lead to marketing performance. In this study marketing performance outcomes are high student numbers, increased revenue/ROI, and increased market share. The article by Mahaney, mentioned that the recruitment of students now takes place online leading to the effective use of virtual marketing and online marketing to increase student numbers (Mahaney, 2012). The conceptual framework indicates that SMM has an impact on marketing performance and that its effectiveness after interrogating the research variables can be measured empirically.



**FIGURE 2.3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### 2.25.7 Measuring effectiveness

Effectiveness is defined as the extent to which objectives are met (Common Wealth of Australia, 2013), this means that to measure effectiveness there must be a set of objectives that are well designed and matched against performance. In this research to measure effectiveness of SMM on the marketing performance of HEIs, there are a set of four objectives that have been defined and will be used to determine how effective SMM is on the marketing performance of HEIs. To measure effectiveness, the outcome of the use of SMM must result into high student numbers, increased revenue, and increased market share as these have been picked as indicators of high marketing performance.

To measure effectiveness of SMM, Bayne (2011) in a research thesis submitted to Georgia University investigated two main areas of study and these are; to understand the effectiveness of Facebook as a promotional tool, and to understand Twitter as an effective tool for marketing promotion (Bayne, 2011). This research limited itself to two social media platforms and these are Facebook and twitter, because these where well-known social media platforms for marketing promotion in Georgia Universities. This research has taken a wider approach in measuring effectiveness of SMM by first identifying the social media platforms mainly used in HEIs in Zambia. There is no research that has established these in Zambia and secondly that the research by Bayne was mainly focused on marketing promotion and its findings are around this particular

area of marketing and may not be as wide as the research title in this research. The research title in this research in addition looks at SMM from a broader perspective. Danish in his thesis report, measured effectiveness of SMM by looking at the best practices of using SMM at Pinterest University (Danish, 2019), this research however was focused on only one institution and its findings cannot be generalized to local HEIs in Zambia since it was limited. However, the study brought out one fact that is relevant to this research and that is, to measure SMM effectiveness. The SMM platforms commonly used in HEIs must first be identified and hence in this research **RO1**, seeks to first establish the commonly used SMM platforms in HEIs in Zambia.

**RO2** in this research is phrased as; to investigate if Social media marketing can lead to increase in student numbers. If the results of the research indicate that SMM can lead to increased student numbers, then this will fit with the assumption in the hypothesis. If the use of SMM in marketing HEIs in Zambia, proves that it leads to increased numbers, then this is evidence that SMM has led to increased student recruitment. This will also mean that the assumption drawn could be that SMM has an effect on marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia.

Choudaha (2013), in his thesis investigated SMM and its effectiveness in international student recruitment and his findings were that because of its flexibility and interactive nature it leads to an increase in market expansion across geographic boundaries (Choudaha, 2013). To measure effectiveness of SMM Choudaha investigated the increase in international student recruitment and this is similar to this research that has measured SMM by looking at increase in student numbers as a result of the use of SMM for recruitment.

#### **2.25.8 Social media effectiveness**

In a Doctoral research thesis submitted to D.Y. Patil University, by Ayarekar (2015), the findings were that there is a relationship between the attractiveness of social media and online advertising (Ayarekar, 2015). In the research by Ayarekar social media effectiveness is associated with firstly its attractiveness for advertising and also its dynamic nature to capture different markets. According to Ayarekar social media effectiveness is suitable for online advertising as it helps to increase online presence and achieve sales objectives. The research by Ayarekar was based on young working women in Gujarat. It brought out an important component in research on social media since it was able to link social behaviors to how young working women respond to online

advertising; however, this finding cannot be generalized to this current research since the behaviors of students and prospective students would obviously be different from the behaviors of young working women.

In a research at the University of Southern Indiana to study the effectiveness of social media, they used student recruitment and student retention in their framework (Foroughi, 2011). This research developed a framework containing variables that researchers must use in order to measure the effectiveness of social media. The research was looking at the effectiveness of implementing social media in higher education, while the concepts of the framework developed in this research can be used in every research on social media.

Another research at the University of Nebraska in Ghana investigated the effect of social media on academic performance of students, among their objectives was to find out firstly what students use social media for and to ascertain how social media tools influence academic performance (Bernard & Patience , 2018). The research by Bernard & Patience investigated social media effect on academic performance, it did not mostly focus on SMM in HEIs and therefore the gap in the use of HEIs in this research provides new knowledge.

#### **2.25.9 Marketing effectiveness**

Marketing effectiveness as a concept has been linked to valuable organizational output according to Webster (1995) as cited by Milichovský & Simberova (2015), valuable outcome relates to increase in revenue, increase in profitability and increase in market share (František & Iveta , 2015). Marketing develops objectives that support the overall organizational goals, and if the marketing objectives produce a valuable outcome to achieve the overall organizational goals, then according to Webster, marketing is effective. Lamberti & Noci (2010), related marketing effectiveness to attainment of high sales revenue, high profitability and the overall output of attainment of objectives (Lucio & Giuliano, 2010). The interpretation of the findings by both Milichovský & Simberova and Lamberti & Noci, is that the effectiveness of marketing is measured through marketing performance.

The measures of marketing effectiveness are return on investment, total opportunity revenue and sales revenue analysis (Geitner, 2020). The findings by Geitner are highly linked to marketing effectiveness for high marketing performance. The argument is that if you cannot measure

marketing performance then you cannot determine whether marketing is effective or not. This research looks at higher student numbers and increase in market share as measures of high marketing performance and these fit very well with the findings by Geitner, Milichovský & Simberova and also Lamberti & Noci.

Most marketers in many organizations including HEIs find it very difficult to justify investment in marketing (Gallo, 2017). This is because they have not put in place a framework to monitor marketing performance. One of the outcomes of this research is the development of an SMM model for marketing HEIs and this should also include a recommendation on the best possible metrics for measuring SMM performance.

#### **2.25.10 Explaining the independent variable**

The independent variable is 'social media' since this needs to be linked or associated with marketing performance. To interrogate this variable and link it to marketing performance the motivating variables or intervening variables sit between this variable and the dependent variable which is marketing performance. The University of Southern California describes an independent variable as a variable that is stable and unaffected by other variables that are being measured in a particular research (University of Southern California, 2020). The Independent variable shown in Figure 2.3 above on the conceptual framework is SMM and this is the condition of the study that will be systematically manipulated by the research investigator. Neil Salkind states that an independent variable is complementary to dependent variables and that the two concepts are used in their mathematical sense (Salkind, 2020). The social marketing variable in this instance will be purposefully manipulated in order to give answers to the research questions.

SMM is the main component in this research and must be conceptualized and interrogated in order to be able to change the values of the dependent variables in response to the independent variable. Social media is a stream of internet or E-commerce since it is in actual fact feared to replace brand management and introduce a new method of marketing (Sing & Ratna, 2017). SMM creates a new innovation in marketing especially that research shows that organizations are using social media to enhance interest in their organization and to build relationships with their online public (Ardan & Mohammad, 2019). The study of social media by Ardan and Mohammad was done in the cosmetic sector but the findings of this study become highly relevant with regard to the choice of

social media as an independent variable in this research since in the study social media impacts performance of organizations through online engagement of the public.

Social media in the conceptual framework though linked to the intervening variables forms an independent study in this research and will lead to the concepts and theories on SMM to be brought out in order to clearly understand the topic of SMM and develop effective research instruments that will ultimately lead to addressing the research questions. Social media has demonstrated huge impact on consumer behavior since it has provided different ways of marketing to consumers whose mindsets have changed from the traditional brick and mortar or physical shopping to online shopping using different online media platforms (Zulqurnain *et al.*, 2016). Social media becomes a powerful tool for marketing since it changes consumer perceptions and is able to allow organizations to expand markets, reduce their costs and increase profitability.

#### **2.25.11 Outcomes of social media marketing studies in Zambia**

The literature review has indicated that SMM studies in Zambia have mainly focused on the use of social media for purposes of class room delivery (Akakandelwa & Walubita, 2017) and not necessarily its impact on marketing. This makes the SMM a variable that should be studied in this research before linking it to the dependent variables. SMM plays a significant role for Universities to be able to succeed in the changing environmental context and therefore must be part of their overall marketing planning process (Elena *et al.*, 2012).

The success of Universities in Romania according to the study by Elena *et al* indicates that there is huge interest in exploring how the same concept can apply to HEIs in the Zambian context especially that such a study has not been done in the Zambian environment. What is not explored therefore in this circumstance is that SMM as an independent variable can impact marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia.

The use of social media in HEIs has caused the relationships between educational institutions and their stakeholders to change. The main stakeholders are the students in HEIs and these are changing their attitudes and perceptions as a result of many institutions adopting SMM (Clark *et al.*, 2017). SMM is becoming a huge influence in the way HEIs are conducting their business and it is also a huge area of interest in this research as an independent variable.

### **2.25.12 Implications of COVID-19 and the Adoption of technology**

COVID-19 has seen the adoption of technology as a strategic partner in the delivery of higher learning education, many HEIs have commenced offering online delivery to respond to the changes in consumer behavior during the advent of the pandemic. Price and quality are becoming the two key factors in service delivery (Gustav & Alexandra, 2020). Those are part of the social media concepts since SMM has the ability to change consumer perceptions but strengthens brand image for the service industry. HEIs in Zambia have used traditional marketing aggressively but since the advent of SMM they have incorporated online platforms for their advertising and communication. The question that must arise then must be, should they only use social media for advertising purposes or they can maximize its use? SMM as an independent variable provided the researcher with more opportunity to explore the concept of SMM and provided responses to the research questions.

### **2.25.13 The role of social media in branding HEIs**

SMM has a role to play in branding and marketing and it is also a powerful tool for administration work and changing consumer behavior. Social media presents companies with an opportunity to reach to millions of potential customers in a fraction of time at less the cost compared to traditional marketing (Shamster *et al.*, 2020).

Literature reviewed so far indicates that social media is highly useful for branding purposes for organizations but can this same concept be applied to HEIs in Zambia? Universities such as the Australian business institute have relied on social media for student recruitment and for communication purposes especially that cultures in Australia are more inclined to media technology than to traditional forms of communication (Mertous & Peekmound, 2020). The cultures in Zambia and in Australia are different and therefore the findings for research in Australia cannot be extrapolated in Zambia despite the study using the same independent variable of social media to measure marketing performance.

The conclusion that can be made is that SMM is highly visible as the new method of marketing particularly for the HEIs that are forced to change their marketing approach to include online presence and high interaction between institutions and its markets.

#### **2.25.14 Explaining the intervening variables**

Intervening variables are also known as mediating variables, they explain a relationship or link between other variables (Vogt, 2020). The intervening variables are important to this research since they allow the researcher to determine the links or relationships between the independent variable and the dependent variable. These variables are not the focus of the study, the study rather is focused on SMM as the independent variable and marketing performance as the dependent variable.

The intervening variables will be critical to the research since they allowed the researcher to link the independent and the dependent variables to satisfy the research topic and address the research questions. Intervening variables are hypothetical aspects in this research and they were useful to determine not only the research assumptions but also to address the theoretical aspects of the research in the conceptual framework. Intervening variables are eminent and forerunners in any research (Msuya *et al.*, 2014), they are discussed individually in the next section.

#### **2.26 Measures of social media marketing performance**

The social exchange theory of 1976 and as cited by Pan (2012) provides the basis for the creation of SMM in today's marketing concepts (Bing & Crottis, 2012). The marketing of goods and services using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram constitute part of the wider umbrella of SMM. SMM is becoming one of the most popular forms of marketing globally. In the United States this has formed the most important marketing tools for marketing HEIs, an example of this is the success at University of Columbia where they have increased student numbers through the use of social media platforms (Constantinides & Marc, 2020).

To understand the effectiveness of SMM on marketing performance, the measures of SMM need to be brought into perspective and then linked to the measures of marketing performance. In South Africa SMM has proved to be largely effective in the marketing of HEIs in that country, an example of this being the research carried out at Regent University which shows that Universities in that country are engaging social media in the recruitment of prospective students (Khan, 2017). In Zambia the gaps in the literature show that studies on the subject on social media are more

targeted at delivery of Lectures or incorporation of these in class room environments rather than for marketing purposes (Akakandelwa & Walubita, 2017). Studies at the University of Zambia have explored the use of social media as a teaching and learning technique rather than as a marketing tool (Mwalimu *et al.*, 2017). Another study at ZCAS University in Zambia revealed that brand management is a critical aspect in the marketing of HEIs in Zambia (Kayombo, 2014). The study by Kayombo did not include the use of social media in creating brand awareness and did not link branding to marketing performance in HEIs. The study though provided a basis or the gap by which SMM can be investigated in the study of brand management.

Further research indicates that social media is being used by students in learning institutions and it is transforming their way of learning, social conduct and networking (Manzira & Tsvara, 2019). The findings in the research works carried out by various researchers bring out an important component in this research in that they establish that social media is a useful tool in marketing, managing brands and in the delivery of Lectures in HEIs. The research at Regent University creates a huge similarity between this study and the findings by Khan, who investigated SMM in HEIs. Khan's study concludes that SMM is effective in marketing HEIs in the South African environment. The consumer behavior theory on the other hand, states that culture has an influence in the behavior of consumers and that this may vary from one consumer market to the other, and the findings cannot therefore be generalized (Bing & Crottis, 2012).

SMM performance in this research has been taken to focus on four variables which can be used to draw a conclusion that SMM has an effect on the marketing performance in HEIs. The variables for measuring SMM performance are: Engagement, Reach, Conversion and lead. SMM measurements can be complex or simple depending on the organizational goals (Jeffrey, 2013). For most social media platforms, the four variables of engagement, reach, conversion and lead are the best form to use in order to measure the performance of any social media platform (Jeffrey, 2013).

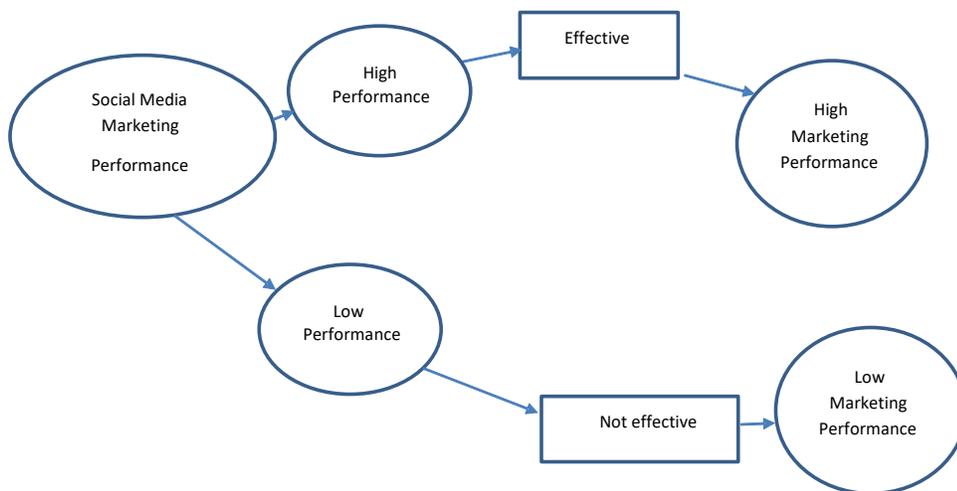
## **2.27 Social media marketing and marketing performance**

Literature reviewed in this study shows that there is a relationship between SMM and Marketing performance, since social media strategies must be aligned with the overall marketing strategies of the organization (Amir & Anand , 2020). Further research in this study shows that there is a

connection between SMM and overall business growth (Sing & Ratna, 2017). The assumption in this research is that a high performance in SMM leads to a high marketing performance while a low performance in SMM leads to a low marketing performance. This assumption is shown in Figure 2.4 below which shows the concept design in this research and forms part of the research questions particularly **RO3** which seeks to establish the extent to which social media contributes to the overall marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia.

Figure 2.4 below is an expansion of the conceptual framework which shows that what leads to a high marketing performance in SMM is engagement, reach, conversion and lead. The assumption is that when these seem to all be high, then performance of SSM is high and this leads to a high performance in overall marketing results.

**FIGURE 2.4: THE ASSUMPTION OF HIGH SMM AND LOW SMM**



The conceptual framework in this study was developed as a result of careful review of literature from various researchers on the subject of SMM and marketing concepts, and after establishing the gaps the concept for this research was established. The hypothesis shows that effective SMM has an effect on the marketing performance of HEIs, conversely it also shows that SMM is not effective for marketing HEIs. This leads to the assumptions shown in Figure 2.4 that high performance in SMM leads to a high performance in Marketing.

## **2.28 The relationship among the variables**

To study social media performance on social media platforms the number of likes, share, comments and interaction is highly critical (Patel, 2017), this relates to engagement in this study. The number of users coming across social media content is a good measure of the performance of a particular social media platform (Chen, 2020), this relates to reach in this study. The measure of how visitors to a social media respond to a call of action is an important metric to measure when it comes to determining how effective a social media platform is (Bobby *et al.*, 2009). This is referred to as lead and it is a metric that quantifies SMM performance. There is no way the determination of social media platform performance can be carried out without looking at the visitors to the site who have expressed interest in the product (Eun *et al.*, 2020). The research instruments designed in Chapter three (Methodology) considered the literature reviewed which has determined the questions that must be posed in order to satisfy the research objectives. Table 2.7 below shows an explanation of what each of these variables are and the possible way in which they have been captured in the research questions on both the semi structured interview guide and the structured questionnaire. The Literature reviewed in this Chapter supports the formulation of the research questions designed in Chapter three. The findings by Eun *et al* indicate that to measure effectiveness of a social media platform visitors to a site who have expressed interest in a product must be analyzed.

**2.29 A summary of the social media intervening variables**

<b>TABLE 2.7: EXPLAINING ENGAGEMENT, REACH, LEAD AND CONVERSATION</b>				
	<b>1. Engagement</b>	<b>2. Reach</b>	<b>3. Lead</b>	<b>4. Conversation</b>
	Measures shares, likes and comments	Measures the number of users who have come across a particular content on social media	Measures how social media gets visitors to respond to a call of action	Measures potential visitors who have expressed interest in the product
<b>Measuring</b>	This should involve looking at the popularity of social media posts on social media platforms and the number of times respondents have commented on a social media post	Which platforms are popular and which ones are commonly used in HEIs. This can lead to asking questions leading to identifying via which social media platforms the respondents learnt of a particular course offered	This will lead to asking questions around how much time visitors spend on social media and how they rate social media page contents	The questions surrounding this measure will relate to the number of times respondents visit a social media platform or page and how effective the social media page is

Social media user engagement can be observed by looking at the activities on the social media pages and this can be achieved by the use of tools such as google analytics, brand24 and many others that allow institutions to map their SMM performance to their overall marketing performance (Abbu *et al.*, 2012).

Social media comprises of diverse and numerous mixes of systems where users engage with the media and other users (Khan, 2014). The implication of this is that when investigating the effectiveness of SMM on the marketing performance in HEIs, there is need to be able to construct the measures or variables that will assist in determining effectiveness. Effectiveness simply means finding out whether something produced any output (Saba & Jonathan, 2016). In this research to measure effectiveness, three main areas were captured; 1) the efficiency of the SMM platforms, 2) the SMM strategies that HEIs are using, 3) whether or not the use of SMM can lead to higher

student enrolment or to a higher market share. The outcome of providing answers to the questions resulted in addressing effectiveness of SMM.

### **2.29.7 Engagement**

This is a key performance indicator for any social media platform as it measures interaction with online users by considering likes, shares and other interactive aspects of social media pages (Vedran , 2013). Engagement will relate to activity on a social media page and this usually has statistical measures to allow the researcher to observe the levels of engagement on social media sites and provide a comparative analysis of how HEIs are using social media to engage their customers and grow their brand. Engagement is a common metric in measuring social media performance, though it does not necessarily relate to sales revenue for a firm involved in social media especially that some social media visitors may not really end up into customers of that firm or institution.

Research indicates that most of the social media sites are dormant as a result of weak or poor engagement on their social media platforms and hence their poor outcome on the performance of their SMM strategies (Hausman, 2020). Engagement can be understood better in relation to customers who physically walk in a storefront or shop to enquire about products and services. The customers often may not buy but they are potential customers and whether they stick around or make the purchasing decision depends on what the marketers or sales team does in order to change their minds. The concept of the moment of truth can then be brought out to explain the concept of how online visitors can become online customers. The moment of truth is the time when customers decide whether to purchase a particular product or not, through listening and responding to marketing elements such as packaging and branding (Löfgren *et al.*, 2008). Customers respond to many aspects of social media pages such as Facebook in order for them to like, share or respond to posts and these aspects can include level of interaction, website or social media page design and how attractive the products or services have been displayed on the social media page.

Engagement is different from one SMM platform to the other since online segmentation processes separate social media platforms according to the popularity of that particular social media platform and the key influencers that the platform has. Engagement therefore is likely to change depending

on the management of each social media page. Social media has changed perceptions of consumers and has also enabled consumers to change their perceptions of its use in the education sector.

Engagement according to research increases effectiveness of advertising since there is a relationship between engagement on a media site and customer reactions to goods and services on that site (Bobby *et al.*, 2009). There are two types of engagement, personal and social interactive engagement, personal engagement relates to the user's initiative and interest in a particular social media post by way of commenting or liking a page while social interaction is the process of users of a social media page or platform discussing or interacting with each other on a common interest topic or post (Bristan, 2021).

This research is interested in both personal engagement and social engagement as these are clear measures of how effective a social media platform or tool is on marketing performance. The levels of social and personal engagement determine popularity of a social media site and how effective it is in the marketing performance of an HEI. If a social media platform has higher engagement then it can be measured as effective and if it has low engagement then it is not effective. This research investigated effectiveness of SMM on marketing performance of HEIs and one of the ways to measure this is by looking at the levels of engagement on a particular social media platform. To measure effectiveness the correct variables must be defined and the variable must be exhaustive with a number of attributes associated with it (Pierre *et al.*, 2015).

The engagement variable in this case is linked to two other attributes of personal engagement and social engagement and these are also associated with other variables such as reach and conversion.

Effective social media should be stated by turning traditional return on investment (ROI) upside down (Donna & Marek, 2010), one of the outcomes for measuring effectiveness of SMM is measuring the return on investment for social media performance. Engagement helps to assist in the calculations of ROI for SMM, since it measures public shares, likes and comments which may translate into sales though strong arguments by SMM scholars who indicate that engagement does not necessarily lead to sales and therefore it is an indirect measure (Big commerce, 2021).

Marketing performance traditionally has been measured through ROI as the most reliable measure whenever marketing professionals are justifying marketing contribution to the firm's performance (Gao, 2010). There have been huge arguments in many corporate firms concerning the justification of marketing budgets and activities and this has raised interest to study how marketing professionals can justify costs for marketing activities including investment in social media. In traditional marketing the measurement of marketing performance is by the use of variables such as increase in customer base, market share and revenue growth. The interest of this research was to determine whether SMM can create this same outcome on marketing performance. HEIs in Zambia have invested in SMM but there is no model for monitoring and evaluating the effect of this investment on the marketing performance of these Institutions.

The assumption in the Hypothesis is that engagement can lead to effective marketing performance or it may not. According to the literature engagement is a great measure of how effective online advertising is particularly examining the number of shares (Hilde *et al.*, 2018).

#### **2.29.7.1 Engagement in this research**

Studying engagement in this research addressed the research assumptions and provided the means by which SMM was linked or not linked to marketing performance in HEIs. Customer loyalty has come under undeniable influence because of social media (Nadeem, 2015). Research indicates that social media is able to influence customer loyalty since it connects brands with customers in a more personal manner. The level of engagement on social media platforms is relevant to customer loyalty since customer retention is a clear measure of effectiveness of social media on marketing performance. While the studies on the relationship between engagement and customer retention seem to prove the research assumption that engagement leads to effectiveness in marketing performance, this outcome cannot be generalized to the performance of marketing in HEIs.

#### **2.29.8 Reach**

Reach is the total number of people who view or see content on a social media site or page (York, 2020), reach is directly related to impression even though impression is the number of times a content is displayed. Reach is important since it is what determines whether a customer or visitor to a page will either buy a product or simply get some information about that product and use this information to influence a purchase or refer other potential customers. Moment of truth is the few

seconds that customers take before they decide whether to buy a product or not (Sarpong, 2016). Reach is an important variable in determining how effective a SMM platform is since it records the number of people who view site content and therefore can be used to measure effectiveness of SMM on marketing performance. In present day marketing, it is almost impossible to design a marketing strategy without the inclusion of social media (Abbu *et al.*, 2012).

Social media influences consumer buyer decisions, since it has the ability to reach billions of people within a click of a boosted posting using social media tools (Abbu *et al.*, 2012). Through paid media and search engine optimization companies are able to reach individuals in different geographic places and this expands their business into international markets.

A research published by the Australian communications and media authority indicates that 90% of teenagers in Australia are using social media and because of this Universities have boosted participation in Social media (McMalcolm, 2021). The implication of this is that Zambian Universities must embrace social media in their management and marketing of HEIs. This research is necessary in order to determine whether social media is effective in marketing these institutions or not. Education in Australia is among the top five sectors that contribute to their GDP according to the Economist and this means that they are able to export educational services and earn forex from this. In Zambia on the other hand education is viewed mostly as a social sector and highly subsidized even through there is an indicator that through the incorporation of social media reach HEIs may become more effective in their revenue generation.

#### **2.29.8.1 Social media and referral marketing**

Referral marketing has proved to be a powerful tool in increasing marketing share and revenue for many organizations and businesses, so the assumption in this research is that if reach is used as a variable for improving the effectiveness of marketing performance then it will be possible that visitors to a social media site would recommend it to others. Research shows that customers who become advocates to the business have the power to bring in other customers and increase revenue for businesses (Berman, 2016). A research conducted at Walden University indicates that digital marketing is able to improve revenue for small scale businesses as a result of its ability to increase market share and market presence (Lockett, 2018). This research assumes that if small scale

businesses can increase revenue and market presence through the use of online marketing, then it is possible that HEIs can increase their markets and presence through the use of SMM.

A study carried out in South Africa to investigate the effectiveness of SMM indicated that retention of students and recruitment of prospective students depended on the effective use of social media platforms (Khan, 2017). The indication of this finding is that to recruit students online, reach is an important aspect as this is the only way that HEIs can capture prospective students even far beyond their own geographic boundaries. Reach in this case provides the fact that revenue generation in HEIs is related to expansion of markets and this is why in the conceptual framework there is an indication that when HEI's expand their markets internationally, expectations are that they will increase both revenue and profitability. The Hypothesis in this research assumes that if social media campaigns reach a wider audience then the social media platforms are effective. An example of an empirical measure in this research is investigating whether social media leads to enrolled students at HEIs to enroll in particular courses. Research conducted in Pakistan in various Universities indicates that social media has an impact in changing behaviors of learners in various learning institutions (Abbas *et al.*, 2019). The findings in the research by Abbas, *et al.*, is a clear indication that social media can influence behaviors of learners and this can lead to them changing or selecting particular courses at HEIs. Consumer behavior is dynamic from one business environment to the other and the behaviors of consumers in Pakistan may not be the behaviors of consumers in Zambia. This justifies the collection of empirical data in order to understand or satisfy the questions raised in this research.

#### **2.29.8.2 Reach in this research**

Literature analyzed in this study indicates that social media in HEIs has been used more in the delivery of lessons at HEIs rather than for purposes of marketing. The establishment that consumer behavior is different from one business environment to the other creates huge interest to determine the relationship between SMM and marketing performance. The consumer behavior as defined by Walter in 1974 and as cited by research at the University of Pretoria in 2020 defines it as the process by which consumers make choices between product or service offerings (University of Pretoria, 2020). The choices by the consumers can be influenced by marketing campaigns whether

through the use of traditional marketing or online marketing campaigns. SMM has the advantage that marketing campaigns can reach larger audiences in a single click or boost and this can have a huge influence on consumer choices especially that platforms such as Facebook have a social cultural aspect among the users.

Research conducted by Araujo shows that Twitter as a social media platform has influencers that can be able to use word of mouth to influence buyers of goods and services to make choices towards a particular service or product offering (Araujo *et al.*, 2016). This research shows that Twitter as a social media platform is among the top social media platforms with a high influence, rate and reach. In the measurement of social media performance reach is a vital variable since it is among the four key measures of social media performance.

### **2.29.9 Conversion**

Conversion measures potential visitors who have expressed interest in the product (Newman & Gabriel , 2019). This is an important aspect for any social media campaign as it helps greatly in identifying prospective customers and eventually may lead to online segmentation of visitors to the site. Research indicates that when organizations deliver effective customer experience customers tend to move from being prospective to loyal customers (Oswald *et al.*, 2006). The focus on returning customers should be on physical moments, emotional moments and value chain moments. The interpretation of the concepts by Oswald is that social media pages or platforms must be designed deliberately to become sticky sites so that customers visiting the site might want to return again.

Prospective visitors to a site are likely to transform into customers and move up the loyalty ladder to become loyal customers and eventually advocates (Ozimek, 2010). Conversion works like shoppers who enter a physical shop and have to decide whether they are buying a product or not. The concept of moment of truth states that ‘customers have between 25 to 30 seconds for them to decide whether to buy a product or not’ (Markus *et al.*, 2019). Conversion as a measure of effectiveness of SMM on the marketing performance of HEIs becomes highly relevant as it tastes concepts of the attractiveness and popularity of particular social media platforms. This has been determined by asking questions such as whether adverts on social media platforms cause students to walk into learning institutions or asking how many times they visit social media platforms. The

way people communicate and interact has changed as a result of internet technologies and this includes social media. The meaning is that collaboration on social media pages is a component of how effective a social media platform is (Jenny & Karolina , 2019). The rate of new visitors to a site means that referral marketing is pulling prospective clients to a particular social media site.

### **2.29.9.1 Conversion and referral marketing**

According to Berman, referral marketing using traditional means is highly effective and the incorporation of digital media enhances its effects (Drucker, 2017).

Social media sites must retain customers just like physical business premises by ensuring that they provide an environment that offers great customer experience. This is why in this research, questions such as “how helpful is the information on the institution’s social media page?” resulted in measuring the conversion rate on social media pages.

The study of customer retention is one that cannot be ignored in this research that looks at the effectiveness of SMM on marketing performance. According to Vilma and Gabryte, customers’ repeat purchases need to be studied in order to understand what makes them return (Vilma & Ingrida, 2014).

On social media sites it would be important to understand what information customers are viewing and what products and services they (sites) are offering so that deliberately these could be used to attract customers. On the other hand, other researchers argue that it is the dynamics of the online site that attracts visitors to a site and not necessarily the information (Schmdit, 2021). However, for HEIs the approach to SMM must be different and this is the reason this research was investigating the effectiveness of SMM.

Social media offers numerous ways by which individuals can interact freely with others and be able to exchange ideas and product information (Appel *et al.*, 2019). This is the reason why conversion is highly supported by influencers on any social media site since these are able to convince masses to like a social media site and most visitors are able to express interest in particular products and services. The design and content of the social media site then becomes important in achieving a high conversion rate, the loyalty ladder theory supports this as well as the brand loyalty theory (Aaker, 1991) as cited by (Kayombo, 2014).

Research indicates that social media conversation leads to visitors to a site to follow a URL and visit the sections of the social media page by clicking. However, to understand this relationship the social media process should be studied from both the perspective of the customers and the organizations (Hamilton *et al.*, 2015). This research investigates Conversion by determining what students use social media for and which activities they mostly use social media for.

In this research generating questions that point to Conversion results into achieving **RO3** which seeks to identify which social media platforms are mostly used in HEIs and then from there this can identify what information students look for on social media platforms. Effectiveness is defined as the degree to which an action or something produces a desired result (Gager, 2020).

#### **2.29.9.2 Conversion in this research**

Conversion is a measure of effectiveness since it measures potential visitors to a site who have expressed interest in a product or a piece of information (Newman & Gabriel , 2019). The assumption in this research is that when a social media site has high conversion then the interpretation is that the social media platform is effective, since it is able to generate interest from its visitors. The generation of interest can be linked to potential student recruitment on social media sites and this assertion can be supported by Patterson (2007), who suggests that prospects can be transformed into clients by focusing on their needs and ensuring that they have the correct information about product and service offering (Laura , 2007). Converting online visitors into clients may require identifying the commonly used social media platforms by customers and then developing the correct combination of SMM platforms that can be attached to a digital marketing strategy.

#### **2.29.10 Lead**

Lead measures how social media gets visitors to respond to a call for action on a social media page and it is a highly important variable in determining the effectiveness of any social media platform (Newman & Gabriel , 2019). The concept of lead can be understood from the traditional marketing concepts of effective communication, which is defined by Cohen as a form of communication which must get a response from the target audience (Cohn, 2007). On social media platforms the content must be placed in such a way that it causes respondents to comment, share, like or even act regarding that post. HEIs with social media pages must have a method of how they cause their

visitors to be able to respond to a call for action; one particular tool and method they can use is boosting a post through media such as Facebook and creating prompt. Research conducted by Thomsen at Wiley University suggests that creating a content schedule and allowing an automatic boost of the content is likely to increase feedback or response from followers by over 16% (Thomsen, 2015). How interesting a post is matters in creating a response or action from followers, when the post is interesting followers will comment, like or share that post and eventually this goes viral and causes many other social media subscribers to post or react.

Twitter mention that they have a retweet function which causes a particular post to be broadcasted and reactions from followers as a result. Peer to peer distribution of advertising is one of the most effective virtual marketing techniques as it does not only distribute information but causes reaction towards purchasing a product or a service (Itai & Guy , 2019). The assumption that this research took is that when the lead rate is high then a social media platform is effective. This caused the researcher to ask questions in the data collection stage that would specifically deal with this variable. Some of the questions asked to measure lead are: “Does social media lead you to visit an HEI?” and another is “How many times have you shared or commented on a social media post on your institution’s social media page?”

Social media page design creates visitor attraction, but much more the information that a particular page contains. The power of social media is not in the tools or the channels used but rather in what people do on the social media page (Lilach & Ola , 2013), this means that lead increase on social media platforms is closely associated with how a social media page performs and eventually this will translate into a relationship between SMM and the overall marketing performance of the organization. There are various social media tools that can be used to manipulate lead on social media, for example on Facebook they have a boosting tool which is a paid social media feature that allows organizations and individuals to increase the visibility of their social media post so that they can reach a much wider audience and this can lead to a higher reach and a higher lead rate for the particular social media page.

### **2.29.10.1 Lead in this research**

The argument that can arise would be to relate lead to reach, conversion and to engagement, and this relationship should therefore be established in order to understand how social media operates and eventually link it to marketing performance.

Marketing awareness is meant to bring to the attention of customers the product offerings of organizations. The adoption process by Wilkening, 1956 as cited by Anderson in (2014), states that for customers to adopt products they need to first have information about those products. This comes by creating deliberate awareness (Anderson, 2014). Social media pages are a good platform for creating this awareness, so that lead rate can improve on the social media pages. High lead rate has been found to create traffic across social media pages since visitors to any social media page are counted as part of the lead rate. Organizations seeking to drive business goals on social media must generate high lead on their social media pages (Gary & Kristen , 2014). Generating a high lead depends on many other factors such as the levels of engagement on the site, the overall design of the social media page and details of what the visitors look for on a social media page.

### **2.29.11 The Relationship among the social media variables**

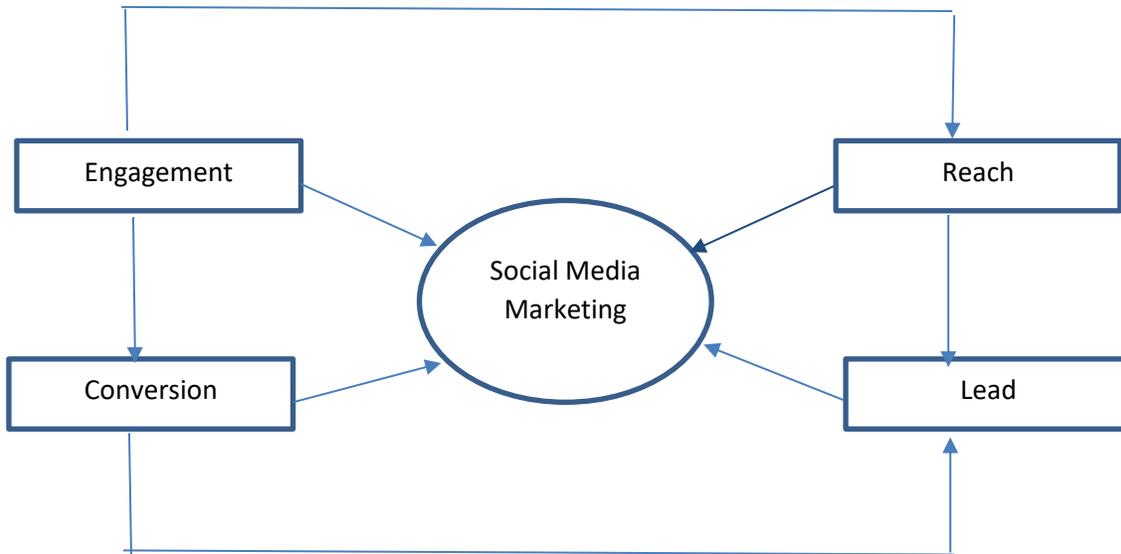
This research has used four social media variables as the intermediate variables and these have a direct connection to the assumption in this research. The assumption is that SMM is either effective on performance of marketing for HEIs or that it is not effective. To understand the concept in this research, it is paramount to know the relationships among the four social media variables. The assumption in this research is that the higher the number of likes for a particular social media post the higher the conversion and the higher the shares for a particular post. Further assumption is that, the higher the reach, the higher the lead rate and the higher the conversion rate. This assumption is supported by Uphoff who argues that the higher the engagement, the higher the lead on any social media page (Uphoff, 2014). Other authors such as Schwartz argue that a high engagement does not result into a higher lead (Shwartz, 2015), this is because the number of likes of shares may not always result into visitors to a social media page getting interested in a posting.

Engagement is the number of likes and shares, while reach is the number of people who have come across a particular post, conversion is the number of visitors who have responded to a particular call of action while reach is the number of people who have come across a particular social media

content. Lead on the other hand measures potential visitors who have expressed interest in a product or service on a social media page. The intermediate variables are all related in a number of ways, when engagement increases it affects the reach, the conversion, and the lead. Though social media elements are viewed as integrated, they are often seen as independent measures of social media performance (Shuai *et al.*, 2016), the use of the term integrated means that even though these social media elements are seen to be independent, they are connected and each of them affect the other. It is most likely that a high conversion rate can lead to a high reach as a result of referral and a high reach could be as a result of a high lead.

Word of mouth is a powerful instrument in marketing as it has the ability to change the mindset and purchasing decisions of buyers (Miroslav *et al.*, 2020), engagement is therefore only the first aspect to gaining customer leads to social media content, which also is highly affected by the reach rate and eventually this results into a high conversion. Viral marketing is related to how the social media elements should be viewed since it is a buzz marketing technique that generates effective word of mouth communication among consumers (Rollin *et al.*, 2014). This is the same concept applied in social media when a post is generated, shared, creates interest, elicits an action from visitors and a response. SMM is comprised of the four elements shown in Figure 5 below which also are the measures of social media performance on any social media platform. The Hypothesis in this research largely looks at whether SMM is effective or not effective and this concept cannot be tested successfully without explaining each of these elements and relating them to marketing performance.

The elements are related to one another in that one drives the other and therefore they are highly integrated as a measure of social media performance.



**FIGURE 2.5: ELEMENTS OF SMM**

Chi (2014), as cited by Paquette (2013) defined SMM as a connection between brands and consumers (Paquette, 2013), this definition of SMM implies that there must be a connection between brands and consumers and for this to happen on social media platforms there must be high engagement, leading to a high reach and later this creates conversion. The elements of SMM as illustrated in Figure 5 above reflect the tangible measure of SMM.

### **2.29.12 Explaining the Dependent Variables**

Dependent variables can be described as variables that depend on other factors that are measurable (Barrere, 2021). These variables are not constant in the research and they are expected to change as a result of the experimental manipulation of the independent variables. The dependent variable in this research is marketing performance and the outcomes of these are expected to vary from one HEIs to the other depending on how they have used SMM to increase or affect marketing performance. Marketing performance therefore relates to increased return on investment, increased student numbers, market expansion and reduction in marketing costs. The indicators of marketing performance stated will change as the independent variable is being manipulated in the process of research experimentation.

### **2.30 The shift from traditional Marketing to Social Media Marketing**

Kotler and Drucker (1954) defined marketing as the process of creating customer value and satisfying customer needs (Phillip & Drucker, 2010). The definition of marketing by Kotler and Drucker created a focus for marketing on customer care and value creation. This definition perhaps brought about the branching of marketing into customer care. The definition of marketing has changed over time and in the recent years, the American marketing association defined marketing as an organization function and set of processes for creating, communication and delivering value to customers, for managing customer relationships to the benefit of the organization and its stakeholders (Gregory & William , 2007). The definitions of marketing keep expanding as latest methods and techniques for marketing are innovated, for example the birth of digital technologies such as social media leads to more definitions of marketing as this becomes the new media for marketing.

SMM as the use of social media and associated technologies to market goods and services is a highly collaborative and interactive method of marketing (Fangfang *et al.*, 2020). SMM enhances the way marketing is done in organizations; in HEIs there is need for research particularly in Zambia to establish how social media is being used for marketing purposes and whether it has an effect on marketing performance. SMM is already known to influence consumer behavior and research already indicates this finding which forms a foundation for further research to be carried out to investigate how social media has been used for marketing purposes (Helena *et al.*, 2016). This research focuses on the use of social media in HEIs, but the definitions of marketing and SMM are important to understand in order to address or satisfy the research questions.

### **2.31 Measuring Marketing performance**

Marketing performance can be measured through sales revenue, market share, profitability and competitive advantage (Pravina & Azizah, 2017). The variables for measuring marketing performance by Pravina & Azizah are captured in the conceptual framework for this research except profitability. The implication is that this research has identified the correct metrics for measuring marketing performance. Research indicates that consumer-based behavior is part of measuring marketing performance (Rossano *et al.*, 2006). This study uses consumer behavior theories such as the social exchange theory to link SMM performance to measures of marketing performance. The study of social exchange behaviors and the use of the brand loyalty theory fits

well in the descriptions of metrics for measuring marketing performance by both Pravina & Azizah and the study by Rossabo *et al.*

There are various arguments that propose a variety of measures of marketing performance, with some authors proposing the development of marketing organizational information processing models (Bruce *et al.*, 2014). In this research the measures of marketing performance relate to increase in sales revenue, increase in student recruitment, increase in market share and reduction in marketing costs. Kiritis & Karahan suggest that SMM is the most cost-effective form of marketing after the economic recession of 2000, since many organizations had squeezed budgets for marketing (A. Kazm & Filiz, 2008). The findings by Kazm & Filiz perhaps forms one of the earliest empirical studies suggesting the link between SMM and marketing performance, especially that after the global recession in 2000s many organizations began to look for solutions that would allow them to expand markets but with reduced costs.

Social media in the 2000s was a new innovation and companies that adopted the technology at that time reduced both their marketing costs and increased their market presence (Gupta, 2020). According to Gupta companies engaged in SMM reduced their marketing costs by 33% and increased their sales revenue by 35%. The findings by Gupta prove that SMM has a reputation and tradition to deliver marketing performance but can this be the same for HEIs? This question rises research interest and also allows a comparative study to be conducted between successful cases in the United States such as Columbia University and Universities in Zambia.

The failure to justify marketing costs creates a situation where marketers in an organization cannot account for their marketing activities (Don & Andrew, 2014). This is a similar concept to the argument in this research which seeks to investigate how effective SSM is on the marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia. HEIs invest in SMM, but it is not clear what metrics these institutions are using to justify the investment in SMM. The creation of a model for SMM for HEIs includes the metrics that HEIs can use to measure SMM performance.

### **2.31.7 Increased student numbers**

Research indicates that about 60% of admission officers in colleges are using social media to recruit prospective students and that social media influences choice of college or program of study (Turner, 2017). This finding in the research by Turner is very important to this research as it

provides a comparison specifically for responding to **RO4** which seeks to establish whether SMM can lead to high marketing performance in HEIs. The argument though in the findings by Turner is that, this research was carried out in British Columbia and its findings were mainly on selected colleges and may not be generalized to the Zambian environment with different technological infrastructure and with different cultural responses to social media.

Columbia University through SMM increased its student numbers by 61% in less than two years after implementing SMM (Sing & Ratna, 2017). In Zambia there is no research that has proved that HEIs are increasing student numbers after implementation of SMM. Part of this reason could be that most of the HEIs have not implemented a means by which they can effectively monitor the contribution of SMM to their overall marketing performance. This research brings out empirical evidence of the contribution of SMM to marketing performance. Recent research published by Stratford in 2020, indicates that social media has a huge influence on student recruitment in Kenya's private Universities (Michael & Simon, 2020). Kenya is a more developed environment in terms of technological advancement than Zambia and it would be interesting to compare the findings in Kenya and those in Zambia as regards use of SMM in HEIs. The study in Kenya though did not include public Universities and was not necessarily investigating SMM but rather student recruitment which is only a component of the use of SMM.

#### **2.31.8 Increased Revenue**

Increased revenue is one of the best measures of marketing performance, as it can directly be linked to marketing activities (William & Michael, 1995). Recent measures of marketing performance also indicate that increased revenue and profitability are a measure of marketing performance (Don & Andrew, 2007). This research has indicated that to determine the effectiveness of SMM on the marketing performance in selected HEIs, the performance of SMM platforms should be evaluated in terms of how much revenue SMM platforms are bringing in for HEIs. The research instruments include questions that have to do with marketing professionals estimating how much revenue their SMM platforms are bringing in, in terms of revenue.

There have been arguments around marketing studies on measuring marketing performance and in actual fact there has been no empirical study of whether the ability to measure marketing performance has any effect on the performance of the firm (Don & Andrew, 2014). Once HEIs in Zambia develop a model or a framework to measure contribution of SMM to marketing performance then it would be easy to decide as to whether these lead to increased revenue or not. This research has brought out these facts in its findings and has developed a model for SMM for HEIs in Zambia so that the revenue contribution of SMM can be fully understood.

### **2.31.9 Increased Market share**

Market share is defined as the percentage of the total purchase of consumers that go to a particular company (The Economic Times, 2021). Market share is a measure of increased market performance and if SMM is assumed to lead to high market share then it is effective in the marketing of HEIs. Market share matters in the assessment of market performance because it adds to the financial gains of any organization (Alexander & Alexander, 2018). Increased market share when SMM is implemented in HEIs implies that these are effective but this requires empirical evidence to support the drawing of such a conclusion. This research in its objectives is set to establish whether SMM leads to an increase in market share for HEIs as shown in Figure 2.3 the conceptual framework.

The relationship between market share and marketing performance is linked to profitability. When profitability is high, the assumption is that market share is expected to increase since a company has adequate resources to reinvest its profits and grow its markets (Yannopoulos, 2020). This relationship between market share and profitability is an important aspect in any study of marketing and since SMM is becoming the new media in marketing, its relationship with marketing performance also becomes an area of key interest in the study of modern marketing.

### **2.32 Gaps identified in the literature**

SMM has been proved to achieve higher business growth and increase marketing performance in business sectors. A case study that investigated managers of five small businesses using two surveys and a semi structured interview found that these businesses were able to increase customer awareness and achieve business growth (Nori *et al.*, 2015). The findings of the research by Nori and others is evidence that SMM has an impact on the growth of small businesses. However, this finding was based on a relatively small sample. The biggest gap in the research by Nori *et al* is that the research was based on small businesses and these operate differently from HEIs.

A logical argument that may arise is that SMM does not only impact marketing for small scale businesses but also for large businesses. An example of this is in a qualitative Doctoral research thesis submitted to Walden University that investigated five large companies that adopted SMM and were able to witness large growth in terms of sales (Ezeife, 2017). In this research increase in student numbers in HEIs is equivalent to increase in sales. This is a strong argument with empirical

evidence of the impact of SMM on marketing but examining the research, the methodology used is qualitative and it's not certain that a mixed research such as this one could produce identical results and that the findings can be the same in another sector such as education.

The studies reviewed in the literature have showed that there are not many studies that have been carried out on the effectiveness of SMM on marketing HEIs, in many regions of the world and especially here in Zambia where this study has analyzed seven studies on SMM as shown in Table 2.1 of this document. None of these are focused on SMM in HEIs. This interprets into the fact that there are gaps in the literature, which leads to the first gap as illustrated below;

### **The first gap**

Our literature review indicates that HEIs such as Columbia University and Western University have increased their student recruitment and student numbers through the use of SMM. Columbia University has introduced on-campus advertising that they have used to increase student retention by their online marketing retention agency (Henley, 2017). However, these findings cannot be generalized or extrapolated to the use of social media by HEIs in Zambia because cultures are different and budgetary allocations for SMM are also different. In addition, these findings are not presented as a result of an empirical research using a scientific methodology or approach but are rather presented in form of a report for management decision making.

The seven studies evaluated in the literature review in Table 2.1 of this document have shown that all these studies were not in the direction of this research but rather on the use of social media as a learning or teaching aid. A scan of global studies shows the same trend whereby in most Universities the approach has been to study social media as a tool for either business growth in non-education sectors or as a utility tool for student life improvement.

The literature that can be cited in this research is Klassen, M., & Helgesen. (2008), who found that student recruitment is only possible through value creation and not necessarily through the use of SMM (Klassen & Helgesen, 2008).

Another study carried out in the USA and reviewed in this study is Nyangau, J. Z., & Bado, N. (2012), who found that social media can be used to increase student recruitment and student retention (Nyangau & Bado, 2012). The methodologies in these studies and the sample sizes are

totally different and therefore it would not be possible to extrapolate these findings to Zambia's HEIs and this leads to the identification of the second gap as illustrated below;

### **The second Gap**

Research conducted in Zambia by different authors indicate that most literature is on the use of social media for lecturing purposes and not for marketing purposes, for example, Mwalimu & Mulauzi conducted a study titled, the use of social media among University of Zambia Lecturers in teaching and learning (Mwalimu *et al.*, 2017), while Akakandelwa & Walubita researched on; "Students' social media use and its perceived impact on their social life: A case study of the University of Zambia" (Akakandelwa & Walubita, 2017). The two studies while relevant to inform this study have not factored in the use of social media for marketing.

### **2.33 Chapter summary**

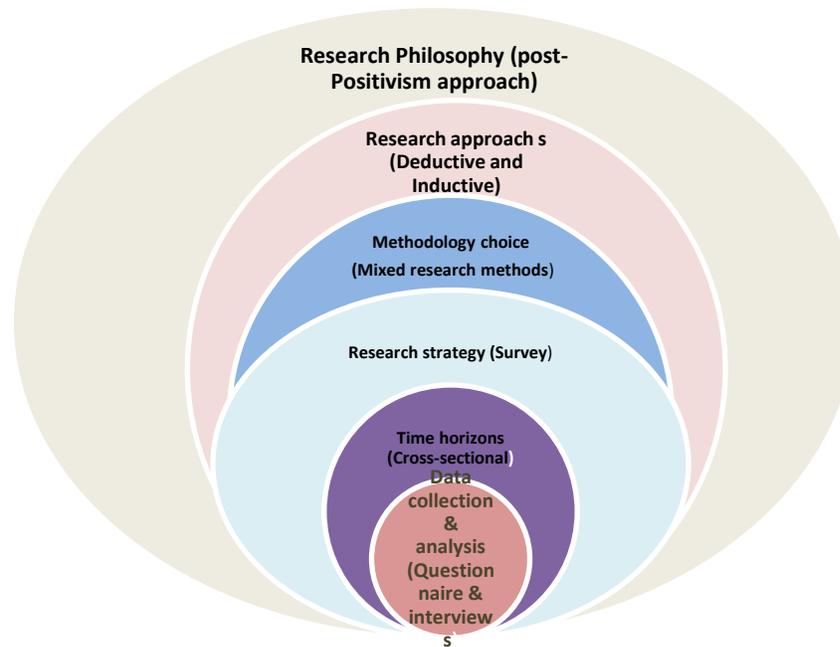
This Chapter reviewed studies and arguments from published authors, research papers and scholarly articles which have similar or different views concerning the topic of SMM. The Chapter consisted of literature that is relevant to inform this study and was focused on two key main theories in its theoretical framework and these are; the social media concept and the brand awareness concepts. These concepts in the study show that social media presence is now a necessity for institutions and that institutions can create more brand visibility through the use of social media tools relevant to their business model. The conceptual framework in this Chapter provided the necessary details of how the researcher has conceptualized this study and later maps this concept onto the relevant academic theories explored in the theoretical framework. The conceptual framework was based on the marketing performance measurements (MPM) by Clark and was mapped on the social media concept and the brand loyalty theory.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This Chapter describes the methods and actions which were taken to investigate the research problem. It discusses the techniques that were used to identify, select, process and analyze research data. The Chapter also discusses the methods that were used to understand the problem and critically evaluate the study for purposes of providing a solution to the research problem. The Chapter is divided into five sections which are: research strategy, Research views/Philosophy, research approach, methodological choice and research design. The research Strategy is exploratory while the research philosophy was based on a pragmatic approach. Exploratory research is the process of investigating a problem that has not been studied or thoroughly investigated in the past (Swedberg, 2020). This research investigated the effectiveness of SMM on the marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia, a study that has never been undertaken before in Zambia. A pragmatic approach to research is based on the philosophy of identifying a problem and then resolve it within its broad context (Salkind, 2010). This research investigated the problem from the view point of SMM decision makers and recipients of those decisions (enrolled students). The research approach consisted of both deductive and inductive approaches and the methodology design was based on a mixed research approach. Deductive in that it uses a theoretical framework to test the concepts of the research and inductive in that it created new concepts in the application of social media for marketing HEIs.

## 3.2 Research Onion



**FIGURE 3.4: RESEARCH ONION**

The research onion is one of the methods that can be used to construct research methodology according to Saunders *et al* (Saunders *et al*, 2018). It provides an existing description of the main layers of formulating an effective methodology (Ramdhani, 2017). The research Onion in Figure 3.4 summarizes the research methodology that was used in this study and has been adapted from the original concept by Saunders. The research uses a survey to collect data from the sample and this is done through a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. Since it is a mixed research it has both deductive and inductive aspects.

## 3.3 Research Philosophy

According to Boucher (2014), a philosophical stance is a position consisting of something other than a belief of what the world is like. The philosophy for this research was therefore based on the aspect that, social media or digital media is highly dynamic as it requires a wider scan of literature. Literature surrounding social media is ever changing due to the rate of innovation in digital

technologies. Digital changes have given rise to what is referred to as the digital revolution (Fraser, 2019). The innovations in the use of digital media have an impact on the way HEIs are conducting their business and the way they are marketing their products. With the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, HEIs are left with no choice but to offer their services online and to market their products through SMM.

### **3.3.1 Philosophical choice**

There are four main research philosophies within the scope of business studies and these are positivism, realism and interpretivism and Post positivism (Saunders *et al.*, 2018). A realism research philosophy is on the other hand based on the study of things that are already known while a positivism approach is based on observation and measurement and the role of the researcher is limited to data collection (Crowther & Lancaster, 2008). Interpretivism approaches are based on what the researcher's interests are and the researcher has specific roles (Wilson, 2010).

This research was based on a post positivism philosophy due to fact that it is a mixed research and that it deals with a scientific approach on the quantitative part while it also as some subjectivity aspects. Since the problem is identified first then empirical data is collected to provide solutions; it is also post-positivist in nature as a result of the having both qualitative and quantitative aspect. The research may also have elements of both objectivity and subjectivity especially since it is a mixed research and involves two data samples. Realism and interpretivism did not fit since the researcher were not dealing with a known theory or problem. The research was based on non-researcher interests but exploratory in nature since the researcher wanted to discover aspects about social media that are not known.

### **3.4 Nature of Research**

The first objective of this research was **Research Objective 1 (RO1)**: To Identify the social media marketing platforms that are used in higher education institutions in Zambia. To establish this objective, an in-depth **exploratory** study of various HEIs and the social media platforms they are using was undertaken. Exploratory research is defined by Stebbins (2019) as a research methodology approach that is primarily concerned with discovery and generating new theory. It was suitable for this research since the study involved aspects of discovery. The research involved

determining the nature of the problem with regards to the use of social media in HEIs and thus enabled the problem to be explored further.

Exploratory research at this point only enabled the research topic to be explored in more details so that the suggested research method discussed under methodological approach could be used effectively. The exploratory part of this research did not provide conclusive answers but enabled the research objectives and questions to be addressed through in-depth study of how HEIs are using their social media and this is what made it suitable for this kind of study.

A further study was carried out to explore the SMM platforms that are available online and those being used by successful HEIs such as University of Columbia and Western University. The second study is what led to recommending and developing the best combination of social media platforms that HEIs can utilize to enhance their marketing performance and eventually address the fourth objective **Research Objective (RO4)** of the study: To establish the extent to which social media contributes to the overall marketing performance of higher education institutions in Zambia.

**Research Objective 3 (RO3)** and **Research Objective 2 (RO2)** were achieved by means of both the first study and the second study. The first study enabled the recommendation of the best combination of social media platforms that HEIs could use for their social media marketing and this overlaps into the second study which was mainly concerned with enrolled students in the selected HEIs or the market for social media services (SMS) being offered by HEIs.

### **3.5 Research Approach**

A research approach is a plan and procedure that consists of procedure, assumptions and details of data collection methods. It has two main groups, deductive and inductive, it can also include abduction (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This research generated untested conclusions and moved from general to specific and while at some time moving from specific to general in terms of SMM applications.

#### **3.5.1 Deductive and inductive**

This research was based on both deductive and inductive approaches; deductive in that it starts with a theoretical hypothesis and then collects data from the sample to formulate conclusions around the research (Burney & Saleem, 2008). The general concept and assumption are that SMM can have a positive effect on the marketing of HEIs and this led to the collection of empirical data to support this assumption, which is purely a top down design. At the same time the research focused on particular cases of applications of SMM in HEI and asked questions around the research topic that were used to build principles around the use of social media in this small group of registered HEIs in Zambia.

### **3.6 Methodological choice**

This was mixed research as it involved both qualitative and quantitative aspects. A mixed research involves the collecting, analyzing and interpreting quantitative and qualitative aspects in a single study to investigate the same underlying phenomenon (Cameron, 2015). There are HEIs in Zambia and this includes six public institutions (Higher Education Authority, 2022). These institutions are all targets for data collection and were incorporated in this research depending on the sample size that was required for this particular research.

Fotis (2015), in his study of the impact of social media on consumer behavior used qualitative research and was highly successful in the use of this research approach. The study by Fotis brought out outcomes that led to a conclusion that consumer behaviors were impacted on the development of technologies such as 3G and 4G (Fotis, 2015). While the qualitative research by Fotis yielded the necessary results, this research involved quantitative aspects which were integrated with the quantitative aspects as used by Aman and Hussin (2018) who investigated a similar study on the effectiveness of SMM on marketing of HEIs. From the findings the researcher was able to conclude that the use of social media brought about effectiveness in marketing for the institutions under

study. The research by Aman and Hussin is highly similar to this research and this interprets into the fact that a mixed research was highly suitable as a methodological choice.

### **3.7 Qualitative Data collection Techniques**

There are three types of interviews, namely structured, semi-structured and in-depth. Structured interviews allow the interviewer to ask respondents the same question in the same way. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews involve a series of open-ended questions and in-depth interviews with very little structure (Mathers *et al.*, 1998). The researcher chose a semi-structured interview since it was helpful in getting more views from respondents and also allowed a level of follow up insights to be obtained.

The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and was focused on specific sample targets such as Business Development Officers and Marketing Officers in HEIs. The interview type was semi-structured, since an interview guide was provided and the researcher was able to adhere to the guidelines on the interview guide. It also allowed the researcher to explore further the responses of the people that were interviewed. The semi-structured interview fits in well with the exploratory research since it allows for exploring further the findings of the interview (Given, 2008). Semi-structured interviews are also similar in that for the qualitative data collection the sample size was narrow since it involved interviewing two to four people within the HEIs that are responsible for SMM. This method was used in a similar research that was looking at an identical topic by Aman and Hussin (2018) who also investigated the effectiveness of SMM in HEIs. For this research the interview was interviewer administered for purposes of assuring the quality and also getting depth in terms of research title relevance.

### **3.8 Quantitative Data Techniques**

Structured questionnaires are designed to include standard questions requiring specific answers and are usually suitable for larger samples as opposed to unstructured questionnaires which may have branching questions (Cheung, 2014). Unstructured questionnaires are mostly suitable for qualitative data collection and this is the reason why the researcher chose to use structured questionnaires.

The quantitative research data were collected through the use of a structured questionnaire targeted at enrolled students in the selected HEIs, who are users of social media platforms. The selected sample for the enrolled students was a large sample and this made the questionnaires highly suitable and cost effective as well as easier to administer across the targeted sample. Structured questionnaires are defined as documents consisting of standard questions with a fixed scheme, which specifies exact wording and order of questions, for gathering information from respondents (Cheung, 2018). Structured questionnaires have been used successfully in similar research such as Alsaif (2016) who investigated the impact of social media on students and concluded that social media had impacted the behavioral patterns of students. The study by Alsaif was a mixed research and the quantitative data was collected through the use of structured questionnaires.

### **3.9 Sampling Plan**

There were two studies in this research and this implies that two separate sampling plans were developed for this research in order to satisfy the research questions and achieve the research objectives. The sampling plan for the qualitative and the quantitative studies that were used are discussed separately in the subsections below.

#### **3.9.1 Sampling Plan - Qualitative study**

The sampling method that was used in the qualitative study was non-probability sampling since this study focused on a sample that was taken from the sixty HEIs that are known and registered by HEA. Non-probability sampling technique ensured that it gave the researcher a highly suitable and strong theoretical reason for the choice of a sample from all the sixty HEIs in the study. This sampling method was cheaper and quicker for the research work to draw the conclusive evidence that was used to complete the research work. Purposeful sampling technique is widely used in qualitative studies for identification and selection of information detail related to the phenomenon

of interest (Palinkas *et al.*, 2016). The researcher in this instance was interested in understanding how the HEIs are using SMM and how effective SMM is on marketing performance of HEIs.

### **3.8.2 Sampling plan - Quantitative study**

The sampling method that was used in this study was probability sampling for the enrolled students at each of the HEIs in the selected sample especially that this is a quantitative research study. The sampling method was also suitable since the researcher intends to generalize the findings across the entire population and since this method has been used in many studies on social media (Andrade, 2020). This sampling method was suitable since the sample was picked from a systematically selected enrolled student in the target HEIs. Syetematic sampling is probability sampling which results in selecting a sample from a population that is readily available or systematically selected by the researcher (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The sampling techniques was non-probability since the quantitative research of this study was focused on enrolled students in each of the HEIs in the sample size.

### 3.8.3 Determination of sample size

There are sixty registered HEIs in Zambia according to the latest information released by HEA on its online platform (HEA, 2022). Out of these six are public institutions and fifty-four are privately owned institutions. The determination of the sample size was based on the concept by the sample size theory by Adcock (2020) According to Adcock the sample size must be at least between 20% and 30% of the total population in order to give an accurate outcome that can be generalized across the population. Since there are sixty HEIs, 20% of this is twelve. The choice of the twelve HEIs was based on similarity of service or program offering as well as ownership since these are likely to be similar in terms of marketing practices and the findings could be applicable to those categories. The assertion is that institutions with similar models are likely to have similarity in marketing and branding practices. This assertion is supported by a research conducted by Kimberly *et al.* (2009) whose findings indicate that there is little differentiation in branding strategies in HEIs and that those that are slightly differentiating themselves gain competitive advantage. This means that the samples for the qualitative research were broken down using purposeful sampling as indicated in the Tables below which show the categorizations of the institutions selected as the sample.

#### Public Universities

Table 3.1: Selected Sample from the public Universities			
Institution	Service offering	Sector/Ownership	Location
Mulungushi University	Academic programs	Public	Kabwe
Mukuba University	Academic programs	Public	Kitwe
UNZA	Academic programs	Public	Lusaka

The three public institutions were selected because they represented the generic combinations of program offering. Mukuba University offers a wide range of programs including home sciences and this means that their marketing strategies cut across what many other Universities are doing. Including Mukuba University in the sample for the qualitative study meant that the findings were representative. The Universities are largely spread across Central Province, Lusaka Province and Copperbelt Province and this is why Mulungushi University in Kabwe and Mukuba University in Kitwe were the best options, since they are located in different towns with different ICT infrastructure. This impacts the performance of SMM and benefited the research in that it provided

a comparative in terms of investment capacity and limitations in ICT infrastructure differences between HEIs in Lusaka Province and other areas.

### Private Universities

<b>Table 3.2: Selected Sample from the private Universities</b>			
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Service offering</b>	<b>Sector/Ownership</b>	<b>Location</b>
ZCAS University	Professional/Academic programs	Private	Lusaka
OAK University	Academic/ Health Sciences	Private	Lusaka
Northrise University	Academic/Health sciences	Private	Ndola
Zambia Open University	Academic programs	Private	Lusaka
Cavendish University	Academic programs	Private	Lusaka
University of Lusaka	Academic programs	Private	Lusaka
Coppertone University	Academic programs	Private	Kitwe
St Bonaventure University	Academic programs/	Private	Kalulushi
Lusaka Apex Medical University	Academic/Health Sciences	Private	Lusaka
Africa research University	Academic/Health Sciences	Private	Lusaka

The ten private institutions were selected on the basis of ease of access and cost consideration. They also represented private institutions that offer a wide range of programs ranging from health sciences, business, theology and professional qualifications. This means that the findings were a good estimate for all the fifty-four private institutions. These private institutions were purposefully selected in terms of similarity in program offering.

### Sample size - qualitative study

For the selected twelve institutions a semi-structured interview was conducted targeted at an estimate of two (2) marketing personal responsible for social media or involved in marketing in each HEI. This meant that the total sample size for the qualitative research was twenty-four (24) across the public and private institutions. The 24 represented more than 20% of the total population of all marketing professionals involved in SMM in HEIs.

### Sample size - Quantitative study

The sample size for the quantitative research was based on Table 3.3 which shows estimate of the number of enrolled students in the selected twelve HEIs where the samples for the research were picked from. The estimates in Table 3.3 were based on the available information on online platforms for each of the HEIs published and in some cases confirmation from their Student Administration Office.

<b>Table 3.3: Estimated student population in HEIs</b>	
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Estimated number of students</b>
Africa Research University	2,000
Kwame Nkrumah University	6,000
Mukuba University	2,400
ZCAS University	2050
OAK University	460
Northrise University	700
Zambia Open University	2,000
Cavendish University	5,300
Lusaka University	4840
Copperstone University	850
St Bonaventure University	2,100
Lusaka Apex Medical University	5800
<b>Total population</b>	<b>34,500</b>

The determination of sample size in the quantitative research study used the recommendation by Hair *et al.* (2014) who recommended that to determine the sample size there is need to use a statistical method so that the research sample is more accurate and will give a representative finding for the given population. The sample size for the quantitative research was therefore based on the total population of enrolled students in the selected HEIs of 34,500 which is the maximum sample size and according to Hair *et al.* the minimum required is 50. To determine the sample size the formula below was used to get the minimum representative sample:

$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$  Where; n= Sample size, N= is the population size, e= level of precision

$$n = \frac{34,500}{1 + 34,500(0.05)^2} = 395$$

**Source: Determination of the sample size, Yamane (1967) cited in Polonia (2013) (Aaker, 1991)**

### **3.10 Justification of the sample size**

The sample size for the qualitative research was twenty-four (24) respondents from the twelve (12) HEIs which was arrived at after a careful observation of the approximate number of marketing professionals involved in marketing in HEIs and particularly those involved in SMM where the lowest number in one institution is one and the highest number is 2. The researcher therefore took the highest number of two per institution resulting in the sample of twenty-four (24) respondents in twelve institutions. For the quantitative research the sample size was determined by using Yamane's formula which gave three ninety-five as the sample size.

#### **3.10.1 Quantitative study**

The quantitative sample picked according to the calculation using Yamane (1967) formula was three hundred ninety-five (395) and is highly representative of the total population of thirty-four thousand five hundred. According to the theoretical saturation concept a sample should be large enough to support and satisfy the research interest and address the research questions but must also be limited at the point of saturation (Emmel, 2013). The sample size is also justified in terms of the resources and time available to conduct this research as asserted by Wilson (2012) who states that time constraints and financial resources can be a determinant in selecting the sample size.

The type of sampling used in any research is a factor in determining the sample size. In this case the sample used is based on enrolled students at HEIs. Quantitative research in social media studies is highly useful in that it allows huge populations to be sampled by a carefully selected sample through statistical models such as Yamane's formula and the sample can easily be extrapolated to the entire population (Joshi, 2015).

### **3.10.2 Qualitative study**

The sample size can be justified in that the study is firstly purposive and that the number of registered HEIs is predetermined. This means therefore, that for a population of sixty HEIs a sample of about 12 institutions with 24 respondents (2 in each institution) is more than sufficient in order to give the study a clearer view of how almost each of the HEIs is using social media for its marketing activities.

According to Wayne (1999) a population as small as this one cannot have a sample size that is less than 20% as this gives a margin of error that is less than 5%. The sample size is also highly representative. When argued against the theoretical saturation model which states that a researcher has carried out a comprehensive examination of phenomenon under study and have actualized the depths and breadth of social theory to achieve through explanations, descriptions and interpretations of their research (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017), this fits with Wayne's assertions.

In this research the sample picked from the HEIs is 24 interviews and this is within the recommended interviews for qualitative research according to the theoretical saturation model and the ethnography concept (Morse, 1994). The argument by Morse is supported by Creswell (1998) who recommends 5-25 interviews of any given population. A recent study by Moser and Korstjens (2018) indicates that for qualitative research, and particularly where a semi-structured interview is used, the number of interviews recommended is 10% of the population. In this research the researcher surpassed this mark so that the research could be representative and so that the outcome of the findings could be more acceptable across all the HEIs.

### **3.10.3 Research Design**

This research consisted of two components, qualitative research phase and the quantitative research. These were done through semi-structured interviews for the qualitative part and a structured questionnaire for the quantitative part. The research design indicated that the first phase was data collection in the HEIs using semi-structured interviews while the second phase is qualitative research using a structured questionnaire administered by the researcher to enrolled students in the HEIs selected in the sample. The qualitative responses and the quantitative responses were triangulated and the findings were used to address the research questions. A comparative analysis was used to determine and quantify the relationship between two or more variables by observing different groups that either by choice or circumstance were exposed to

different treatments (Esser, 2017). The comparative analysis using correlation was suitable for this research since it involved an analysis of different uses of social media in HEIs to address the question of how the use of SMM has impacted on their marketing performance.

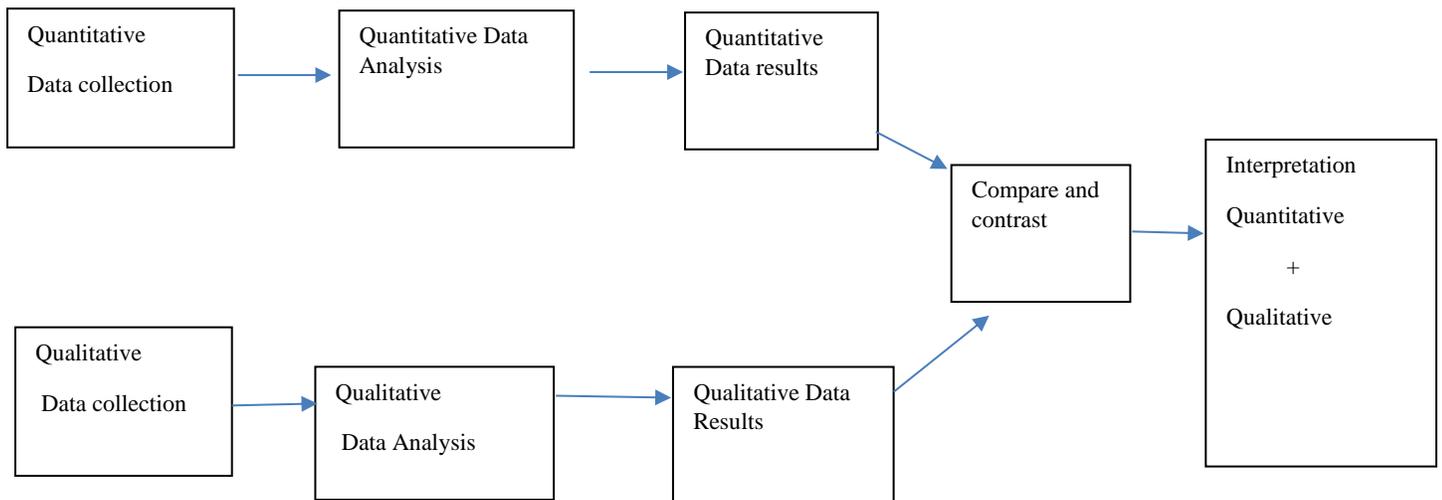
The research was conducted in two phases namely qualitative and quantitative and it also showed that the two aspects needed to be integrated to enable a comparative analysis that was carried out during the final data integration and report stage.

### **3.11 Time horizon**

There are two major Time horizons that a research of this nature can be conducted and these are cross-sectional and longitudinal. Cross section is an observational study that measures the output and exposures in the study of participants at the same time (Setia, 2016). Longitudinal research studies on the other hand is an observational research data is covered for the same subjects repeatedly over a period of time (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010). This study was a cross-sectional study since data was collected once to provide answers to the research question. The researcher used cross-sectional study since it was less costly to conduct and took less time, the researcher also selected a cross-sectional study because it fit in the research design and concept especially that there was no behavioural comparisons in the study.

### 3.11 Triangulation design

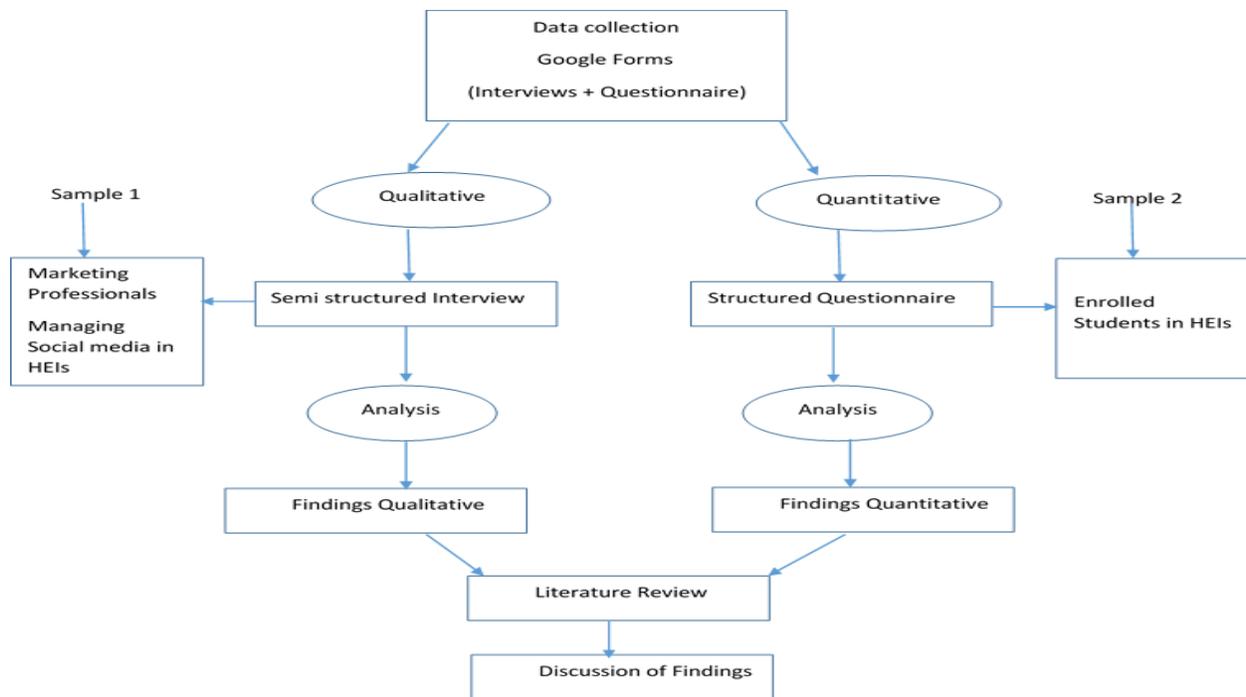
The triangulation design in this research is based on the model by Creswell et al. (2003) which is the most common model in mixed research design and allows different but complementary data to be understood and compared. There is need to converge the qualitative aspects of this research with the quantitative aspects of the research so that the data can be interpreted and compared in order to respond to the research questions. The triangulation design that was used in this research was the concurrent triangulation since both the qualitative and quantitative data could have been collected at the same time but in the interpretation the data results were combined and therefore the convergence model shown in the Figure 6 below:



Source: Creswell *et al.* (2003)

**FIGURE 3.1: TRIANGULATION MODEL FOR QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA**

Arising from Creswell's mixed research model in Figure 3.1, the researcher developed a model for the current research as illustrated in Figure 3.2 below.



**FIGURE 3.2: QUALITATIVE & QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH MODEL**

Figure 3.2 is a representation of how the qualitative and the quantitative data were handled in this research in order to satisfy the research topic and provide answers to the research questions. The literature review was critical to the triangulation process as it seats in between the qualitative and the quantitative and allowed for the findings from the two samples to be compared and provide a solution to the research questions. Jacobsen (2020) states that the justification for a mixed research method is to enable a limitation in one research sample to be covered by another research sample. The data collected from the quantitative sample did not provide answers to some of the research questions, particularly those related to increase in student numbers in HEIs. The quantitative data did not also provide responses related to return of marketing investments as the study on these two factors was limited from the student samples. The interview with marketing professionals managing social media platforms in HEIs is what provided the empirical data that were used to draw conclusions on the findings.

### **3.12 Data Analysis**

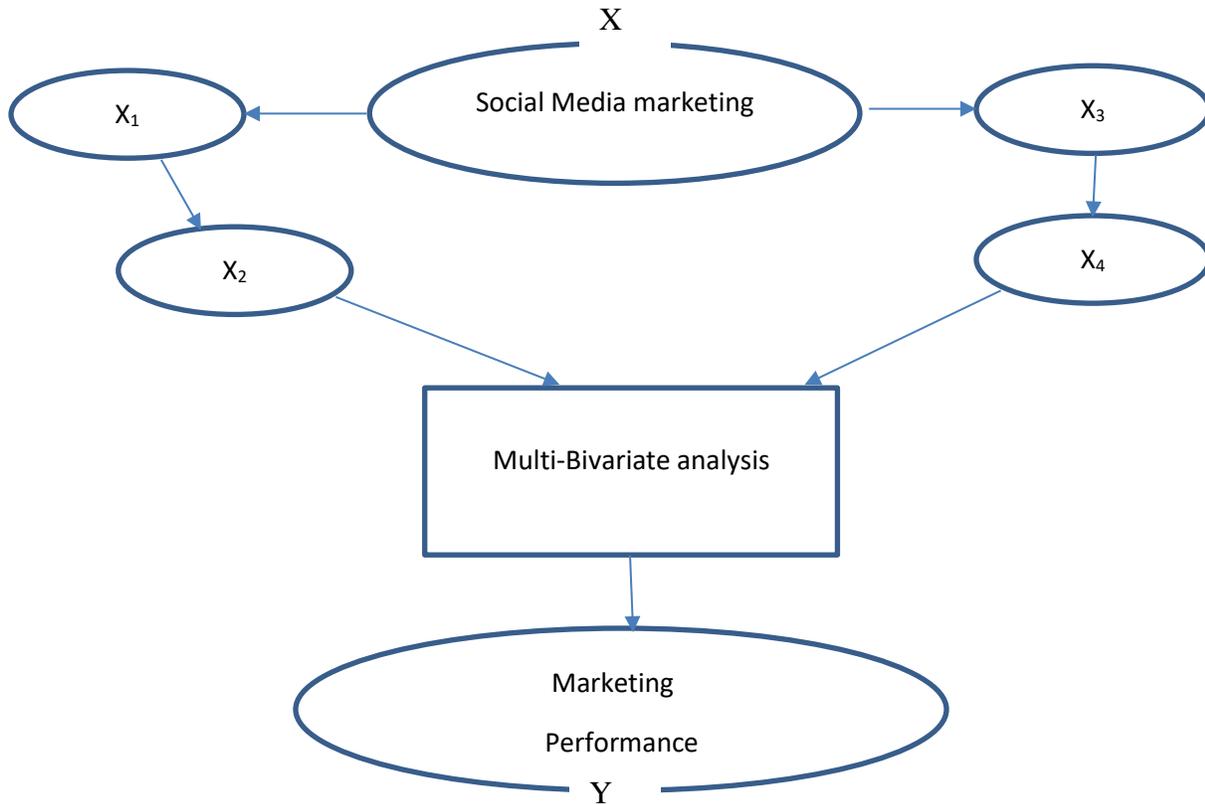
Data analysis methods defined in this section considered the design of the research. Since this was a mixed research, gaps from the quantitative research results are covered with the qualitative findings. The quantitative research was analyzed using SPSS as the primary software while qualitative data was analyzed using Google analytics. Quantitative research is the process of collecting and analyzing numeric data to find patterns and relationships between data variables while qualitative research is interpreting text and narrative findings (Creswell, 1998).

#### **3.12.1 Adopted scale for data analysis**

The scale adopted for the Likert scales was five in order to increase response rate and also because it is mostly recommended by researchers. In this research 1 = “Strongly Disagree”, 2 = “Disagree”, 3 = “Neutral”, 4 = “Agree”, 5 = “Strongly Agree”.

#### **3.12.2 Quantitative data analysis**

For purposes of this study descriptive statistics and frequency analysis was achieved using SPSS statistical software package, which was used to analyze the data, obtained from the second sample. The data were analyzed using multivariate analysis tool for maximizing a multiple variable conceptual framework. Multivariate tools allow for multi regression analysis, which is suitable because it tests the relationships between multiple variables to determine empirical relationships between them (Murray, 2014). Anthony Miles used multivariate tools in his study of social media and consumer behavior, their justification for the use of this tool was that their conceptual framework had multiple variables (Miles, 2014). Salkind (2010) further qualifies the use of multivariate analysis as suitable to determine how variation in one or more variables predicts or explains variation in another variable. Other tools that were critical to the analysis in this research are correlation tools ANOVA testing and Chi-square testing. Hypothesis testing in this research was done using Kogromorov and chi-square tools.



X= Social media Marketing

Y= Marketing Performance

**FIGURE 3.3: ANALYSIS OF INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES**

Figure 3.3 shows the relationship between independent variable social media denoted as X and dependent variable marketing performance denoted as Y. X<sub>1</sub> to X<sub>4</sub> are the intervening variables associated with social media and these are Reach, Lead, conversion and engagement.

**3.12.3 Qualitative analysis**

The qualitative aspects of this research were analyzed by interpreting text narrations from the semi-structured interview. The researcher chose to use Content Analysis using Atlas.ti and Google Analytics for some graphical analysis. AmberscriptIt was used for data transcription since it has a high conversion rate and allows for export of data to applications such as Microsoft Excel.

### **3.14 Ethical considerations**

In every study, writers are required to report on ethical considerations as this indicates whether the research was approved by a review board or the relevant structures in Universities (Connelly, 2014). This research is no exception particularly that the research was in the field of marketing which has high consideration for ethics. Researchers planning, designing and conducting studies using human data must consider values and principles (Jaranit & Pornpimon, 2019). This research is on social media and has high elements of human data. The human data in this research related to the use of social media and issues to do with social media platforms the respondents are signed up for.

To deal with ethical consideration surrounding privacy, the researcher did not ask the respondents to provide their identity, but only specify which institution they were enrolled with. At data collection, the researcher respected the respondent's right not to participate in the research, the right to confidentiality and to remain anonymous as well as rights to withdraw their participation. The researcher also took the initiative of seeking permission from research committees where it was necessary. The data processing and analysis stage also considered the rights and privacy of respondents especially in the process of storing personal information relating to the devices they were using to answer questions on electronic questionnaires. The researcher also made sure that the consent of all respondents was obtained. The researcher also signed a non-disclosure agreement in Appendix 1 of this document.

The data that was collected from the HEIs contained sensitive marketing data and this brought out ethical issues especially that the researcher had an interest because of the research objectives in this project. In many HEIs, they have committees that deal with data security and this means that authorization to use the data had to be obtained. For example, at Princeton University, data security is handled by the data governance steering committee (Princeton University, 2020). The researcher therefore developed and signed a non-disclosure form which restricted the researcher to use the marketing data for research purposes only and not for distributing to marketing agents or across the HEIs. Where possible the researcher withheld the name of the institution by not specifying them on any research instrument.

### **3.15 Chapter summary**

This Chapter covered the methodological aspects of this research study justifying the research philosophy, strategy, methods, approaches and design that were used in this research. The Chapter also discussed the sample size for the research, the research instruments that were used and the data analysis methods that were adopted. The methodology Chapter described the process and procedure that the research followed in order to provide answers to the research questions and to satisfy the research topic. The Chapter covered how the data was analyzed using the different statistical packages within the software programs.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This Chapter brings out the findings from the data collection as dictated to by the methodological choices of the sample sizes. The Chapter reports on how the sample responded to the questions on the structured questionnaire and the semi structured interview guide. The structured questionnaire and the interview guide were used as the research instruments to provide responses to the questions on both the questionnaire and the interview guide. The repossess on the interview guide and the structured questionnaire were used to address the research objectives so that the aim of this research can be achieved. The Chapter presents the findings in four key areas:

- I. Identifying social media platforms used in HEIs;
- II. Extent to which social media leads to higher market share;
- III. Best combination of social media marketing platforms
- IV. Effectiveness of social media marketing on marketing pefromance in HEIs

The qualitative data covers the gaps from the quantitative findings and responds to the research objectives not studied from the quantitative sample. The quantitative samples are the enrolled students in the various HEIs while the qualitative sample comprised the marketing professionals managing social media in HEIs.

### **4.2 Actual qualitative data collected**

The researcher succeeded to conduct 16 interviews out of the planned 24 interviews, due to issues related to COVID-19 that placed so much restriction on interaction. Consequently, some of the targeted individuals were not reachable as HEIs were closed at that time. The interviews conducted constituted 67% of the targeted sample. The 67% is an acceptable response rate according to Graglia who suggests that an acceptable sample should be between 60% and 80% of the total population (Graglia, 2018). According to Guest the saturation point for purposeful data collection is reached once the researcher cannot observe any new trends in the data (Guest *et al.*, 2006). At 67% of data collection the researcher observed that they could not collect any new trends as data was following a particular pattern, implying that a saturation point had been achieved.

### 4.3 Actual quantitative data collected

The researcher targeted to collect 395 responses from the structured questionnaire but was only able to collect 321. The response rate was 74% of the planned data responses which according to Hair is above 70% and therefore, is highly acceptable (Hair *et al.*, 2014).

### 4.4 Data reliability test

A reliability test was conducted on the data collected using Cronbach Alpha based on standardized items. Out of 25 questions on the questionnaire, 20 questions were picked for the reliability test and the outcome shows that the data was reliable at 0.990 which can be interpreted as 99% reliability. According to Cronbach, a result greater than .91 is excellent while anything between .61 and .80 is good and acceptable (Taber, 2017). The 20 questions selected for this test represent 80% of the survey questions while the 20% are questions related to demographics of respondents and preliminary information about the sample.

**Table 4.1: Cronbach Alpha test**

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.990	.990	20

The Cronbach Alpha test results are a confirmation of the validity of the data collected and show that the set of questions administered were highly reliable. A normality test however was required in order to see how the data was distributed and determine whether the data was distributed normally or if the data deviated from the normal.

## 4.5 Data normality tests

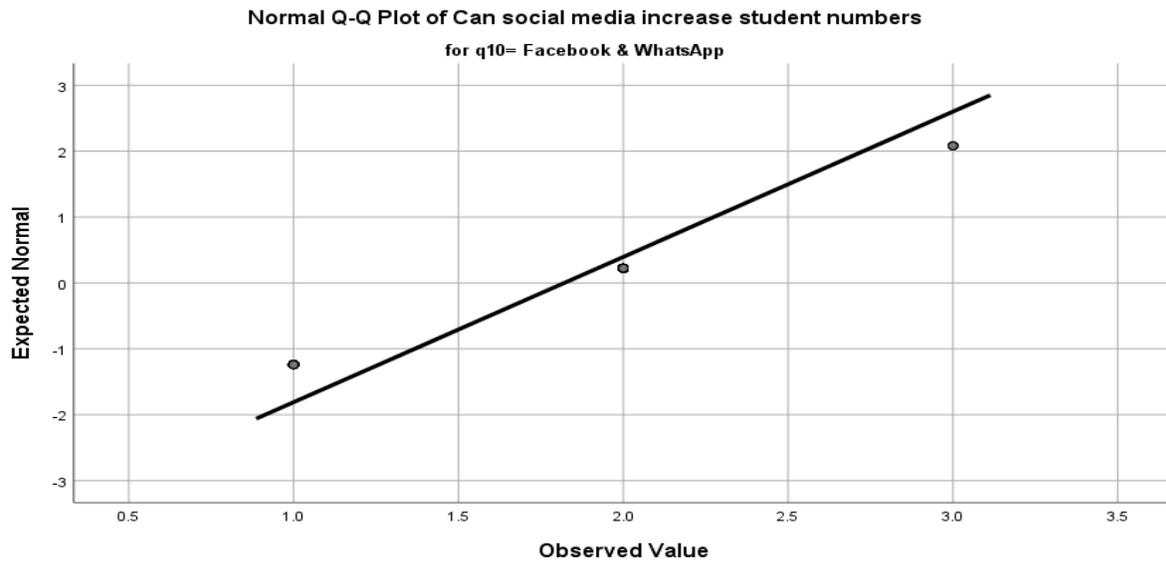
**Tests of Normality**

	Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Can social media increase student numbers	Instagram & WhatsApp	.527	38	.000	.355	38	.000
	Facebook & WhatsApp	.446	106	.000	.606	106	.000
	Twitter & WhatsApp	.382	32	.000	.688	32	.000
	Facebook & Twitter	.355	90	.000	.739	90	.000
	Facebook & Instagram	.420	55	.000	.631	55	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

### FIGURE 4.1: NORMALITY TEST 1

The significance on all the questions was 0.000 confirming that the data was reliable. The Shapiro-Wilk Test is less than 0.05 confirming that the data was deviate from a normal distribution. This also confirms the skewness and kurtosis values in Table 4.23. According to Darling Anderson, in a test for normality, when data fails the normality test and scores a P value which is less than 0.05, the interpretation is that the test rejects the hypothesis of Normality (Darling, 2020). The QQ plot in Figure 4.2 validates this test to show that the data is not normally distributed.



**FIGURE 4.2: NON-NORMAL DISTRIBUTION QQ PLOT**

The QQ plot in Figure 4.2 confirms the deviate of data from the normal distribution and is in line with the Shapiro-Wilk Test results. According to Yunsi when the majority dots on a QQ plot are along the line of linear the distribution is exponential and the data is skewed (Yunsi *et al.*, 2016). From the QQ plot the findings of the normality test indicate that the data collected was skewed towards social media increasing student numbers.

### Tests of Normality

Social media platforms influence your choice of learning institution		Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Can social media increase student numbers	Strongly Disagree	.469	61	.000	.535	61	.000
	Disagree	.460	81	.000	.550	81	.000
	Neutral	.218	43	.000	.858	43	.000
	Agree	.244	103	.000	.808	103	.000
	Strongly Agree	.250	33	.000	.795	33	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

#### FIGURE 4.3: NORMALITY TEST 2

The significance of the normality test in Figure 4.3 is 0.00 showing that there is a strong relationship between increase in student numbers and influence of social media in the choice of learning institution. The Shapiro-Wilk Test is also less than 0.05 and this indicates that the data is none normally distributed.

## 4.6 Survey responses and analysis

### 4.6.1 General information about respondents

**Table 4.2: Name of HEIs and frequency responses**

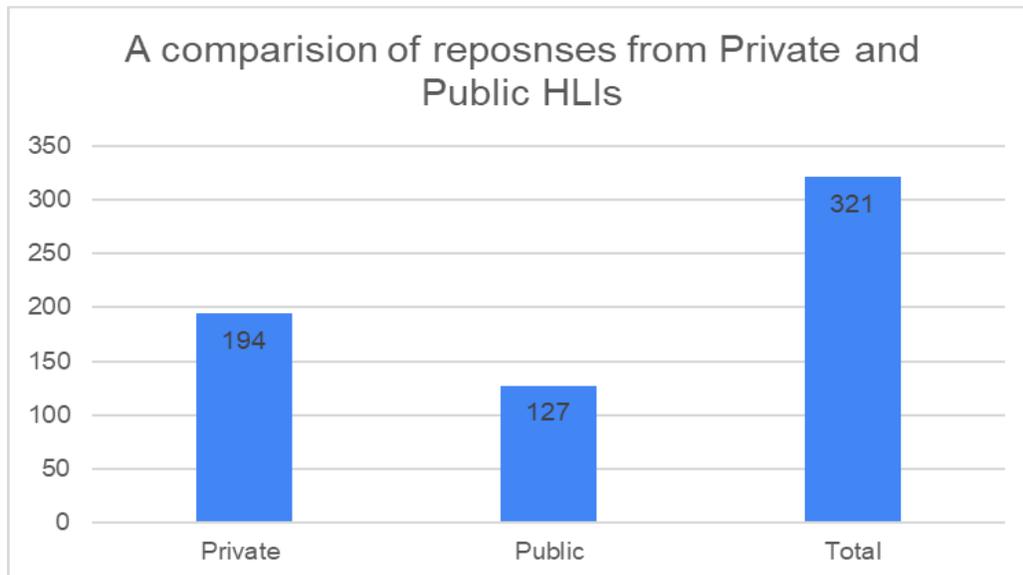
Name of Institution				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Africa research University	7	2.2	2.2	2.2
Cavendish University	13	4.1	4.1	6.3
Copperstone University	16	5.0	5.0	11.3
Lusaka Apex Medical University	56	17.5	17.5	28.7
Mukuba University	44	13.8	13.8	42.5
Mulungushi University	32	10.0	10.0	52.5
Northrise University	11	3.4	3.4	55.9
OAK University	12	3.8	3.8	59.7
St Bonaventure University	13	4.1	4.1	63.7
University of Lusaka	22	6.9	6.9	70.6
UNZA	36	11.3	11.3	81.9
Kwame Nkrumah University	2	.3	.3	82.2
ZCAS	57	17.8	17.8	100.0
Total	321	100.0	100.0	

The respondents were asked to identify which institution they were enrolled with. A total of 321 responses were collected from 13 HEIs. The highest number of responses came from ZCAS University with 17.8%, followed by Lusaka Apex Medical University with 17.5% while the lowest

response was from Africa Research University with 2.2%. The information in Table 4.2 was important in order to identify the institutions that the respondents were coming from.

Table 4.2. shows the frequency responses of respondents from each HEI. Table 4.2 shows that ZCAS had the highest frequency of 57 respondents followed by Lusaka Apex Medical University with 56 respondents.

The responses came from both public HEIs and private HEIs that were included in the sample. Figure 4.4 below shows responses from enrolled students in both private and public institutions. The responses from private HEIs were 60.4% and 39.6% were from public HEIs. The breakdown of the sample responses is important in determining the credibility of the sample responses which are 81% of the total research population making the sample highly credible since it is above 74% (Hair *et al.*, 2014). The respondents use social media platforms for their HEIs and therefore they are highly knowledgeable on the subject and gave credible answers.



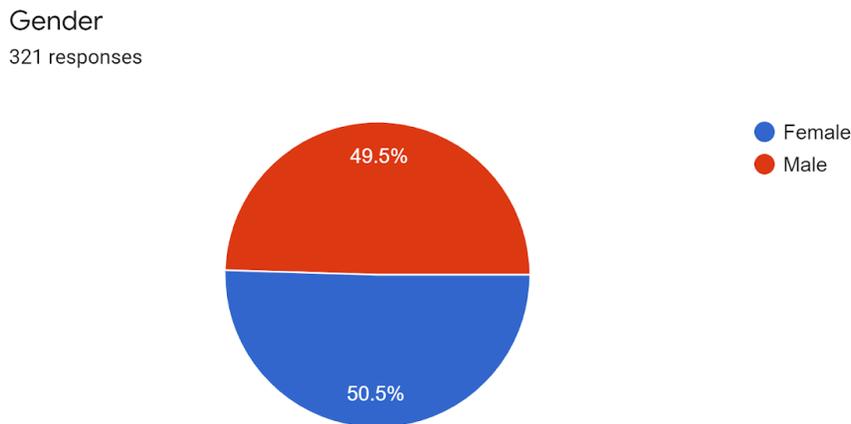
**FIGURE 4.4: COMPARISON OF RESPONSES FROM PRIVATE AND PUBLIC HEIS**

According to HEA 43.8% of total enrolled students in HEIs are in public institutions while 56.2% are in private institutions (HEA, 2019). The comparisons of responses from private and public HEIs in Figure 4.4 makes the data findings more credible since the larger responses at 60.4% is from the private HEIs. A research conducted at Mamara University by Professor Ali Delice brings

out strong findings on the relationship between sample size and the population and states that the credibility of a finding is measured on the participation of a larger representation of a sample (Delice, 2010). In this research the participation was more from the private HEIs making the finding in Figure 4.4 highly credible.

#### 4.7 Demographic data of respondents

From the data collected on the question of what the respondent's gender was, 159 were males representing 49.5% of the total 321 responses. Female respondents were 162 representing 50.5% of total respondents as shown in Figure 4.5 below. This data on gender was important in order to identify the respondents so that the outcomes of the analysis becomes implicit with a view to dealing with a well-known sample out of the whole population. In research gender distribution is highly important in order to ensure that research results apply to everyone (Tannenbaum *et al.*, 2016), especially to this research because HEA has reported that the male population in HEIs stands at 52% while female population stands at 47.6%. (Higher Education Authority, 2022). In comparison to the sample in this research the gender aspect was well represented to give credible response from both male and female respondents in the selected HEIs.



**FIGURE 4.5: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF RESPONDENTS**

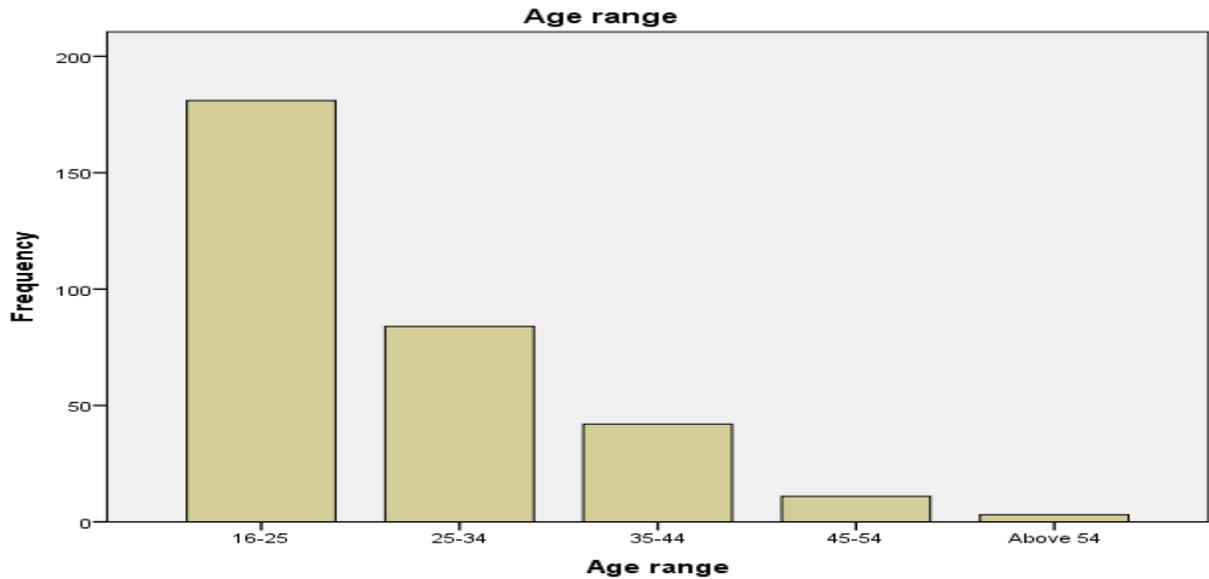
The statistics on the question of identifying the gender of the respondents are tabulated in Table 4.3 below showing that all 321 respondents indicated their gender with zero missing values and this means that the total cumulative percentage was 100% as illustrated in Table 4.3 below.

**Table 4.3: Statistics what is your gender**

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Male	159	49.5	49.5	49.5
Valid	Female	162	50.5	50.5	100.0
	Total	321	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.7.1 Age range of respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate their age range; all 321 respondents indicated their age. From the findings 181 respondents out of 321 were in the age ranges of 16-25 representing 56.4% of total respondents. Further responses show that 84 respondents were in the age range of 25-34, comprising 26.2% of the total respondents on this question. The findings revealed that 43 respondents were between the age ranges of 35-44 and these represent 13.1% of the respondents on this question, while 3.4% were between the age ranges 45-54 which is only 3.4% of respondents. In the findings 3 respondents were above the age of 54 and represent 0.9% of the total respondents on this question. Table 4.3 shows that the highest number of respondents were in the age range of 16-25 while the lowest respondents were in the age range of above 54. The age of respondents is highly important in this research to determine social media behaviors and association of age and social media platforms so that recommendations for appropriate social media combinations can later be made in Chapter 5. A research conducted by Neves *et al.* indicated that age is a critical factor in any social media study, since it is the determinant of the type of social media platforms likely to be signed up for and also that each age bracket forms a unique segment for the development of social media strategies (Neves *et al.*, 2018). Figure 4.6 below shows the graphical representation of age distribution on this question.



**FIGURE 4.6: AGE RANGE OF RESPONDENTS**

Figure 4.6 shows that the highest number of student respondents were between the age ranges of 16-25 and this can be a strong target for SMM strategies. Table 4.4 below shows the statistics on age range while Table 4.4 simply shows that all 321 respondents indicated their age range especially that this was a required field used to identify the respondents.

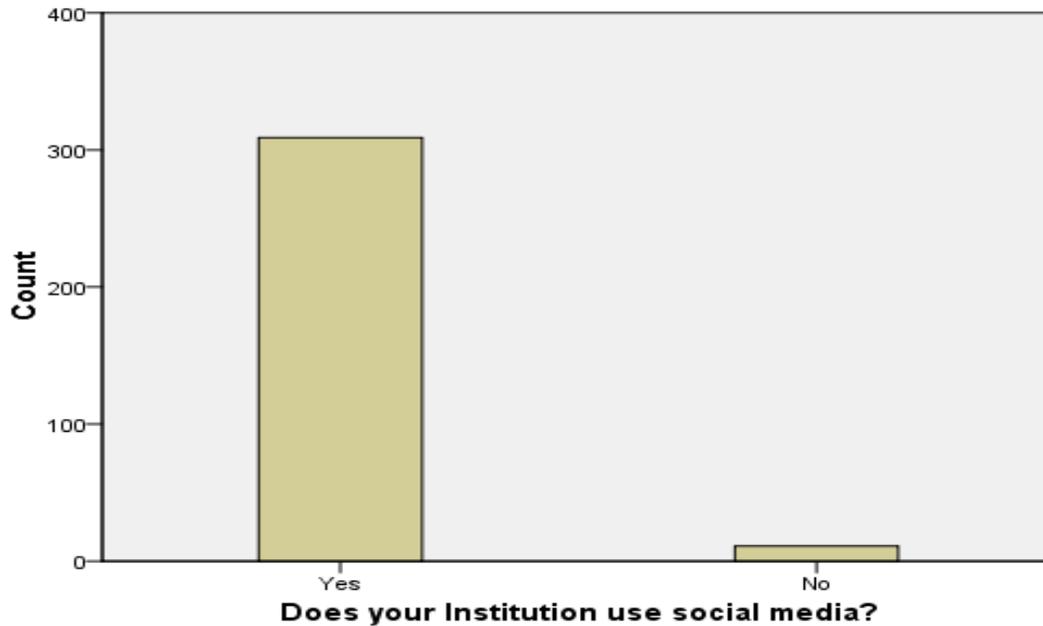
**Table 4.4: Statistics on what is your age range**

Age range				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
16-25	181	56.4	56.4	56.4
25-34	84	26.2	26.2	82.6
35-44	42	13.1	13.1	95.6
45-54	11	3.4	3.4	99.1
Above 54	3	.9	.9	100.0
Total	321	100.0	100.0	

The frequencies in Table 4.4 shows that the highest frequency was from the age range of 16-25 and the lowest frequency was 3 from respondents who were above 54. The data in Table 4.4 reflects the frequency ranges and the percentages of responses, which are not included in Figure 4.6 making it necessary to use both the Table and the histogram.

#### 4.8 **HEIs using social media platforms**

From the analysis in Figure 4.7 below, approximately 309 respondents out of 321 indicated that their institution uses social media. The 309 respondents represent 96.6% of the sample, while 11 respondents making up 3.4% were deviant. This directly means that 96.6% of the students in the sample are aware that their HEI is using social media. Figure 4.7 below shows the graphical representation of these findings with the larger percentage of respondents stating that their institution uses social media. According to UniRank, there are 32 HEIs in Zambia that are active on Facebook, 12 are active on Twitter, 6 on Instagram, 6 on YouTube and 4 on LinkedIn (UniRank, 2021). UniRank is the leading international higher education directory and search engine featuring reviews and rankings of over 13,800 officially recognized in 200 countries (UniRank, 2022). According to UniRank active HEIs on social media are those with higher engagements of more than 100 likes and leads. The 11% response in this survey could be assumed to be those from HEIs that are less active on some social media platforms and therefore their students may not be aware of their social media presence. Strong argument would be that social media is free and assumptively almost all HEIs could have a presence but not active according to UniRank.



**FIGURE 4.7: SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS**

The findings in Table 4.3 are in line with the findings by Beqiri who investigated the impact of social media in higher education in Kosovo and found that there was an increase in internet usage and hence an increase in social media usage (Beqiri, 2014). From the findings in this research 98% of the respondents were active on social media. Table 4.4 below shows results of the descriptive statistics. Statistics from The Insider, an online social media business platform, shows that YouTube and Facebook are the most popular social media platforms in the USA among people in the age range of 18-29 (Tran, 2018). The findings on The Insider can be compared to the findings in Figure 4.8 which shows that Facebook is the most common social media platform in HEIs in Zambia. Analysing findings in Table 4.4 above, respondents between the age range of 16-25 constituted 56%, a finding similar to the one in the USA.

**Table 4.5: Statistics on does your institution use social media**

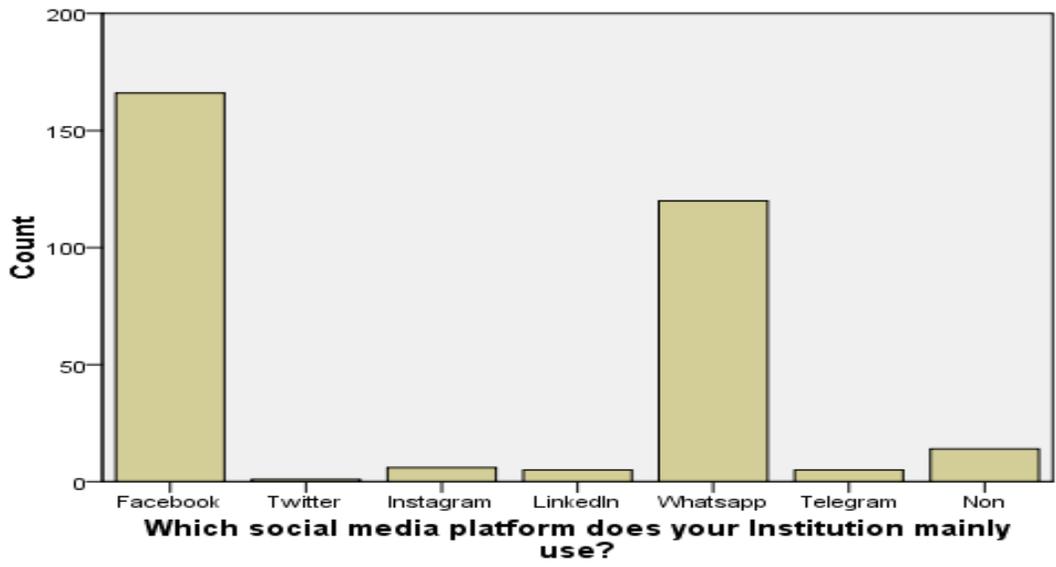
**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Does your Institution use social media?	321	1	2	1.03	.182
Valid N (listwise)	321				

The standard deviation in Table 4.5 is  $< 0$  and this means that the data variation is closer to the mean and dotted around the same point, implying that the responses around the question centered on Yes responses as confirmed in Figure 4.7 with more than 300 responses. The findings in Table 4.5 validates the results obtained in the question of HEIs using social media. The 11% of respondents who stated that their institution did not use social media could be unaware of the existence of their institution’s social media pages or they probably did not understand the research question.

**4.8.1 Identifying social media platforms used in HEIs**

This question had 321 responses with 167 respondents forming the highest response number. The larger proposition indicated that their institution used Facebook as their main social media platform. The literature review in Chapter three indicated that Facebook was the most popular social media platform in line with the findings in this research. These who indicated that Facebook was the social media platform used in their institution make up 52.5% of the sample. From the responses 121 representing 38.1% responded that WhatsApp was the social media platform that their institution mainly uses. The lowest response was 1 representing 0.3% of the total respondents who stated that Twitter was the most common social media platform used in their institution. Out of 321 responses, 14 respondents indicated none on this question and these where 4.4% of the total responses to this question.



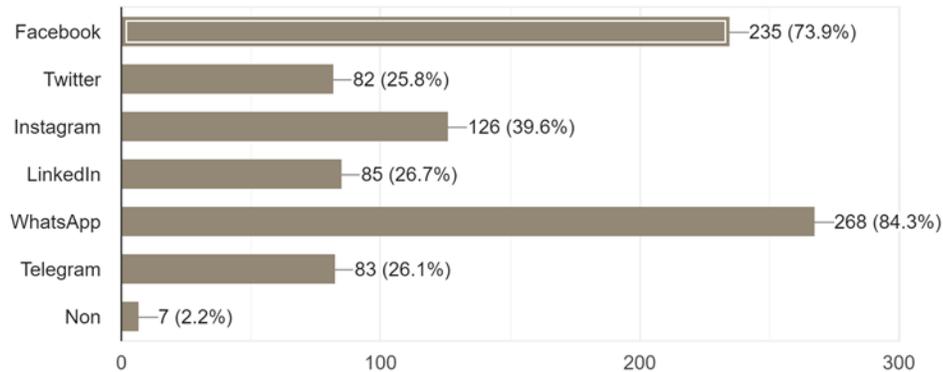
**FIGURE 2.8: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS MAINLY USED IN HEIS**

Figure 4.8 above shows that Facebook followed by WhatsApp are the most common social media platforms in HEIs in the selected sample in this research. Figure 4.8 also shows that Twitter is not popular in HEIs. Research conducted at Kibabii University in Kenya found that WhatsApp and Facebook are the most popular social media networking sites at that University (Chonge, 2020). The finding at Kibabii University is similar to the findings in Figure 4.8 where Facebook and WhatsApp are the most popular social media platforms in HEIs. The findings in Figure 4.8 are similar to the findings on the insider business site in the USA which showed that Facebook was highly popular among people in the age range of 18-29 (Tran, 2018). The popularity of Facebook in HEI's could relate to the fact that Facebook is a free media and easy to use; conversely it could also mean that it is the most popular media in the age groupings of this research and in the research in the USA by Tran and in Kenya by Chonge.

Figure 4.9 below shows that 73.9% of respondents were signed up for Facebook, further confirming the popularity of Facebook in HEIs and justifying the Findings in Figure 4.8. In Chapter 5 the researcher has included Facebook in Figure 5.2 as the most effective social media platform to use in marketing HEI.

#### 4.8.2 Identifying social media platforms that respondents are signed up for

The question had 321 respondents and out of these respondents 235 indicated that they are signed up for Facebook. Those signed up for Facebook were 73.9% of the total respondents, while 82 respondents, representing 25.8% indicated that they were signed up for Twitter. A total number of 126 respondents representing 39.6% indicated that they were signed up for Instagram.



**FIGURE 4.9: COMBINATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS SIGNED UP FOR BY THE RESPONDENTS**

In the responses 85 respondents representing 26.7% responded that they were signed up on LinkedIn, while 268 respondents representing 84.3% were signed up for WhatsApp. From the responses, 83 respondents representing 26.1% were signed up on Telegram and 7 respondents representing 2.2% were not signed up for any social media platform.

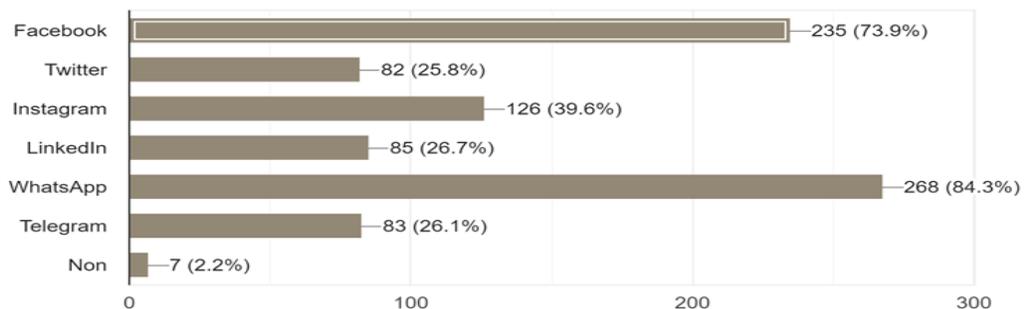
Figure 4.9 shows the graphic presentation of indications of social media platforms signed up for by the respondents. A research conducted at Charles Darwin University found that most respondents were signed up on social media to keep in touch with friends and family (Sharma & Bandias, 2016). This finding provides a reflection of the findings in Figure 4.9 showing that WhatsApp and Facebook are the most popular social media platforms signed up for by the respondents. Furthermore, according to research conducted in South Africa at Vhembe Further Education Training College 87% of respondents out of a sample of 105 indicated that they were signed up for Facebook and WhatsApp respectively. The research at Vhembe Further Education

Training College places Facebook and WhatsApp as the most popular social media platforms at the institution, a result similar to the findings in Figure 4.9 below.

The percentage of those signed up for Facebook and WhatsApp provides a similar trend in the results in Figure 4.8, where students stated that Facebook followed by WhatsApp were the most common social media platforms in their institutions. The essence of asking the question of which social media platform was common in the respondents' HEIs was in order to investigate the popularity of the social media platforms in HEIs.

### 4.8.3 The most common social media platforms in HEIs

Figure 4.10 shows that this question had 321 responses out of a sample size of 321. The findings show that WhatsApp is the most common platform among students. Results indicate 63.6% respondents indicated that WhatsApp is the most common platform in their institution, followed by Facebook with 32%. The least common platform according to the responses is LinkedIn with 1 respondent representing 0.3% of the total respondents. The findings in Figure 4.10 is similar to what was found in a study in Kwara State in Nigeria where they investigated the most popular social media platform and found that Facebook was the most common social media platform since 24.3% of the total sample indicated that they were signed up for it and WhatsApp (Akintola *et al.*, 2016). Figure 4.10 brings out findings similar to the ones in Figure 4.9 which also shows that WhatsApp is the platform that most students in HEIs are signed up for followed by Facebook. Since the findings in Figures 4.10 and 4.9 show similar outcomes the researcher can assume that the outcomes are reliable.



**FIGURE 4.10: POPULARITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM AMONG STUDENTS IN HEIS**

Table 4.6 below shows the descriptive statistics for the most common or popular social media platforms in HEIs as indicated by the respondents with a mean of 3.66, making WhatsApp the most popular platform followed by Facebook. This finding is very important in determining the best social media platform combinations for marketing HEIs. Table 4.6 also shows that 321 respondents answered this question. Further studies in Ghana at Koforidua Polytechnic show a similar trend in findings where 66.6% and 19.9% of the respondents indicated that Facebook and WhatsApp respectively were the most common social media platform in their institution (M. Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015) accordingly, they concluded that the two platforms were the most common among students.

**Table 4.6: Data set for the most popular social media platform among students in HEIs**

**Descriptive Statistics**

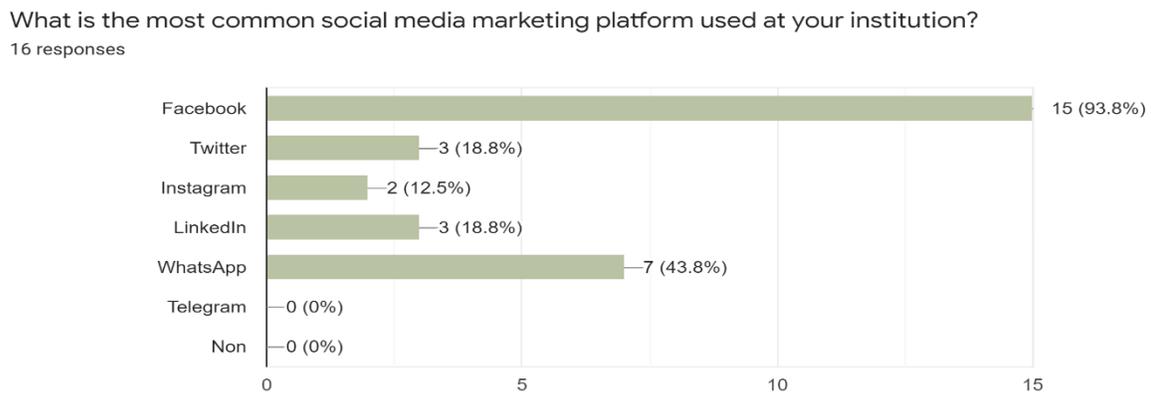
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Which social media platform is mostly common among students in your Institution?	321	1	7	3.66	1.883
Valid N (listwise)	321				

Statistics show that Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter are among the cheapest social media platforms in the world (Spencer, 2022). This could be the reason why these are mostly common in middle income countries or growing economies across Asia and Africa. Other reasons for popularity of Facebook and WhatsApp as social media platforms in Asia and

Africa are related to ease of use, friendly regulation and deliberate marketing strategies by Facebook Inc. to focus on African and Asian markets (Nothias, 2020). Facebook has a policy, for example, to offer free basic Facebook and WhatsApp to African and Asian markets which it treats as its growing focused markets (Murphy & Reed, 2021).

This finding also confirms the popularity of Facebook in HEIs since it is regarded as the most cost-effective social media (Parkson, 2021). Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.9 findings relate to the findings in Table 4.6 where the mean is less than 5 implying that the data is dotted along the same line. The researcher took the initiative of investigating other social media platforms and their popularity in order to assess usability of these platforms and whether they could form part of the recommendations made in Figure 5.2 in Chapter five.

#### 4.8.4 Common social media platforms used for Marketing HEIs



**FIGURE 4.11: COMMON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN HEIs**

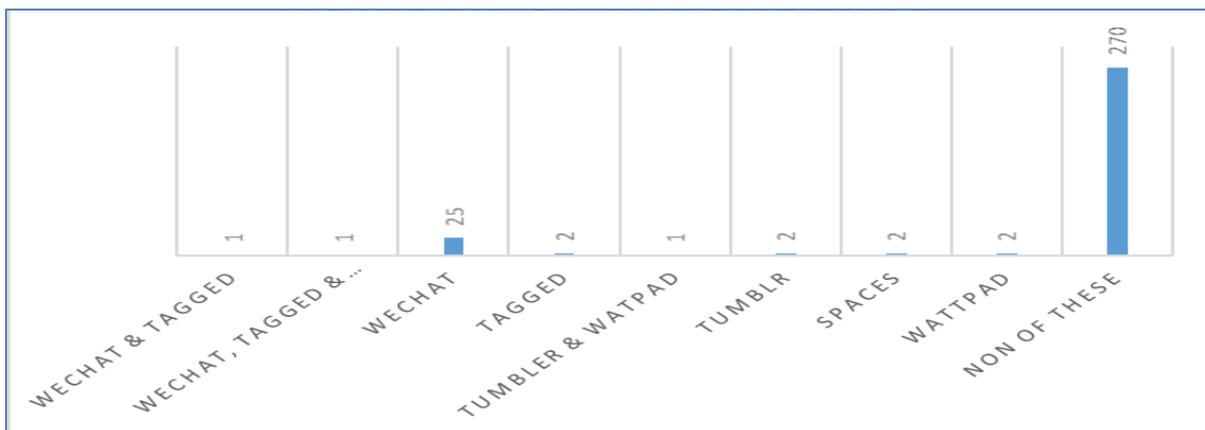
Figure 4.11 shows that 93.8% of respondents indicated that Facebook is the most common social media platform in their institution while 43.8% indicated that WhatsApp is the most common social media platform in their institution. Figure 4.11 also shows that twitter and LinkedIn were also common in HEIs since 18.8% of respondents indicated that Twitter was common and 18.8%

indicated that Instagram was common in their institution. The findings confirm the findings by Mahaney that Facebook is the most common social media platform at State University in New York (Mahaney, 2012).

The qualitative responses reported that Facebook was the most commonly used social media platform by marketing professional in HEIs since 93.8% of respondents in the interview confirmed its popularity followed by 43.6% who stated that they mostly use WhatsApp. In comparison with the findings from the quantitative sample WhatsApp emerged as the most common social media platform in HEIs at 84.3% followed by Facebook at 73.9%. This difference implies that HEIs must focus on creating advertising content for firstly WhatsApp and then secondly Facebook since there is a mismatch between the media used for marketing and the most common platforms among the enrolled students. The differences in the views of the enrolled students and the marketing professional identifies a gap in targeting which social media platform are more effective than others and hence requires the recommendations made in Figure 5.1 in Chapter five.

#### 4.8.5 Other social media platforms used in HEIs

This question had 306 respondents out of a sample of 321 respondents implying that 4.6% of respondents did not attempt this question. The findings indicate that 84.1% of the total respondents on this question indicated that their institution did not use any other platform other than the ones addressed or identified in question 4.4. Four respondents representing 8.1% of the total respondents to this question indicated that their institution also uses WeChat.



**FIGURE 4.12: OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED IN HEIS**

Research in China at Marquette University shows that WeChat and Facebook are becoming one of the most popular social media platforms among international students in that country (Yan,

2009). Figure 4.12 shows that 25% of respondents indicated that they use WeChat. A study at the University of Pennsylvania confirms the findings at Marquette University, since it revealed that Facebook followed by WeChat were the most popular social media platforms in China (Wu, 2014). The findings in Figure 4.12 show that among other social media platforms apart from Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter, WeChat was becoming popular since even in the selected HEIs in this research there were some students that were using it.

#### **4.8.6 Relationship between age and social media platform signed up for**

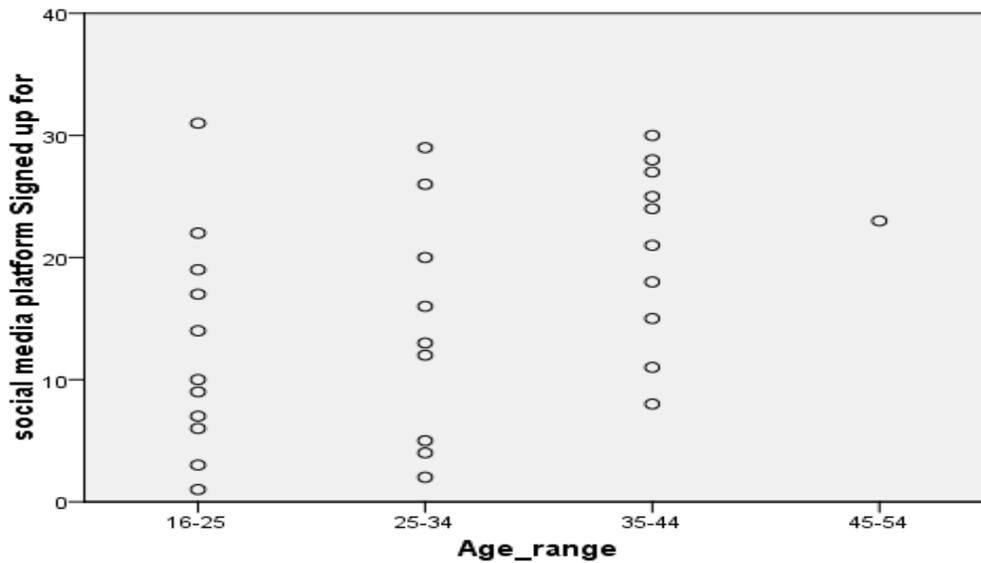
It is highly important in this research that the age is linked to social media in order to segment usage of social media platform in the development of a social media model for HEIs. The understanding of this correlation is also helpful in determining the popularity of social media platforms in HEIs. The online value proposition (OVP) and segmentation presented in the social media marketing model in Figure 5.2 in Chapter 5 feeds from the findings in this section.

In a thesis published at the University of Missouri – Columbia that investigated the usage of social media and interaction, age ranges were a critical factor to consider in developing the relationship between popularity of social media and social behavior (Fiester, 2016). In the current study the relationship between age and social media signed up for becomes highly critical in verifying the findings in Table 4.6 and linking those findings to the common social media platforms in HEIs. Another research at Western University factored in the age range so that those demographics could assist in linking choice of social media to behavioral trends across choice of social media (Trelford, 2018). The findings in the research at University of Missouri-Columbia and Western University justify the importance of correlating age to the choice of social media. Since this research in Chapter 5 recommends the best social media platform combinations for HEIs in Zambia, the correlation results in Table 4.7 below are highly critical to that recommendation.

Table 4.10 shows that the relationship is statistically significant since the probability of the spurious relationship is below 0.05 representing an infinite low value and the correlation is a perfect positive 1 implying that the relationship exists.

<b>Table 4.7: Correlation results</b>			
<b>Correlations</b>			
		Age range	social media platform Signed up for
Age range	Pearson Correlation	1	.394*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.028
	N	321	31
social media platform Signed up for	Pearson Correlation	.394*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.028	
	N	31	31
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

The analysis in Table 4.7 using bivariate analysis in SPSS, indicate that there is a relationship between the age range and the number of social media platforms the respondents were signed up for. Graphical evidence shows that age ranges 16-25 were signed on more social media platforms while age ranges 45-54 were signed up on the least number of social media platforms. The scatter plot in Figure 4.13 shows this analysis and also indicates that age ranges 45-54 were signed up on similar social media platforms. Research shows that teenagers tend to have more friends on Myspace and other platforms (Ulrike & Zaphiris, 2008). This finding on Myspace is similar to the results of the QQ plot in Figure 4.13 which shows that age ranges between 16-25 have more scatter dots than any other age range.



**FIGURE 4.13: CORRELATION BETWEEN AGE RANGE AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM SIGNED UP FOR**

#### **4.8.7 The relationship between social media platform signed up for and Gender**

The relationship between social media platform signed up for and gender is important in this research as it forms a strong basis for making recommendations on the most popular social media platforms across different genders. HEIs that want to implement SMM strategies must understand the relationship between choice of social media and gender so that it would be easier to perform online segmentation and develop OVPs. Research conducted to investigate gender differences in social media sites and its effect on academic performance revealed that there were more male students using Facebook than females and more female students using WhatsApp than males (Hossain & Prodhan, 2020). The SMM model developed in Figure 5.2 in Chapter 5 includes an OVP, which means that for HEIs to develop this they need to first segment their online audience and this means using age and gender descriptors. This implies that the Pearson correlation results in Table 4.7 are highly significant findings for the SMM model in Figure 5.2 of Chapter 5.

The findings after running a bivariate correlation indicated that there is a relationship between gender and the social media platform signed up for. The spurious probability is above 0.05 with a perfect positive correlation of 1 as shown in Table 4.8. However, the relationship is not significant as the results did not yield any significant level.

<b>Table 4.8: Correlation between gender and social media platforms signed up for</b>			
<b>Correlations</b>			
		social media platform Signed up for	Gender
social media platform Signed up for	Pearson Correlation	1	.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.937
	N	31	31
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.015	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.937	
	N	31	321

#### 4.9 Social media and student numbers

**Table 4.9: Social media increasing student numbers**

Can social media increase student numbers				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	26	8.1	8.1
	Disagree	79	24.8	43.9
Valid	Neutral	49	15.2	59.2
	Agree	115	36	83.8
	Strongly agree	52	16.1	100.0
Total		321	100.0	

Table 4.9 shows that 36% respondents out of 321 indicated that social media could increase student numbers, while 24.8% disagreed that social media could increase student numbers. 8.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed that social media could increase student numbers. The respondents who strongly agreed and agreed constituted 52.1% while those who disagreed and strongly agreed were 32.9% implying that social media can increase student numbers. Social media increasing student numbers was investigated by Jepngetich in Kenya who among his findings reported that due to social media's ability to create face to face interaction, its improved enrolments in selected HEIs (Jepngetich, 2016). The finding by Jepngetich is similar to the responses in Table 4.9 where 36% of respondents were of the view that social media could increase student numbers. Additionally, to confirm Jepngetich findings a further 16.1% responded that they strongly agreed that social media could improve student numbers. The findings in Table 4.10 show that 46.1% of respondents were of the view that adverts on social media caused them to visit a particular HEI as opposed to 42.6% were of the view that adverts do not cause them to visit a particular HEIs. The conclusion on these findings in Table 4.9 and Table 4.10 is that adverts on social media are linked to increase in student numbers since the assumption is that when prospects see adverts on social media they go to HEIs to enroll and this increases student numbers. This finding is also supported

by the findings in the qualitative sample were respondents stated that social media increases student numbers in their HEIs, as some responses in the interview indicated in the affirmative. Examples of three responses from the qualitative responses are below.

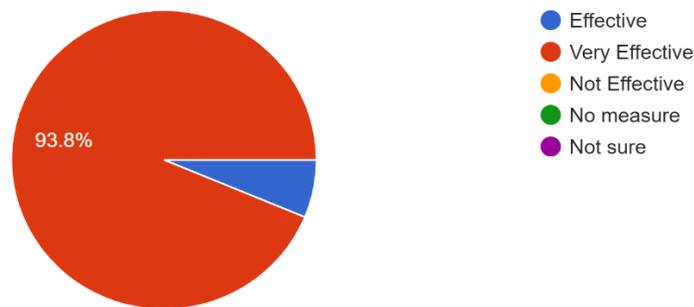
...(R1) *“Social media platforms have improved our student numbers especially during enrolment periods and are therefore effective” ...*

...(R2) *“Social media is effective in increasing student numbers because it has a higher reach” ...*

...(R3) *“no it is not effective in increasing student numbers, most students are enrolled through our student administration and the applicants usually just walk through campus for their enrolment, we do not have enrollment through social media” ...*

Figure 4.14 below shows that 93.8% of respondents from the interview with professionals managing social media in HEIs indicated that social media was very effective in increasing student numbers. The responses in Figure 4.14 provide answers to RO2: To investigate the extent to which social media marketing leads to higher student recruitment and market share in higher education institutions in Zambia.

How effective are social media platforms in increasing student numbers  
16 responses



**FIGURE 4.15: EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN IMPROVING STUDENT NUMBERS**

The responses on (Q1) the effectiveness of social media in increasing student numbers strongly indicate that social media is effective in improving student numbers. Research findings by Streimikiene indicate that social media has the ability to assist organizations achieve their

marketing objectives and increase customer numbers (Streimikiene *et al.*, 2021); according to this research social media was able to increase customer numbers on social sites by 65%. The analysis in the findings are **identical** to those in Sreimikiene’s research and lead to a strong assumption that social media can increase student numbers. Respondents were also asked if social media is able to generate revenue (**RQ2**). The results of the responses show that social media has a higher reach and this means that respondents agreed that social media marketing could increase student numbers in HEIs.

The findings in both the qualitative and quantitative samples show that social media can increase student numbers. In the quantitative sample 19.2% more of the respondents stated that adverts cause them to visit particular learning institutions, implying that social media is effective in student increasing student numbers. The responses in the qualitative findings further confirm this as 93.8% of the respondents affirmed that social media is effective in increasing student numbers.

**Social media adverts causing respondents to visit particular HEIs**

**Table 4.10: Social media adverts cause respondents to visit particular learning institutions**

**Do adverts on social media cause you to visit a particular learning institution**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	46	14.3	14.3	14.3
Disagree	91	28.3	28.3	42.7
Valid Neutral	36	11.2	11.2	53.9
Agree	134	41.7	41.7	95.6
Strongly Agree	14	4.4	4.4	100.0
Total	321	100.0		

Table 4.10 shows that there were 321 responses on this particular question; 4.4% of the respondents indicated that they strongly agree that adverts caused them to visit particular learning institutions. On the other hand, 28.3% responded that that they disagreed that social media adverts

caused them to visit particular learning institutions. Table 4.10 further shows that 41.7% respondents agreed that adverts on social media caused them to visit particular learning institutions while 14.3% strongly disagreed. The findings on the question of social media adverts causing respondents to visit particular learning institutions is confirmed by similar findings in a research report conducted by Ezeife who investigated social media strategies for increasing sales and found that awareness on social media caused 84% of customers to visit particular business places and make decisions to purchase (Ezeife, 2017). The key interest from these findings is now to correlate the relationship between social media advertising and student numbers so that the researcher can establish whether social media advertising could lead to increased student numbers. In Table 4.10, 46.1%, of respondents indicated that social media adverts cause them to visit a particular HEIs while 42.6% stated that adverts do not cause them to visit particular learning institutions. The findings in Table 4.10 validate the findings in Table 4.9 where 52.1% of respondents indicated that social media increases student numbers against 32.9% who indicated that it didn't.

In the qualitative findings 31.3% of respondents out of 16 stated that as a result of social media adverts their international student numbers had increased by 10 and this further validates the findings in Table 4.9.

...(R4) *“Social media platforms adverts have increased traffic in our admissions office and resulted in high enrolment” ...*

This finding is in line with the findings in Table 4.10 above which shows that 41.7% of respondents agreed that social media adverts cause them to visit particular HEIs. The assumption would be that if social media increases international student numbers then it can be used to increase overall student numbers and also ultimately increase market share for HEIs. In the literature review in Chapter three findings were that social media is an effective tool for increasing student numbers, particularly in private HEIs in Kenya (Kimani & Obwatho (2020).

#### 4.9.1 Social media platforms influencing the choice of learning institutions

**Table 4.11: Social media influencing the choice of learning Institution**

**Social media platforms influence your choice of learning institution**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	61	19.1	19.1	19.0
Disagree	81	25.2	25.2	44.2
Neutral	43	13.4	13.4	57.6
Agree	103	32.1	32.1	89.7
Strongly Agree	33	10.3	10.3	100.0
Total	321	100.0		

Table 4.11 shows that out of a total response of 321, 32.1% respondents indicated that they agreed that social media platforms influenced their choice of learning institution. On the other hand, 25.2% disagreed while 10.3% indicated that they strongly disagreed. The lowest response regarding this question was 13.4% who remained neutral. However, the findings also show that a large percentage of the respondents at 44.3% were of the view that social media platforms do not influence their choice of learning institution with 42.4% stated that it does. This means that to make conclusive findings, a comparison of the literature findings in Chapter three-literature review is highly helpful. A research conducted in Ghana investigating critical factors influencing choice of graduate programs listed quality of program, student support but also stated that development of technological strategy was an important factor in student choices of HEIs (Mbawuni & Nimako, 2015). The findings by Mbawuni & Nimako resonate with the responses on the question of whether social media platforms influence the choice of learning institutions and lead to the assumption that social media should be a critical factor in the choice of learning institution.

#### 4.9.2 Social media platforms providing information

**Table 4.12: Social media providing information**

**Social media platforms for your learning institution are effective in providing you with information about courses**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	64	19.9	19.9	19.9
Disagree	76	23.7	23.7	43.6
Neutral	46	14.3	14.3	57.9
Valid Agree	89	27.7	27.7	85.7
Strongly Agree	46	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	321	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.12 shows that 27.7% stated that they agreed that social media platforms for their learning institutions are effective in providing them with information about learning programs. Additionally, 14.3% strongly agreed that their institutions' social media platforms were effective in providing them with information about learning programs. From 321 respondents 23.7% disagreed with the statement while 14.3% remained neutral. The findings in this question indicate that while a number of the respondents agreed that information on their social media platforms was adequate in providing them with learning program details the majority disagreed. Kayombo in his research at ZCAS found that the internet was responsible for 13% of information sources for students in public universities (Kayombo, 2014) and this confirms the findings that information is critical in students making a choice of HEIs. The findings in Table 4.11 show that 42.4% of were of the view that social media influences their choice of learning institution while 44.3% stated that it does not. This finding confirms the fact that information is critical to making choices in enrolment. The findings in Table 4.11 are supported by the findings in Table 4.12 in that 43.6% of respondents indicated that social media platforms in their HEIs are not effective in providing them with information while 42% were of the view that they do. This could be the reason why the

majority of respondents in Table 4.11 responded that social media does not influence their choice of learning institutions. If visitors to a social media site do not have sufficient information, then it would be difficult for them to make choices, but it would be possible that they can respond to persuasive advertising on social media. It also shows that visitors on social media platforms can interact and share ideas, particularly that in Table 4.13, 23% of respondents agreed that their institution's social media platforms were interactive, even though the majority stated that their HEIs were not interactive the assumption is that social media in nature is highly interactive. In Table 4.13 shows that the majority of respondents 42% against 37.8% responded that their HEIs social media platforms are not interactive, this confirms the findings in Table 4.11 that HEIs social media platforms did not influence their choice of learning institution. This also means that social media sites for HEIs are not providing effective information and hence the reason for the findings in Table 4.11 and 4.12.

Simões and Soares conducted a research to investigate information sources and choice factors in applying to higher education and concluded that at a Portuguese University their website was the most used resource for information (Simões & Soares, 2010).

### 4.9.3 Social media platforms and student interactions

**Table 4.13: Social media platforms and student interaction**

Your institution's social media platform allows for student interaction

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	66	20.6	20.6	20.6
Disagree	75	23.4	23.4	43.9
Neutral	59	18.4	18.4	62.3
Agree	75	23.4	23.4	85.7
Strongly Agree	46	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	321	100.0	100.0	

The responses on the question of social media platforms and student interaction were critical in establishing the concept of how students can influence each other on the choice of HEIs. From the findings on this question 321 responses were provided out of which 23.4% respondents indicated that they agreed that their institution's social media platforms allowed them interaction. From the findings, 14.3% strongly agreed to the question while 23.4% disagreed with 18.4% remaining neutral over the question.

The assumption in this question is that if students interacted on social media platforms then they could influence one another over the choices of courses and HEIs. Rani from the institute of law at the Kurukshetra University in India studied factors influencing consumer choices and found that social groupings influenced consumers from purchasing products and services in a similar fashion (Rani, 2014). The results of the analysis in Table 4.13 indicate a strong inclination of social media platforms for HEIs allowing interaction for students, according to the findings in Rani's studies; this could be a source of influence for choice of learning institutions. This analysis further confirms the findings by Simões and Soares (2010) that information sources are critical in the choice of learning institution and particularly those coming from electronic sources. If social media could increase student numbers as shown in Table 4.9, the expectation should be that it could increase

sales revenue for HEIs. The findings in Table 4.14 show that 27% of respondents agreed that it could increase revenue, further validating findings in Table 4.9 and 4.10 but on the other hand the findings show that the majority of the responses were falling on strongly disagreed/disagree at 44% compared to agree and strongly agree at 37.7%. The implication of this that HEIs must design their social media pages to allow for a higher student interaction so that they can use this to effectively market.

#### 4.9.4 Social media can increase sales revenue

**Table 4.14: Social media increasing sales revenue**

**Can social media increase sales revenue for HEIs?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	71	22.1	22.1	22.1
Disagree	73	22.7	22.7	44.9
Neutral	40	12.5	12.5	57.3
Agree	89	27.7	27.7	85.0
Strongly Agree	48	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	321	100.0	100.0	

The findings indicate that 27.7% respondents out of 321 responded that they agreed to social media increasing sales revenue for HEIs, while 22.7% respondents disagreed. When compared to those who agreed and strongly disagreed, it seems that the majority of respondents stated that social media did not lead to increased revenue, however the findings from the qualitative research show a positive finding on whether social media increases revenue since 98.7% of respondents stated that social media increases revenue while 1.9% indicated that it did not.

...(R4) *“We generate almost one million kwacha from SMM activities, social media provides us with a chance to increase our revenue” ....*

The conflicting findings are as a result that the quantitative sample being the students who did not have sufficient information regarding revenue generation since they did not manage social media in their HEIs

The findings in the qualitative results confirm Lockett’s findings in his study and the findings by Vuckic. The findings in the qualitative sample are confirmed by Kangondu who studied the effect social media on marketing performance and found that social media was responsible for the increase in sales revenue for most businesses in Nairobi including HEIs (Kangondu, 2018).

**4.9.5 Social media makes it easier to make payments to HEI**

**Table 4.15: Social media makes it easy to make payment**

**Making payment for school fees and other fees on social media can be the easiest method for students**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	63	19.6	19.6	19.6
Disagree	81	25.2	25.2	44.9
Neutral	35	10.9	10.9	55.8
Agree	92	28.7	28.7	84.4
Strongly Agree	50	15.6	15.6	100.0
Total	321	100.0	100.0	

The responses on whether social media makes it easy for students to pay school fees shows that 28.7% of the respondents indicated that social media would make it easy for them to make payment while 19% strongly disagreed while 25.2% disagreed. The responses show that the majority of the respondents indicated that social media did not make it easy for them to make payment to HEIs. The assumption could be that most HEIs may not have a payment system on their social media sites. Many Universities in Europe have incorporated school fees payment system on social media pages that make it easier for them to make payment examples of these are York, St John University (York St John University, 2021) and University of South Wales that have links on social media

pages to PayPal and other online payment platforms. In Zambia HEIs must make it easy for students to make payment on social media sites so that they can maximize revenue collection.

#### 4.9.6 Correlation analysis- Can social media increase revenue and make it easy for students to make payment

<b>Table 4.16: Correlation analysis of social media increasing payment and increasing sales revenue</b>			
<b>Correlations</b>			
		Can social media increase sales revenue for HEIs	Making payment for school fees and other fees on social media can be the easiest method for students
Can social media increase sales revenue for HEIs	Pearson Correlation	1	.862**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	321	321
Making payment for school fees and other fees on social media can be the easiest method for students	Pearson Correlation	.862**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	321	321

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

The results of the analysis in Table 4.16 indicate that there is a strong relationship between dependent variable, can social media increase sales revenue for HEIs and independent variable social media making it easy to make payment. The significance is .000 and according to Pearson correlation, this represents a significant relationship (Obilor & Amadi, 2018). The relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable are .862 and .862 and this means that there is a very strong relationship between the two variables. This confirms the findings in Table 4.15 where 27.8% of respondents indicated that social media can make it easy for them to pay school fees and assumes that social media can increase revenue. The assertion that social media

can increase sales revenue has empirical evidence from a research at the University of Taxis Austin where they discovered that by increasing followers on Facebook and Instagram they were able to increase sales revenue significantly (Mabley, 2016).

#### 4.10 Effectiveness of social media on marketing performance

**Table 4.17: Social media and its overall effect on marketing HEIs**

Does social media have an overall effect on marketing HEI				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Strongly Disagree	59	18.4	18.4	18.4
Disagree	82	25.5	25.5	43.9
Neutral	32	10.0	10.0	53.9
Agree	123	38.3	38.3	92.2
Strongly Agree	25	7.8	7.8	100.0
Total	321	100.0	100.0	

The responses in Table 4.17 shows that 38.3% of the respondents indicated that they agreed that social media has an overall effect on marketing HEIs; while 25.5% disagreed that it did not have an effect. In Table 4.17, 18.4% strongly disagreed that social media has an overall effect on marketing HEIs, while 10% remained neutral. Table 4.17 shows that the majority of the respondents indicated that social media had an overall effect on marketing HEIs. The findings in the qualitative studies also show that respondents agreed that social media had an overall effect on marketing further confirming the findings in Table 4.17. One respondent (R14) indicated that social media increased their market share, further confirming the findings in Table 4.17.

...(R14) *“Our Market share has increased by 13%, as an estimate”* ...

Market share is an important indicator of overall marketing performance (Buxton, 2020), this implies that if social media can increase market share then it has an overall effect on marketing.

#### 4.10.1 HEIs social media platform designs

**Table 4.18: Institutional page design**

**Your institution's social media page is well designed and easy to use**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	63	19.6	19.6	19.6
Disagree	73	22.7	22.7	42.4
Valid Neutral	54	16.8	16.8	59.2
Agree	70	21.8	21.8	81.0
strongly Agree	61	19.0	19.0	100.0
Total	321	100.0		

From the responses in Table 4.18, 40.8% of the respondents stated that their institutional social media page was well designed and easy to use. The Table further shows that 42.3% indicated that their institutional social media page was not well designed and easy to use, 16.8% remained neutral. The design of a social media page or platform is critical to attracting and returning visitors to that site (Nzoku, 2021), since the majority of the respondents indicated that their institutional social media page was not well designed. HEIs will need to engage more and use analytical tools to understand the behaviors of their site visitors. The findings in Table 4.10 above explains why 43.6% of the respondents indicated that their institution's social media platforms did not provide them with effective information compared to the 42% of respondents who indicated that they did. The researcher is of the view that design of social media pages is related to the way visitors on a social media site perceive information on that particular site. In this instance if the design of social media pages for HEIs is not well arranged or presented, the information on the site may not be well perceived or received by the visitors on a social media site. Literature in Chapter three indicated that the design of social media pages is highly critical to attaining a high hit rate on a particular web resource as it is linked to information quality and its perception (Abbu *et al.*, 2012).

**Table 4.19: Social media not responsible for decisions to enroll in courses**

**Social media may not be responsible for your decisions to enroll in particular courses at your institution**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	51	13.6	13.6	15.9
Disagree	90	23.9	23.9	43.9
Valid Neutral	45	11.8	11.8	57.9
Agree	76	23.8	23.8	81.6
Strongly Agree	59	25.5	25.5	100.0
Total	321	100.0		

From 321 responses 23.9% of the respondents stated that they disagree that social media is not responsible for their enrolment decisions, 25.5% strongly agreed while 11.8% remained neutral and 23.8% stated that they agreed. The respondents who indicated that they strongly disagreed were 13.6%. The findings in Table 4.19 show that the 49.3% of respondents rejected the notion social media was not responsible for their enrolment decisions while only 37.5% accepted the notion. This means that social media advertising is effective as the findings in Table 4.10 were the majority of respondents indicated that adverts on social media caused them to visit particular learning institutions. It then becomes important to investigate the combination of social media platforms that HEIs are using for marketing and measure how effective these are in generating revenue for them or increase student numbers.

#### 4.11 Identifying Social media platforms used in HEIs

**Table 4.20: Which is the most common social media platform combination used in your Institution**

Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Instagram & WhatsApp	38	11.8	11.8
	Facebook & WhatsApp	106	33.0	44.9
Valid	Twitter & WhatsApp	32	10.0	54.8
	Facebook & Twitter	90	28.0	82.9
	Facebook & Instagram	55	17.1	100.0
Total		321	100.0	

Table 4.20 shows responses on the question of the best combination of social media in HEIs. The results show that 106 respondents out of 321 indicated that Facebook and WhatsApp were the best combination of social media platforms in their institution and this represents 33% of the total responses. Table 4.20 also shows that 28% of respondents indicated that Facebook and Twitter were the most common social media platforms in their institution. The Table further shows that 17.1% indicated that Facebook and Instagram were the most popular social media platforms in their institution with 11.8% and 10% indicating that Instagram & WhatsApp and Twitter & WhatsApp were the most popular social media platforms in their institution respectively. The findings in the Table further shows that Facebook and WhatsApp are the most popular combination of social media platforms used in HEI. The findings in Table 4.20 are in line with the findings by Tosun who in his research and publication found that Facebook was highly popular in learning institutions (Tosun, 2018).

The findings from the qualitative sample show that Facebook is the most commonly used platform by 93.8% of professionals managing social media in HEIs, followed by WhatsApp that is used by 43.8% as indicated in Figure 20 in the qualitative analysis section. Table 20 above shows that a combination of Facebook and WhatsApp at 33% were the most common social media platforms among students in HEIs validating the findings in Figure 20. Table 4.21 below also shows that

Facebook and WhatsApp are regarded to be the best social media platforms for marketing HEIs in Zambia. The findings in Table 20.1 confirms the findings in the qualitative sample findings in Figure 20 and also justify the inclusion of these platforms in the model for marketing HEIs in Figure 5.2 in Chapter five.

#### 4.11.1 The Most effective social media platform to market HEIs in Zambia

**Table 4.21: Which is the best social media platform for marketing HEIs in Zambia**

Which is the best social media platform for marketing higher learning institutions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Twitter	41	12.8	12.8
	Facebook	98	30.5	43.3
	LinkedIn	44	13.7	57.0
	WhatsApp	96	29.9	86.9
	Instagram	42	13.1	100.0
Total		321	100.0	

Table 4.21 shows that Facebook is the best social media platform for marketing HEIs since it received 98 responses out of 321 representing 30.5% of total responses. WhatsApp received 96 representing 29.9%, while 41 respondents representing 12.8% stated that Twitter was the best platform for marketing HEI. The Table further shows that 44 respondents representing 13.7% indicated that LinkedIn was the best social media platform for marketing HEI. From the findings in Table 4.21, 13.7% of respondents indicated that LinkedIn was the best social media platforms, 13.1% of the respondents indicated that Instagram is the best social media platform for marketing HEIs. The findings in Table 4.21 are in line with the observation made in a recent research, which indicates that Facebook is the best platform in terms of active users at a single time (Geeth *et al.*, 2018). The best social media platform is one that offers flexibility and a higher rate of reach

(Veletsianos, 2021). Facebook has over 1.86 billion active users globally according to Geeth et al making it the largest social media platform in the world. The findings in the question of the best social media platform in marketing HEIs indicates that Facebook is highly used and suitable for marketing HEIs and this is in line with the findings in the literature review section.

**Table 4.22: Summary of statistics**

		Summary of Statistics				
		Social media may not be responsible for your decisions to enroll in particular courses at your institution	Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution	Can social media increase student numbers	Social media platforms are helpful in making enrolment	Do adverts on social media cause you to visit a particular learning institution
N	Valid	321	321	321	321	321
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.01	3.06	3.05	2.85	2.93
Median		3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Mode		2	2	2	4	4
Std. Deviation		1.376	1.331	1.256	1.145	1.204

Table 4.22 shows summaries of measures of central tendencies on the question of social media not being responsible for enrolment decisions. The mean was 3.01, the median was 3.0 and the mode was 2.0. The findings on this question is skewed to agree that social media is responsible for their enrolment decisions at their respective institution. This is confirmed by the responses in Table 4.6 where 90 out of 321 respondents strongly agreed that social media was responsible for their enrolment decisions. The findings in Table 4.22 indicate a negatively skewed result to agree that social media may be responsible for enrolment decisions.

Research conducted by Lockett at Walden University indicates that SMM and advertising has ability to increase sales revenue for businesses (Lockett, 2018), this finding is similar to the

indications and responses on the question of social media being responsible for enrolment decisions.

Table 4.22 indicates that the mean on the combination of social media platforms in HEIs is 3.06, the median is 3.0 while the mode is 2.0, this result shows an indication that the combination of social media platforms is effective in influencing enrolment decisions since there is a correlation between the combination of social media platforms and enrolment decisions. The results on the question of whether social media can result in an increase in student numbers indicate a mean of 3.0, a median of 3.0 and a mode of 2.0 shows positively skewed result to agree to the question that social media can increase student numbers. The result on the question of whether social media can increase student numbers links to the result of the question on the combination of social media platform. The question on the combination of social media platform has a mean of 3.0, a median of 3.0 and a mode of 2.0 showing a negative skewness to the question of social media platform combination and confirming the findings in Table 4.7 where 98 respondents out of 321 indicated that Facebook was the most common social media platform. The findings on the negative skewness of the data and the relationships on the variables is confirmed by a normality test and a correlation analysis in the next two sections.

#### 4.11.2 Normality test

Normality tests are a measure of the ability to detect whether a sample forms a non-normal distribution or a normal distribution (Ghasemi & Zahedias, 2012). This test conducted on the data in this thesis proves that the distribution obtained in the summary of central tendency measure skewed positively and that the distribution is a non-normal distribution. The test carried out for the normality test uses descriptive statistics explore functions in SPSS with normality plots with tests. The focus of this test is on the normal QQ plot to determine whether the data is non-normal distributive or normal distribution and then analyze skewness and Kurtosis to confirm the test.

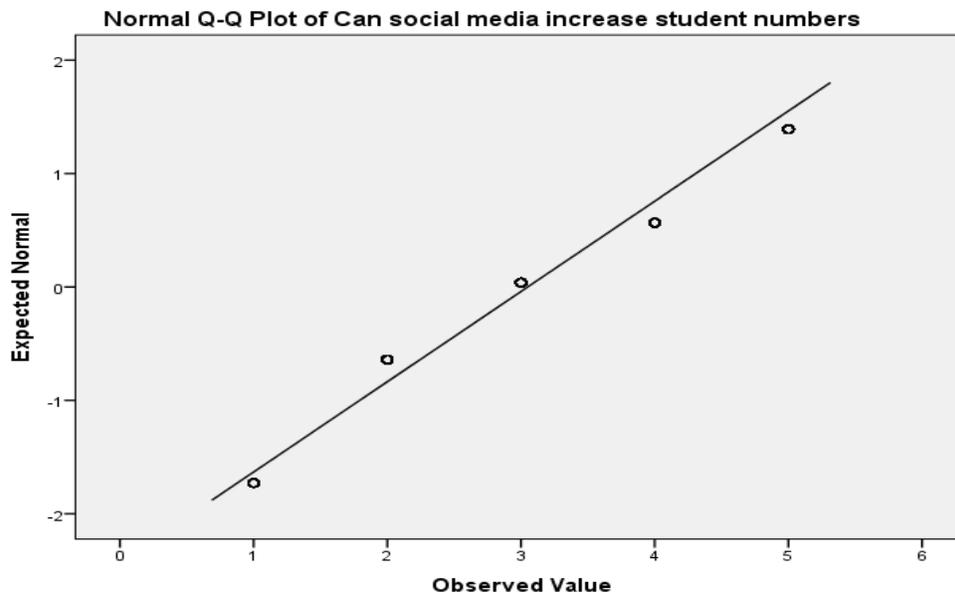


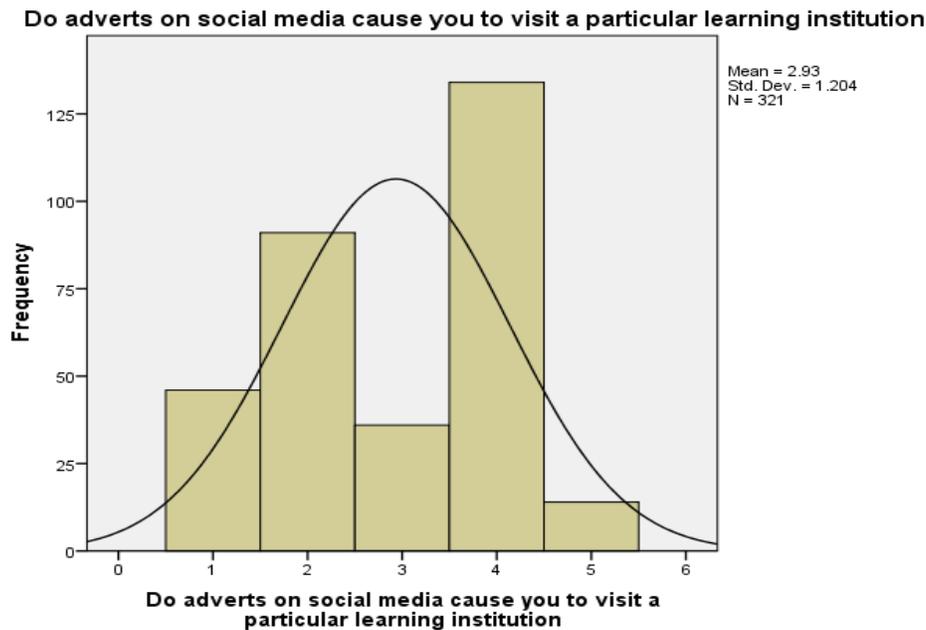
Figure 4.16: Normal QQ plot for central measure of tendency summaries

The QQ plot in Figure 4.16 shows that the dots on the graph distributed away from the linear line and this indicates that the data distribution is a non-normal distribution (Urdan, 2018). The evidence in the normal QQ plot empirically supported by the information in Table 4.26 below, which shows values for skewness and Kurtosis.

<b>Table 4.23: Evidence of skewness and Kurtosis</b>						
<b>Statistics</b>						
		Social media platforms are helpful in making enrolment decisions	Do adverts on social media cause you to visit a particular learning institution	Social media may not be responsible for your decisions to enroll in particular courses at your institution	Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution	Can social media increase student numbers
N	Valid	321	321	321	321	321
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Skewness		-.263	-.220	.047	.033	.153
Std. Error of Skewness		.136	.136	.136	.136	.136
Kurtosis		-1.266	-1.297	-1.319	-1.337	-1.220
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.271	.271	.271	.271	.271

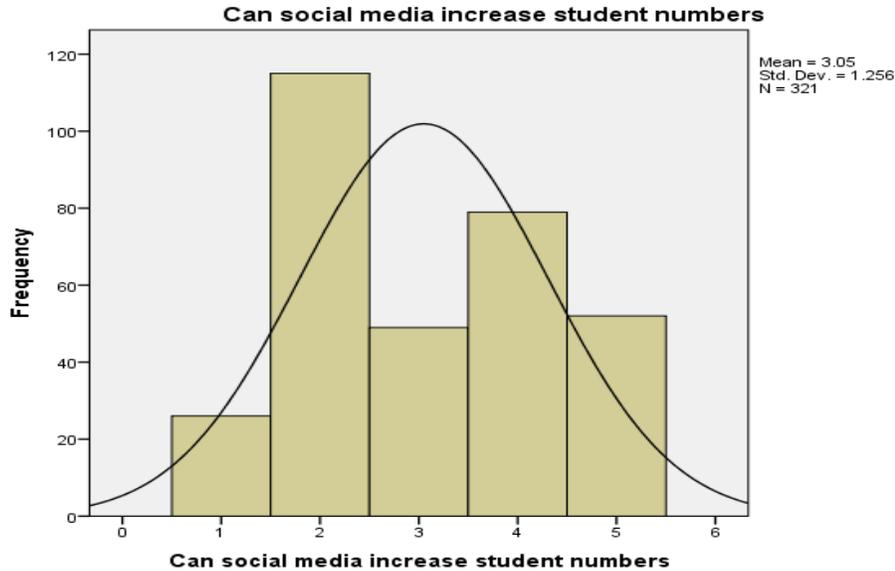
Skewness is a measure of the symmetry of a distribution and determines whether the data has a normal distribution or non-normal distribution (Doane & Seward, 2011). The skewness for the question of can social media increase student number is 0.153 implying that it is more than 0 and therefore is positively skewed. The skewness on the question of social media not being responsible for enrolment decisions is 0.47 and this is greater than 0 and therefore it is also positively skewed and this is the same for the question on the combination of social media that are mostly used in the respondents' learning institutions. The findings in the normality test show that only two questions had a skewness of less than 0 and while the other two had values greater than 0 and this means that the data is negatively skewed.

The question of whether social media adverts causes respondents to visit particular learning institution has a skewness of -2, observing the skewness of the data, distribution is close to normal but has a negative skewness when observed on a distribution curve as shown in Figure 4.17.



**FIGURE 4.17: SKEWNESS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTS**

The findings on this question confirms the findings in Table 4.14 where respondents stated that that social media adverts cause them to visit particular learning institutions. This finding is similar to the findings in a research conducted by Wright and others who discovered that social media advertising has a lasting effect on customer impression of goods and services, customers who view social media adverts are more likely to visit a business premises (Wright *et al.*, 2010). The finding is also similar to a study conducted in the United Arab Emirates where social media in their private universities was responsible for increasing student numbers (Vukic & Vukić, 2019).



**FIGURE 4.18: SKEWNESS ON THE QUESTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA CAN INCREASE STUDENT NUMBERS**

Figure 4.18 shows that on the question of whether social media can increase student numbers, the distribution curve appears almost normally distributed with a leptokurtic result since respondents stated that they strongly disagreed that social media can increase student numbers. From analysis the curve is negatively skewed. The findings in this question brings out interesting findings, especially that 89 respondents out of 321 agreed that their institution's social media platforms are effective in providing information. The responses also in the question of whether their social media page for their institution was well designed and was easy to use had 70 responses out of 321 stating that they strongly agreed while 63 strongly disagreed. The design of the social media pages is highly critical in attracting numbers or stickness to the site, to improve designs HEIs should adopt the concept of dynamic page designs in order to achieve a higher hit rate.

#### 4.11.2.1 Correlation Coefficient results

**TABLE 4.24: CORRELATION BETWEEN DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**

Correlations						
		Social media may not be responsible for your decisions to enrol in particular courses at your institution	Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution	Can social media increase student numbers	Social media platforms are helpful in making enrolment decisions	Do adverts on social media cause you to visit a particular learning institution
Social media may not be responsible for your decisions to enrol in particular courses at your institution	Pearson Correlation	1	.907**	.853**	.812**	.823**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	321	321	321	321	321
Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution	Pearson Correlation	.907**	1	.863**	.818**	.855**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	321	321	321	321	321
Can social media increase student numbers	Pearson Correlation	.853**	.863**	1	.831**	.816**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	321	321	321	321	321
Social media platforms are helpful in making enrolment decisions	Pearson Correlation	.812**	.818**	.831**	1	.927**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	321	321	321	321	321
Do adverts on social media cause you to visit a particular learning institution	Pearson Correlation	.823**	.855**	.816**	.927**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	321	321	321	321	321

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

Correlation is the measure of an association between variables, such that change in the magnitude of one variable results in the change of another (Schober *et al.*, 2018). According to Pearson correlation, which is the most widely used correlation a negative linear relationship means that an increase in one variable means a decrease in the other (Sunil & Ilyoung, 2018). Pearson correlation use the rule of thumb, implying that if the correlation or relationship (r) between variables is in the range 0.00 to 0.10, then the relationship (r) is negligible. When the correlation between variables is 0.10 to 0.39, the relationship is weak, the relationship is moderate when the r is 0.40 to 0.69 and when it is between 0.70 to 0.89 it is strong. The correlation is very strong when r is 0.90 to 1.00 or above.

Table 4.24 shows that there is a linear relationship between the independent variable social media increasing student numbers and its dependent variables social media not being responsible for enrolment decisions, combinations of social media platforms, social media platforms are helpful in enrolment decisions and social media adverts causing the respondents to visit particular learning institutions.

Table 4.24 shows that the relationships between the independent variable and the dependent variables are very strong since they are above 0.90. The dependent variable in Table 4.24 is marketing performance and this is the question ‘can social media increase student numbers. The correlation that is important to the findings in Table 4.24 is on the question of can social media increase student numbers (Dependent variable) against the other questions (Independent variable). To analyses the correlations between the dependent variable and the independent variable, the questions coded in Table 4.25 below are useful in correlations to determine the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables.

<b>Table 4.25: Coding questions for correlation</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Variable description</b>
Social media may not be responsible for your decisions to enrol in particular courses at your institution	SMNRED	Independent
Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution	CSMPMUI	Independent
Social media platforms are helpful in making enrolment decisions	SMPHMED	Independent
Do adverts on social media cause you to visit a particular learning institution	DAOSMCV	Independent
Can social media increase student numbers	CSMISN	Dependent

The codes in Table 4.25 above shows the coded questions from correlations in Table 4.23 and then Table 4.26 below shows the coded questions and analysis the correlations

<b>Table 4.26: Correlations between dependent and independent variables</b>				
	SMNRED	CSMPMUI	SMPHMED	DAOSMCV
CSMISN	.853***	.863***	.831***	.816***

According to Professor Krishanan, a correlation is positive when the values of the two variables move in the same direction such that an increase in one variable cause and increase in the other variable or a decrease in the value of one causes a decrease in the other (Chalil, 2020). Correlation is negative when the values of the two variables move in the opposite direction such that an increase in the other causes a decrease in the other. The correlation in Table 4.26 indicate a strong positive correlation since they are above 0.7 as the value of R and this confirms the findings in the question of social media adverts in Table 4.10 where 134 respondents out of 321 indicated that they strongly agree that adverts on social media causes them to visit particular learning institutions. A relationship between two variables that is more than 0.75 is a very strong positive relationship (Schober *et al.*, 2018). In Table 4.19, respondents indicated that they strongly disagreed that social media was not responsible for their enrolment decisions. Out of 321 respondents 90 implied that social media in actual fact was responsible for their enrolment decisions and this compared to the question of whether adverts cause them to visit a particular learning institution, the relationship is 0.823 as shown in Table 4.25 and this indicates a positive strong relationship between these two variables

#### **4.11.2.2 Regression Analysis**

Regression analysis is a reliable method of identifying variables in a given research that have impacted on the variable of interest, the method was necessary in this study in order to uncover the associations between variables (Jaccard, 2003). Regression analysis is a blanket name for a family analysis technique that is used to determine relationships between variables (Lavrakas, 2008). In this instance the researcher wanted to examine the relationship between dependent variable CSMISN against the independent variables SMNRED, CSMPMUI, SMPHMED, and DAOSMCV as coded in Table 4.25. The dependent variable in this research as outlined in the conceptual framework in Figure 2.3 in Chapter Two-Literature review is social media and the independent variable is marketing performance. The variable CSMISN is the dependent variable (Social media) while the other variables SMNRED, CSMPMUI, SMPHMED, and DAOSMCV are independent variables (Marketing performance).

### 4.11.2.3 Summary results of regression analysis

**TABLE 4.27: REGRESSION ANALYSIS SUMMARY**

Model	Coefficients <sup>a</sup>											
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.391	.086		4.525	.000	.221	.561					
Do adverts on social media cause you to visit a particular learning institution	.122	.072	.117	1.700	.090	-.019	.264	.816	.095	.044	.139	7.169
Social media platforms influence your choice of learning institution	.153	.062	.161	2.480	.014	.032	.274	.809	.138	.064	.158	6.332
Social media may not be responsible for your decisions to enrol in particular courses at your institution	.273	.058	.299	4.670	.000	.158	.388	.853	.254	.120	.162	6.188
Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution	.339	.065	.359	5.233	.000	.212	.467	.863	.282	.135	.140	7.124

a. Dependent Variable: Can social media increase student numbers

The dependent variable CSMISN is plotted against the independent variables, SMNRED, CSMPMUI, SMPHMED, and DAOSMCV as coded in Table 4.28.

$$DV = a + X1 + X2 + X3 + X4 + e$$

DV (CSMISN), a (.391), X1 (SMNRED), X2 (CSMPMUI), X3 (SMPHMED), X4 (DAOSMCV)

$$CSMISN = .391 + .273 + .339 + .153 + .122$$

The relationship between the dependent variable CSMISN and the independent variables SMNRED, CSMPMUI, SMPHMED and DAOSMCV is highly significant since all the significant values in Table 4.27 are less than 0.5; this means that the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables is linearly related. The QQ plot in Figure 4.16 shows that all the variables are on the same dotted line and this confirms that their relationship are strong. The

coefficient of all the independent variables in the summary of regression analysis are closer to one and this is a conformation that a change in one variable causes a change in the other. Regression analysis seeks to investigate the causal effect of variables upon another (Sykes, 2020), for example since adverts cause respondents to visit a particular higher learning institution, the assumption is that these respondents are likely to enroll in these institutions and ultimately student numbers will go up and sales revenue will also go up. Respondents on whether social media adverts cause them to visit particular HEIs stated in the affirmative that they do. The relationship between the independent variable ‘can social media increase student numbers’ and the combination of social media platforms is also very critical to analyze the effect of social media on marketing performance of HEIs. The findings in the linear regression analysis indicate a coefficient significance of 0.00 further agreeing with the findings in the correlation analysis of .086 representing a strong relationship between independent variable and dependent variable shown in Table 4.24.

**Table 4.28: Model summary of regression**

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.889	.791	.788	.578

A multiple regression analysis was conducted which produced the results in Table 4.28, the analysis involved dependent variable CSMISN and independent variables (SMNRED, CSMPMUI, SMPHMED, DAOSMCV). R in the analysis results was 0.889, which indicates a positive correlation between dependent CSMISN and independent variables SMNRED, CSMPMUI, SMPHMED and DAOSMCV. The results can lead to the assumption that social media increase in student numbers for HEIs. This result is similar to the findings in the literature review that showed that in South African Universities student recruitment was dependent on the effectiveness of social media (Khan, 2014). The R square in the model summary is more than 0.5 and this means that there is a strong effect between the dependent variable and the independent

variables (Figueiredo *et al.*, 2011). The results of the analysis show a strong basis for assuming that social media marketing can increase student numbers.

**TABLE 4.29: ANOVA TEST RESULTS**

<b>ANOVA</b>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	399.482	4	99.871	298.514	.000
	Residual	105.720	316	.335		
	Total	505.202	320			

b. Dependent variable: CSMISN

c. Independent variable: SMNRED, CSMPMUI, SMPHMED, DAOSMCV

Anova test is known as the analysis of variance, it splits an observed aggregate found in a data set into systematic factors and random factors (Kenton, 2021). The significance in Table 4.29 above indicate a .000 which is less than 0.05 and this means that social media can increase student numbers. The regression results show a significance of 399.482 and a df of 4 implying that the assumption that social media causes an increase in student number is highly significant. The result of the regression shows that the dependent variable CSMISN is significantly affected by shifts in the independent variables SMNRED, CSMPMUI, SMPHMED and DAOSMCV.

#### 4.11.2.4 Hypothesis testing

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution is normal with mean 3.068 and standard deviation 1.33.	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Do adverts on social media cause you to visit a particular learning institution is normal with mean 2.93 and standard deviation 1.20.	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Social media platforms influence your choice of learning institution is normal with mean 2.89 and standard deviation 1.32.	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of Social media may not be responsible for your decisions to enrol in particular courses at your institution is normal with mean 3.01 and standard deviation 1.38.	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of Can social media increase student numbers is normal with mean 3.05 and standard deviation 1.26.	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

H<sub>0</sub>: Social media cannot lead to increase in student enrolment

H<sub>1</sub>: Social Media can lead to an increase in student enrolment

**FIGURE 4.19: HYPOTHESIS TEST RESULTS**

#### **4.11.2.5 Social media leading to increased student numbers**

The Null hypothesis in Chapter one was set to assume that social media could not lead to increase in student numbers. A hypothesis test conducted brought out the results indicated in Figure 4.19 showing that the significant level was .05 and on all the questions tested using a one sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test produced a significance of .000 to mean that the test rejected the null hypothesis. The rejection of the null hypothesis means that the alternative hypothesis becomes the assumption of this research. This confirms the findings in the correlation results, which showed that the question of; can social media increase student numbers correlated with the dependent variables was above  $<0.8$  and this means that there is a relationship between social media and student result movement. The hypothesis testing results confirm the findings by Vukic who studied social media in the UAE HEIs and discovered that it had huge impact on the recruitment of students since social media captured a larger part of the student population (Vukic & Vukić, 2019). In the hypothesis testing in Figure 4.18, the significance confirms the findings in the test of variance or ANOVA test that showed significance between social media and increase in student numbers with significance of 0.00.

The findings by Vuckic indicated that sales revenue for HEIs in the United Arab Emirates increased because of incorporating social media in their marketing, this is similar to the findings in Lockett's study, which brought out the concept that the use of online marketing strategies could bring out increased sales revenue and higher marketing performance (Lockett, 2018). The findings in Lockett's studies are also similar to what respondents in this study stated in the question of whether social media can increase sales revenue in Table 4.33 below. The assumption is that there is a correlation between student numbers and sales revenue.

#### **4.11.2.6 Cross tabulation analysis-Social media platforms used in HEI and best platform for marketing HEIs**

Cross tabulation is the process or method to quantitatively analyze the relationship between multiple variables (Jalen, 2016). Cross tabulation gives opportunity to understand correlation between different variables, in this thesis it is important to understand the relationship between dependent variable 'what is the best media platform for marketing HEIs and independent variable 'which combination of social media platforms are mostly used in the respondent's institution'. Understanding this relationship is critical to achieving research objectives and to satisfy the research topic. The cross-tabulation analysis results in Table 4.33 shows that 33% of respondents indicated that Facebook and WhatsApp were the best combinations of social media platforms to market HEI, while 28% of respondents indicated that Facebook and Twitter were the best combination to market HEIs. The cross tabulation confirms the findings in Table 4.23 where Facebook & Twitter had 98 responses as the best social media platforms to market HEIs, while 96 respondents in the same analysis indicated that WhatsApp was the best social media platform to market HEIs. The cross tabulation also confirms the findings in Table 4.23 where 27.9% of respondents indicated that Facebook and WhatsApp are the most common social media platform combinations in their institution followed by Facebook and Twitter with 23.7% of responses.

**TABLE 4.30: CROSS TABULATION ANALYSIS**

			Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution					Total
			Instagram & WhatsApp	Facebook & WhatsApp	Twitter & WhatsApp	Facebook & Twitter	Facebook & Instagram	
Which is the best social media platform for marketing HEIs	Twitter	Count	21	20	0	0	0	41
		% within Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution	55.3%	18.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.8%
		% of Total	6.5%	6.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.8%
	Facebook	Count	17	81	0	0	0	98
		% within Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution	44.7%	76.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	30.5%
		% of Total	5.3%	25.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	30.5%
	LinkedIn	Count	0	5	17	19	3	44
		% within Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution	0.0%	4.7%	53.1%	21.1%	5.5%	13.7%
		% of Total	0.0%	1.6%	5.3%	5.9%	0.9%	13.7%
	WhatsApp	Count	0	0	15	64	17	96
		% within Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution	0.0%	0.0%	46.9%	71.1%	30.9%	29.9%
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	4.7%	19.9%	5.3%	29.9%
	Instagram	Count	0	0	0	7	35	42
		% within Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.8%	63.6%	13.1%
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	10.9%	13.1%
	Total	Count	38	106	32	90	55	321
		% within Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	11.8%	33.0%	10.0%	28.0%	17.1%	100.0%

The cross-tabulation analysis in Table 4.30 shows that the tabulation between the best social media platform combination to market HEIs and the most common social media platforms in HEIs for Facebook and WhatsApp had a total percentage of 33%. The analysis further shows that of Facebook and Twitter had a total percentage of 28% further conforming the earlier findings in Tables 4.30 and Table 4.21 in the descriptive analysis Tables. The contingency analysis in the Table shows that the relationship or correlation between the dependent variable and the independent variable had a similar trend of patterns in terms of the responses to the two questions with 25.5% highly similar to the earlier finding in the descriptive analysis Table.

#### 4.11.2.7 Chi square analysis to confirm the Null hypothesis

**Table 4.31: Chi square analysis**

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	492.769 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	513.944	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	258.673	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	321		

a. 5 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.09.

A chi square analysis shows that the P- value is less than the allowed standard alpha of 0.000 and is less than 0.05. The interpretation of this finding is that when  $P < 0.00$  and  $>0.05$  this means that the relationship between the best social media marketing platform to use for marketing HEIs and the most common social media platforms in HEIs. This relationship is highly important, as it will be very useful in determining the best social media platform mix for marketing HEIs. The results of the Chi-square analysis reject the null hypothesis below.

#### **Hypothesis 2**

H<sub>0</sub>: The combination of social media platforms does not lead to effective marketing of HEIs

H<sub>1</sub>: The combination Social media marketing platforms are effective in marketing HEIs in Zambia

Since  $P = 0.00$  and  $\alpha < 0.05$ , the null hypothesis H<sub>0</sub> is rejected and the alternative hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> remains.

To prove the evidence for hypothesis rejection further, the concept of the P value approach developed by Pen State Eberly College of science is useful. The concept states that if  $\alpha$  is greater than 0.1 and is less 0.0127 the hypothesis should be rejected (Penn State Elberly Collegue of Science, 2021). In the Chi square results, the P, value is 0.00, this means that the Null hypothesis falls off, and the alternative hypothesis remains.

#### **4.12 Extent to which SMM leads to higher market share in HEIs**

The quantitative data findings left a gap in the research that could only be answered by professionals managing social media in HEIs. The researcher took time to explore questions surrounding extents to which social media contributes to overall marketing of HEIs. The questions relating to revenue generation, increase in market share, return on social media investments could only be answered by professionals in HEIs managing social media. The relevance of these questions on the semi structured interview guide was to link SMM to overall marketing performance in HEIs. Responses on the interview guide were analyzed to provide further answers from the qualitative sample that were helpful in addressing **RO4**: To establish the extent to which social media marketing contributes to the overall effectiveness of marketing performance of higher education institutions in Zambia.

##### **4.12.1 Establishing the extent of social media on marketing performance**

To establish the extent to which social media contributes to the overall marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia. The question of how much HEIs spend on social media campaigns (**RQ4**) is highly linked to the question of revenue generation on social media campaigns. Respondents stated that social media generated revenue for their institutions (**R4**); this means that a comparison between their marketing costs and the revenue becomes possible. A research conducted by Uchendu listed social media among the marketing strategies that can boost student enrolment (Uchendu *et al.*, 2015). The findings by Uchendu shows that social media boots student recruitment and this proves that it has capability of increasing student numbers and the capability of increasing revenue. The findings by Uchendu though done in secondary school private institutions creates the assumption that SMM is effective in marketing HEIs as shown in the responses where the ROI for SMM is greater than the costs. The interview included a question on social media expanding market share (**RQ5**) and the responses indicated that it increased market share in most HEIs (**R5**).

**(RQ6)**, the question asked respondents to state if they had any international students enrolled in their institution because of social media campaigns. From the responses (**R6**) 87.5% indicated that they had international student's enrolled in their institutions while 12.5% stated that they did not have international students enrolled because of SMM. Social media enables local businesses to expand their market growth beyond their geographic boundaries (Kumps, 2019). The finding is indicative that SSM enable HEIs to communicate their course offerings to markets beyond

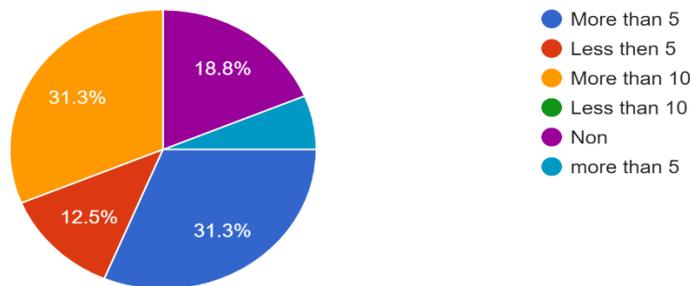
geographic boundaries. Respondents further stated that social media was responsible for increasing international student population as it allows them to increase their reach to students in international markets. One of the respondents for example responded as below;

...(R7) “Social media has increased our international student numbers to more than 10 students”  
 ...

Respondents were asked in to estimate the number of international students that had enrolled in their institution (RQ7) and the responses to this question showed that (R8) 31.3% of the 16 respondents stated that more than 10 international students had enrolled with their institutions while 18.8% indicated that they had non-international students. A further 31.3% indicated that they had more than 5 international students, 12.5% respondent that they had less than 5 international students.

If your answer to the previous question was yes, estimate the number of international students you have recruited in your Institution?

16 responses



**FIGURE 4.19: SOCIAL MEDIA INCREASING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT NUMBERS**

A study in Srilanka found that most students who enrolled in international University programs where influenced by someone on Facebook, the percentage of those influenced on social media was found to be 81% while those who were influenced by a local brand where only 19% as opposed to international influence (Quah *et al.*, 2014). The Findings in Sri Lanka gives an indication that social media has a huge impact in international student recruitment and that the findings are confirmed by previous scientific studies such as those in Sri-Lanka on international student recruitment.

#### 4.12.2 SMM and market share

Respondents were asked whether social media increases their market share (**RQ8**) and their responses indicated that social media does increase market share (**R8**), this is in exception of one respondent out of 16 who responded that they were not sure. One respondent indicated that social media increases their market share by 72% while others indicated that their market share increased by 12% and 13% respectively. Some respondents indicated that they had no tools to measure social media; an example of one particular response is below:

...(R13) *“We have no tools to measure market growth but the growth could be around 10% and 12%”* ...

...(R14) *“Our Market share has increased by 13%, as an estimate”* ...

...(R15) *“Between 10% and 15%”* ...

...(R16) *“Our market share has increased by 6%”* ...

...(R17) *“Around 13%, could be more”* ...

...(R18) *“Around 14%”* ...

...(R19) *“The information about market share is not available”* ...

ASocial media has proved to increase market share for small-scale businesses. research conducted by Malesev involving small-scale companies in the construction sector found that most companies were able to expand their market share by at least more than 25% (Malesev & Cherry, 2021). The findings suggest that social media can increase market share. The analysis from responses indicates

that market share for HEIs that integrated social media in their marketing were able to grow their market share.

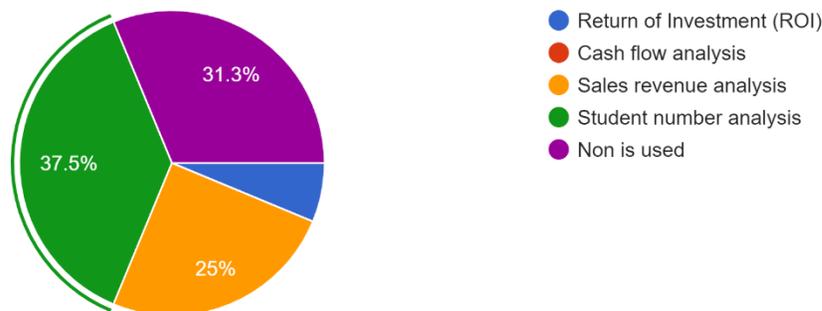
Other respondents on this question stated that social media increased their market share and that they had the means to measure this using the number of students enrolled from international markets.

#### 4.12.3 Returns on marketing investment

What does your institution use to measure return on investment?

What tools if any does your institution use to estimate return on investments for social media platforms?

16 responses



**FIGURE 4.20: MEASURES OF RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

This thematic area focuses on the findings on HEIs regarding whether they are able to get any returns on SMM in order to provide responses to the research question **Q4: Can social media contribute to marketing higher learning institutions?**

#### 4.12.4 HEIs and Returns on SMM

Return on marketing investment (ROI) is an important component in evaluating the effectiveness of marketing tools including social media platforms. Measuring marketing investment has become a critical aspect in management, particularly because of increasing costs and competition (Mishra & Mishra, 2011). The relevance of this to this research is that if HEIs invest in SMM, they must

get a return out of it. The return is what determines whether the social media platforms will impact marketing performance or not. This aspect of the result was not possible to study from the quantitative sample hence the responses from the marketing professionals working in HEIs provides the data for analyzing ROI for SMM.

Respondents in were asked to estimate the amount of revenue their institutions generated from SMM (**RQ9**), two responses that where critical to this research were:

...(R20) *“More than ZMK 78, 000”* ...

...(R21) ... *“Not sure as we do not have the means to track this”* ...

...(R22) *“We have huge returns maybe around 1 million kwacha”* ...

...(R23) *“Around 14,000 Kwacha, maybe more I am not sure”*

...(R24) *“We make around 105, 000, it is a good return”*

...(R25) *“We don’t have a system to measure how much we are making”* ...

The responses indicate that there is ability to raise revenue from SMM and it further shows that some HEIs have not put in place systems to measure their returns on SMM investments (**R25**). Gilfoil and Jobs (2012) argue that there is no clear measure of returns on SMM and therefore companies must use ROI to estimate the values. The effectiveness of SMM on marketing performance in HEIs considers revenue against costs.

The lowest amount of revenue estimated on the responses to this question was ZMW15,000 while the highest response was one million Kwacha. Marketing metrics calculates return on marketing investments as sales growth – marketing costs. Sales Growth is therefore **SG**, **Marketing Cost is MC**, and return on marketing investment is simply **ROI** (Andrew, 2020). The formula for calculating ROI is therefore as below:

$$\text{ROI} = \text{Sales Growth} - \text{Marketing Cost}$$

This formula is important in the research findings as it allows an analysis of what HEIs spend on social media campaigns and how much returns they got, and they will enable computing of responses using the formula on ROI as suggested by Andrew.

Respondents were asked to state their annual budgets for SMM (**RQ10**) and some of the responses were as below:

...(R26) *“Not aware”* ...

...(R27) *“We don’t have a budget we use free media”* ...

...(R28) *“Less than 500”*

...(R29) *“100,000, though it is not sufficient”* ...

... (R30) *“Less than 1000 kwacha and it is not enough”*

The responses indicate that the lowest budget in HEIs is ZMW500 while the highest budget allocation is ZMW100,000 (**R29**). Two respondents out of all the 16 responses collected indicated that they had no budget for social media marketing. The responses show that 98% of the respondents had a budget for SMM. From the responses it means that ROI can be calculated and conclusions drawn as to whether SMM has an effect on marketing performance in HEIs. Hoffman and Fodor (2010) in their research found that most institutions are struggling to measure investments in SMM since largely the measure is from the customer’s investment and not on the firm’s investment and that reach is still the highest level of quaint for social media performance. The findings by Hoffman and Fodor implies that a model for measuring ROI for SMM is necessary and this is part of the interest for this particular research.

#### 4.12.5 HEIs and SMM plans

Respondents were asked if their institution developed an annual SMM plan in their strategic marketing plan (RQ11). The responses indicate that 62.5% of the 16 respondents said that their HEI developed an annual SMM plan, while 37.5% stated that they did not develop any SMM plan (R27). SMM provides opportunity to exploit international markets (Simona, 2017). Respondents on the question of whether social media marketing increased international students in their institution is highly linked to the development of strategic social media marketing plans. Social media has the ability to expose institutions to these markets. Responses in the question of whether HEIs developed marketing plans show that 37.5% did not develop plans and this could have an impact on the low numbers of international students in their institutions.

Does your institution develop an annual social media marketing plan that is incorporated into the strategic marketing plan?

16 responses

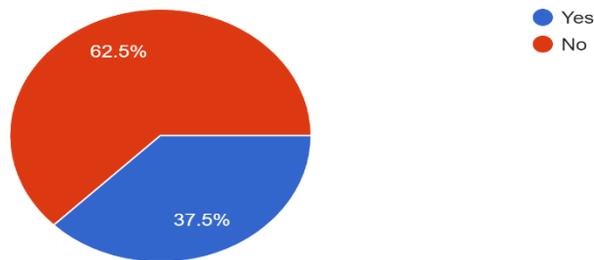


FIGURE 4.21: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLANS FOR HEIS

Respondents were asked what SMM strategies they used (**RQ12**) and some of the responses are below:

...(R31) *“We use a combination of SEO and also Google Ads” ...*

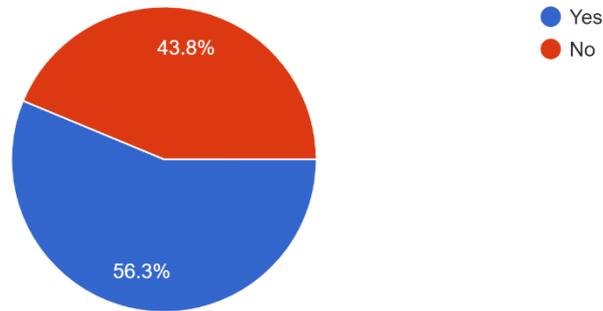
...(R32) *“We use Google ads and also use Facebook to monitor likes” ...*

...(R33) *“We use Google ads and also use Facebook to monitor likes”*

...(R34) *“Not sure” ...*

From the responses, it appears most HEIs have put in place a set of social media tools that they are using to conduct their social media activities, and this is part of their overall strategic marketing plans. SMM strategies are becoming an important aspect in a firm’s marketing strategies (Li *et al.*, 2021). The responses in the question of which social media strategies respondents were using in their HEIs show that marketing professionals have put in place SMM strategies.

Does your institution have a means of monitoring or tracking activities on social media platforms?  
16 responses



**FIGURE 4.22: MONITORING SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES**

Figure 4.26 shows that 56.3% respondents stated that they had a means of monitoring social media activities while 43.8% indicated that they did not have the means to monitor social media. The results of the analysis indicate that most HEIs have already put in place a means of monitoring social media. This confirms some of the responses such as **R31**, **R32** and **R33**; it also means that if HEIs can monitor social media activities then they can collect information on revenue generation on their social media platforms and then use this to calculate ROI.

#### **4.12.6 Social media generating revenue for HEIs**

Findings (**R4**) show that 98.7% of respondents stated that social media generates revenue for their institutions while 1.9% stated that they were not sure.

Respondents indicated that social media is able to increase revenue for their institutions when asked to estimate the amount of revenue that they generate from their social media platforms (**RQ4**). Response on this question (**R4**), (**R5**) and (**R6**) showed that only four respondents indicated that they were not sure if their institution generated any revenue from their SMM. Respondents were asked to estimate the amount of revenue generated from SMM and some of the responses are as below;

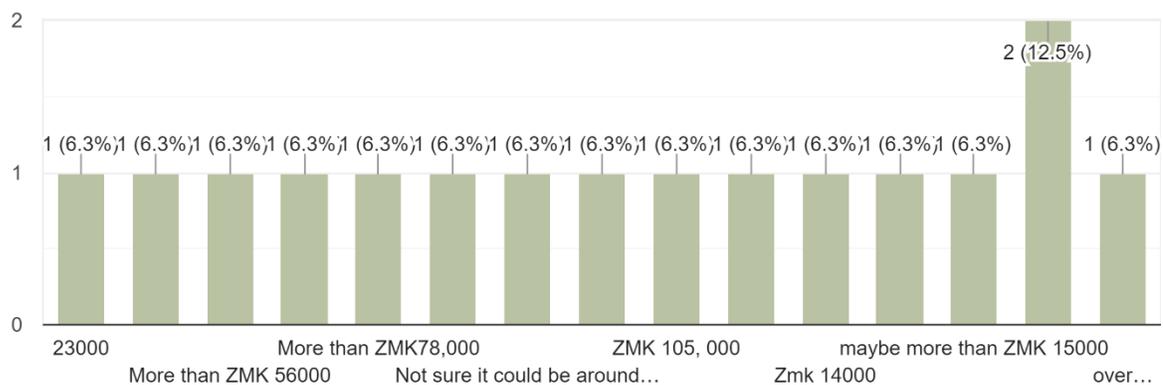
*...(R4) “We generate almost one million kwacha from SMM activities, social media provides us with a chance to increase our revenue” ....*

*...(R5) “We are able to rise between 14000 kwacha and 30,000 per semester” ...*

*...(R6) “Maybe more than ZMK15,000 but we are able to generate revenue off our social media platforms” ...*

On estimate what is the amount of annual revenue generated from social media platforms in relation to student recruitment? (Estimate in Zambian Kwacha)

16 responses



**FIGURE 4.23: SOCIAL MEDIA GENERATING REVENUE**

Figure 4.23 shows the different responses on the question of HEIs raising revenue from their social media platforms and indicates that the majority of responses stated that social media can generate revenue for HEIs.

The responses show that HEIs are able to generate revenue from their social media platforms, one out of 16 respondents indicated that they had no means to measure revenue generated from SMM activities though they suspected it generated revenue. The interpretation of the findings leads to the assumption that social media has huge ability to increase revenue for HEIs. Findings in a research at Columbia University reveal that their SMM activities increased their revenue by 17% (Aman & Hussin, 2018); this finding is highly similar to the findings in this research.

#### **4.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This Chapter presented the findings from the results of the data analysis from two samples proposed in the research methodology section-Chapter three. The data findings were presented in four themes and analyzed separately from each sample, the quantitative sample and the qualitative sample. The data findings in this Chapter suggested that social media has an effect on the marketing performance and this now requires a comparison of the findings from the quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis following the triangulation methods suggested in the methodology section.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This Chapter brings out discussions of the data findings after analyzing the data from the responses on the structured questionnaire and the semi structured interview guide on the effectiveness of social media marketing on the marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia. This Chapter includes discussions that have allowed for the revision of the conceptual framework and the development of a SMM framework for HEIs. The Chapter draws conclusions from the key research findings in Chapter Four and uses these to sum up conclusions relating to the research objectives. (Aalto University, 2013).

### **5.2 Common social media platforms in HEIs**

Social media platforms have become the new media in marketing and their use in HEIs for marketing purposes has become highly prominent. From the literature review in Chapter Two empirical studies at the University of Columbia indicate that they have increased their market share by more than 12% as a result of SSM (Singhal, 2019). The findings by Singhal confirm the effectiveness of SMM on the marketing of HEIs at Columbia University in the USA. The findings in the research by Singhal brought out social media platforms that are utilized to achieve a higher marketing performance. The University has created Facebook profiles that allow students and University administrators to interact. The common platforms at Columbia University are Twitter and Facebook. The findings in this research in Figure 4.11 in Chapter four show that the most common social media platforms in HEIs in Zambia are Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. This means that for any HEI that wants to maximize social media for marketing purposes, Facebook must be included in their social media strategy. From the findings in Figure 4.9 in Chapter Four, 73.9% of the sample indicated that they were signed up on Facebook and 84.3% on WhatsApp, making these the most popular platforms in HEIs in Zambia. HEIs should create a social media mix that is effective and will deliver the desired marketing performance. Basing on the findings, the SMM mix for HEIs in Zambia should then look like the one in Figure 5.1.



**FIGURE 5.1: SOCIAL MEDIA MIX**

A PhD study by Bukowa (2019) at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal investigated how teenagers experience social media in Lusaka. The findings brought out Facebook as the most commonly used social media platforms by teenagers, followed by WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram. The findings by Bukowa confirm the findings in this research in terms of the most common social media platforms in HEIs. In this research in Table 4.4 in Chapter Four, the findings are that 56.4% of the respondents were between the age ranges of 16-25 and these were the majority of the enrolled students in HEIs from the sample. The 56.4% was the highest age bracket indicating that the teenage age was highly represented in this age bracket and also confirms the findings by Bukowa. The first research objective i.e. **RO1**: To Identify the SMM platforms that are used in HEIs in the Zambia, has been addressed in this research by identifying Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter as the most common social media platforms in HEIs.

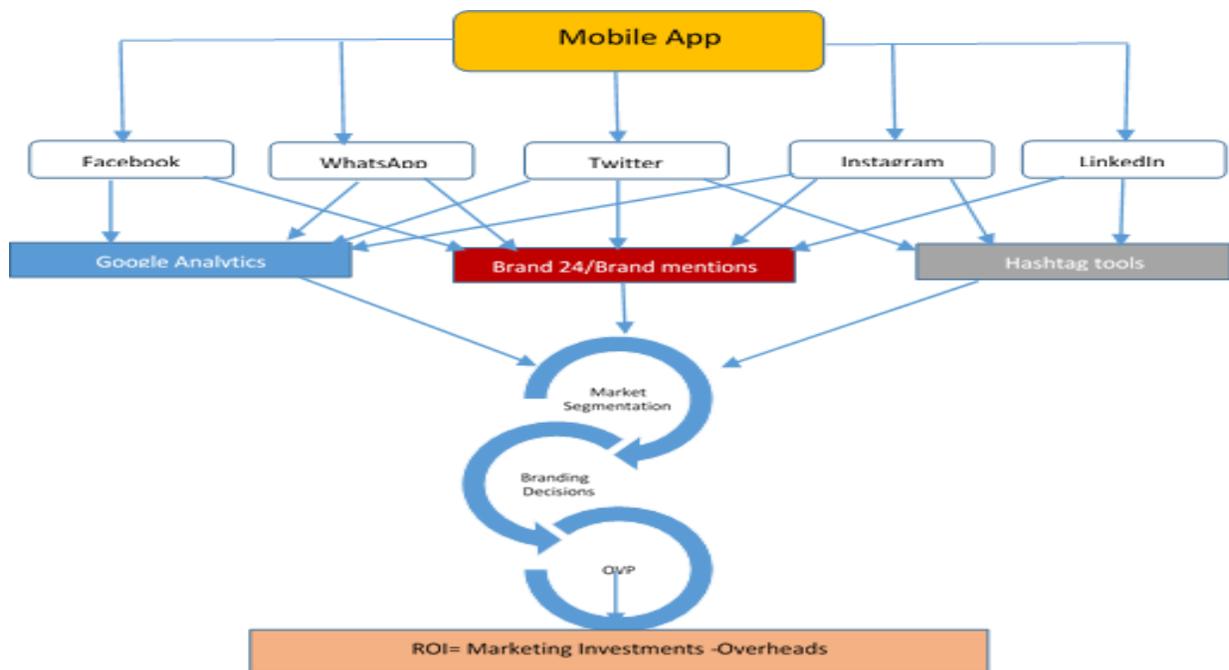
In this research 96% of the respondents from the quantitative data sample indicated that their institution used social media and 73.9% of the respondents indicated that they were signed up for Facebook. A further 84.3% of the respondents indicated that they were signed up for WhatsApp, with 25.8% indicating that they were signed up for Twitter. This confirms that the best social media mix for HEIs to market their programs is a combination of Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. A report reviewed in Chapter Two of this study - the Literature Review, indicates that the United Nations stated that Facebook is the most popular social media platform in Africa (Essoungou, 2020). The findings in the research by the United Nations supports the findings of this research especially that 73.9% of total respondents indicated that they were signed up for Facebook. The literature review further indicated that in East Africa 71% of all internet users are Facebook users (Langat, 2013). The findings from the interviews issued in the qualitative data samples indicate that Facebook and twitter are used effectively by most HEIs, in actual fact the findings show that 98.8% of HEI use Facebook for their marketing while 43.8% submitted that they use WhatsApp

with 18.8% stating that they use Twitter. These findings from the qualitative data confirms that Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp are the most common social media platforms for marketing HEIs in Zambia.

In Zambia there was no previous study that brought out the most common social media platforms in HEIs and therefore, the findings in this research have brought out this contribution to the body of knowledge. Understanding the most common social media platforms signed up by students in HEIs has resulted into the development of a model for marketing HEIs in Zambia presented in Figure 5.2 below.

### 5.2.1 A model for SMM in HEIs

The identification of the common social media marketing platforms in HEIs directly results in the design of a SMM model for HEIs and also results in addressing **RO3**: To determine the best combination of social media platforms that enhance effectiveness of social media marketing in higher education institutions in Zambia. Social media is becoming crucial in the marketing process in different fields; this is why building theoretical models for SMM allows effective conceptualization and discovery of new opportunities (Pan & Crotts, 2012). The research findings show that most of the respondents managing social media in HEIs have implemented some form of tools for monitoring social media but do not have a model or integrated approach to managing social media. Integrated social media in marketing practice is not a wide phenomenon yet, especially in HEIs (Irsa & Pisarava, 2012). Figure 5.2 shows the conceptualized theoretical model for SMM in HEIs in Zambia, developed from the findings of this research.



**FIGURE 5.2: MODEL FOR SMM IN HEIs IN ZAMBIA**

The model in Figure 5.2 shows an integrated method to managing social media in HEIs. The social media platforms included are the outcome of the responses in the research in the order of popularity suggested by the sample. From the responses in Figure 4.21, 37.5% respondents stated that their

institution develops a plan while 62.5% indicated that they do not. The implications of the findings from the semi structured interview is that most HEIs do not have a model for SMM and therefore, the proposed model in Figure 5.2 becomes highly applicable in their institutions. Few firms across sectors have modeled their social media strategies (Li *et al.*, 2021); this was clear in the findings of this research and it also means that HEIs in Zambia are not maximizing SMM. The engagement for social media pages in HEIs is very low as Table 5.1 below shows the top 5 engagement rates on Facebook compiled for 2021 by UniRank with the highest social media engagement rate being only 214,307 by University of Lusaka (UniRank, 2021)

<b>Table 5.1: Statistics on social media engagement in HEIs in Zambia</b>	
<b>HEI</b>	<b>Number of likes on Facebook</b>
University of Lusaka	214,307
Cavendish University	130, 480
University of Zambia	76,805
Chreso University	46,585
Rusangu University	46,361

The statistics in Table 5.1 shows that HEIs require a more collaborated and integrated approach to SMM and perhaps the use of Models and influencers on the social media pages. The information in Table 5.1 confirms the responses in Chapter Four where 50% of respondents indicated that the number of likes on their social media pages is more than 1,000 and 31.3% indicated that the number of likes were less than 1,000. The engagement on HEIs Facebook page is very low compared to Facebook pages of individuals such as Mutale Mwanza who has more than 1.2 million likes (Facebook, 2021). The interpretation is that HEIs need to develop models for social media marketing and use influencers and effective monitoring tools for them to increase the reach, the lead, the conversion and the engagement.

### 5.3 Social Media and Student numbers

Table 5.2: Triangulation on social media increasing student numbers			
Research question/Objective	Quantitative Finding	Qualitative Findings	Literature Review findings
1. Q2: Does social media marketing lead to increase in student recruitment at selected HEIs in Zambia?	<b>Chapter Four Table 4.9:</b> 52.1% of respondents indicated that social media can increase student numbers while 32.9% indicated that social media cannot.	<b>Chapter Four R1 (PG 117)</b> “Social media platforms have improved our student numbers especially during enrolment periods and are therefore effective”	University of Western Australia has increased its international student numbers by 3% (Collyer, 2019). Columbia University in the USA has also increased student numbers by 61% (Singhal, 2019).
2. Q16 Section E on structured questionnaire: Can social media increase revenue for HEIs?	<b>Chapter Four Table 4.14:</b> 42.1% of the respondents stated that that social media can increase revenue in HEIs while 44.8% indicated that it cannot.	<b>Chapter Four R2 (PG 150):</b> “We generate almost one million Kwacha from SMM activities, social media provides us with a chance to increase our revenue”	Researchers at Aalto University, the University at Buffalo, and Texas A&M University have proven a link between customers' use of social media and higher revenue (Aalto University, 2013).

The findings on the two samples, the quantitative sample and the qualitative samples, provided in Chapter Four indicated differences in the responses but the literature review cited in Table 5.2 supports the qualitative findings. The theme on social media increasing student numbers is one that would not have been studied only from the enrolled students' sample but needed to be studied from marketing personal managing social media in HEIs. Table 5.2 shows the findings related to Q2: Does social media marketing lead to increase in student recruitment at selected HEIs in Zambia? The findings on Q2 also asserts the rejected research hypothesis made in this research

that social media cannot lead to increase in student numbers. The findings in the literature review from studies by other researchers integrate the quantitative and the qualitative research findings. Table 5.2 shows triangulation between social media and increasing student numbers.

The findings at Alto University at Buffalo are an indication that when HEIs in Zambia implement the SMM model developed in this research and shown in Figure 5.2, they are likely going to improve revenue for their institutions. According to Anderson (2019), social media creates more opportunities for learning institutions especially when they use centralized web applications such as mobile Apps. The literature review in Chapter Two of this research showed that in Zambia studies carried out were mainly on the use of social media in HEIs for learning purposes; this research has added to the body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence that SMM can increase both student numbers and revenue in HEIs.

### **5.3.1 Adverts and information influence student numbers**

The findings in Chapter Four Table 4.10 show that 45.1% of respondents stated that adverts on social media influence them to visit a learning institution, while 42.6% were not of that view. Adverts on social media are very effective especially through the use of influencers. Influencers play a huge role in driving a brand message and reaching a higher target market (Jarrar *et al.*, 2020), in addition they guarantee product/service quality. This means that if HEIs place their adverts with the intended target and with the correct promotional mix, they can cause prospects to visit their institutions and possibly apply for enrolment in that institution and this in turn increases student numbers.

Information is highly critical in enrolment decisions and also on social media adverts as this causes prospecting students to become more decisive in their enrollment decisions. In the research findings in Table 4.12 in Chapter Four, 42% of respondents stated that that their institution's social media pages provided them with sufficient information, while 43.6% were of the view that their institution's social media page did not provide them with sufficient information. According to research, content is more significant in social media advertising than the levels of engagement (Nur *et al.*, 2016). The interpretation in the research or findings by Nur *et al* is that social media content becomes critical in influencing buyers of products and services and this is the same for HEIs.

In Chapter Four Table 4.11 respondents were asked if social media influences their choice of learning institution and the responses resulted in 42.4% stating that it did while 44.3% stated that it did not. The conclusions on this finding is that social media can only influence choice of learning institution if it is well designed and has adequate information. This is supported by findings by Chivandi *et al.* (2018) and others who state that social media creates strong brand awareness and influences consumer preferences as long as design and content are done correctly. The findings in this research becomes very clear that social media plays a huge role in in marketing of HEIs and this means that HEIs need to develop social media strategies that gives their institutions an online competitive advantage.

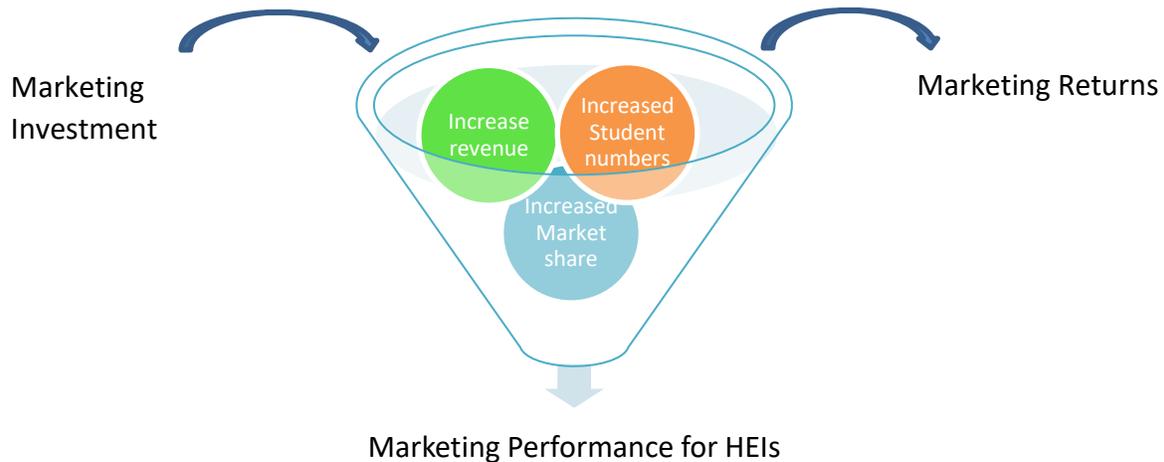
In a research conducted to investigate the impact of social media on consumer behavior, 60% of the respondents indicated that social media is the new word of mouth (Gupta & Chahat , 2020). Word of mouth in marketing is regarded as the most influential marketing tool and if social media is regarded to have the same marketing impact then it is highly effective (Supratim & Rajan, 2017). Social media has been found in this research and other research to be highly influential in consumer choices and therefore is a powerful tool in generating student numbers.

### **5.3.2 Contribution of social media marketing to overall marketing performance**

**Q4:** To what extent does social media marketing contribute to the overall effectiveness of marketing performance of higher education institutions in Zambia? The findings in Chapter Four address **RO4**. The responses from the qualitative findings show that social media is able to generate revenue for HEIs and also increases student numbers, this means that it has an overall effect on marketing performance.

The conceptual framework in Figure 2.3 of Chapter Two indicated that high marketing performance is measured by three factors: Increased student numbers, increased revenue and increased market share. These measures of marketing performance are supported by O’Sullivan and Abela (2007) who reported in their research findings that the main measures of marketing performance most justifiable to boards are revenue increase, market share increase and customer base.

Figure 5.3 is an illustration of measures of marketing performance as indicated on the conceptual framework in Chapter Two. The researcher suggests the marketing performance funnel model in Figure 5.3 as a new concept or model to measuring marketing performance in HEIs in relation to SMM.



**FIGURE 5.3: MEASURES OF MARKETING PERFORMANCE FOR HEIS IN ZAMBIA**

Findings in this research further show that respondents indicated that social media increases market share for HEIs; the highest response on this question from the structured interview indicated that some HEIs had increased their market share by 75% while the lowest showed that their market share had increased by 3%. From the findings the conclusion on **Q4** and **RQ4** is that social media has a positive effect on the overall marketing performance on HEIs. The overall marketing performance can also be measured by looking at the returns on SMM activities. Measures of returns on marketing investment is an increasing need for marketing performance measurement (Thaker, 2009). In response to **RQ4** in Table 4.17 Chapter Four, respondents were asked if social media has an overall effect on marketing HEIs; the responses show that 46.1% indicated that they it does while 43.9% stated that it did not. From the responses in the question of effectiveness of social media on overall marketing of HEIs, the data was strongly skewed towards social media having an overall effect on marketing performance of HEIs.

**RO4:** To establish the extent to which social media contributes to the overall marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia. The findings in this research have sufficiently addressed this objective particularly that there is an inclusion of a model for measuring ROI for SMM. From the

qualitative sample outcomes respondents indicated that they had some form of framework for measuring SMM performance but most of them were not sure if they had a means of calculating ROI.

Hoffman & Fodor suggest four main metrics for measuring ROI for SMM and these are social media application, brand awareness, brand engagement and word of mouth (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). The model by Hoffman & Fodor is highly similar to the suggested model in this research except that in Hoffman & Fodor the model is not specific to HEIs and also seems to mix SMM metric tools with traditional marketing tools.

The conclusion of **RO4**, is that social media contributes to the overall marketing performance since it is able to give ROI to HEIs and also that using the proposed models and tools in this research it is possible to measure the returns. Wiltshire in his research brought out the digital marketing metrics tactics to answer his research questions and in this framework he had well defined KPI and tactics for web analytics (Wiltshire, 2017). The framework by Wiltshire brings in KPIs for web analysts and emphasizes the need for performance measurements, which have been brought out in this research as a way to measure the contribution of SMM to overall marketing of HEIs in Zambia.

#### **5.4 Social media increasing market share**

Market share is defined as a firm's percentage of an industry's total sales (Porter, 2019). Market share is calculated by dividing a company's sales revenue by the total industry revenue. Market share is a determinant of market performance and becomes an important component in this study. The findings in Chapter 4 of this research indicated that social media increases market share in HEIs. Respondents from the qualitative sample in Chapter Four show that in some HEIs social media increased market share by 72% annually, while others indicated that social media increased their market share by 13% and 12% respectively. This finding provides responses to **RO2**: To investigate the extent to which social media marketing leads to higher student recruitment and market share in HEIs in Zambia. Responses from the qualitative sample show that social media increases market share to an extent of 72%, 12% and 13% in some HEIs.

The findings in the literature review in Chapter two revealed that social media has high customer engagement (Appel *et al.*, 2019). Findings also in the quantitative data showed that social media

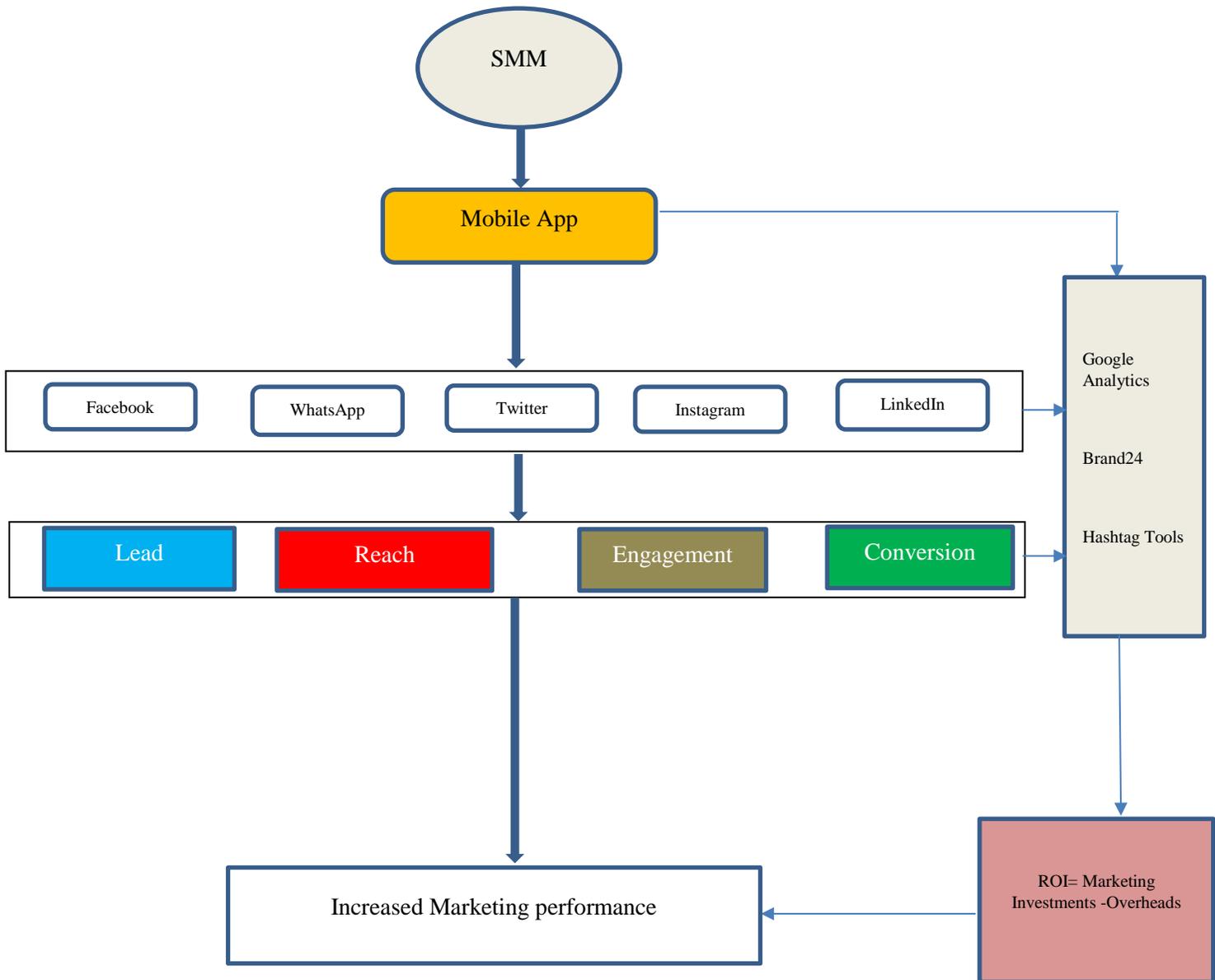
influenced enrolment decisions and this means that it leads to high sales revenue. The findings in the literature review, the qualitative data and the quantitative data show findings that lead to a conclusion that social media increases market share in HEIs.

### **5.5 Return on marketing investments**

The need for marketing accountability is becoming increasingly relevant and has forced companies to develop metrics and measures of marketing performance (Farris *et al.*, 2015). Respondents from the structured interview indicated that they have a budget for SMM; the findings in Chapter Four show 98% of HEIs with a budget for SMM. Further findings show that HEIs are able to generate revenue from SMM and the conclusion is that they can use marketing metrics to calculate ROI for marketing. The literature review in Chapter Two shows the relevance of measuring marketing returns. Farris *et al.* (2015), for example, emphasizes the importance of measuring returns on investments as a way to justify marketing performance. The funnel model in Figure 5.3 shows investment as the input for marketing performance and marketing return as the output. To measure return on SMM investment HEIs must put in place tools such as Google Analytics, Brand24 and other relevant tools that assist them to analyse the performance of SMM activities on their social media platforms.

The formula,  $ROI = SG - MC$  becomes relevant in the process of measuring marketing returns for HEIs. An effective SMM strategy must include ROI so that investment in SMM can be justified. Measuring marketing investment must be part and parcel of a marketing control system which is one of the guarantors for marketing activities in each section of marketing investment (Hadrian *et al.*, 2021). Findings in Chapter Four show that HEIs have annual budgets for SMM but most of them do not have means or models to measure returns on SMM investments. The best model to use is Andrew's metrics which measures returns on marketing investments by deducting Marketing Costs (MC) from Sales Growth (SG) (Andrew, 2020). The introduction of a SMM app that has tools for measuring marketing performance and calculating ROI for marketing is another practical way of implementing effectiveness in SMM management. Marketing performance can only increase when measures for marketing investment are put in place (Luther, 2019).

The findings from Chapter Four and after analyzing data has resulted in the development of a revised conceptual framework for SMM and its effect on marketing performance of HEIs shown in Figure 5.4.



**FIGURE 5.4: REVISED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The model in Figure 5.4 is based on the conceptual framework model in Chapter Three, after data analysis in Chapter Four. The conclusion is that a mobile App for HEIs is relevant in order to effectively manage SMM activities and measure performance. The framework also shows that five social media platforms are common in HEIs and that they must be included in SMM for HEIs. Additionally, the model also has included tools for measuring SMM performance such as Google Analytics, Hashtag tools and Brand24. The model also shows the inclusion of ROI for marketing for SMM that is relevant for increasing marketing performance through measurement of SMM

investment. The conceptual framework in Chapter Two, Literature Review, is extended after the results of the data analysis collected from both the quantitative and qualitative samples.

## **5.6 Research implications**

There are two types of research implications that can be brought out from a Doctoral research and these are the theoretical implications and the practical implications (Sarros *et al.*, 2005). This research brought out practical implications from the findings that HEIs must adopt in order to manage their SMM effectively so that it can improve marketing performance for their institutions. This research has brought two business solutions.

### **5.6.1 A practical model for developing, implementing and running effective SMM campaigns**

HEIs that are looking to running an effective SMM strategy must use the model in Figure 5.2 that includes the best combination of social media platforms for marketing HEIs in Zambia. According to the research responses the five combinations are Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. These must be integrated to give effective performance for SMM. The platforms must be incorporated with the suggested analytics tools in Figure 5.3 that will allow them to monitor clickstream data on each site and SMM activities and produce reports for brand mentions, reach, engagement levels, lead and conversion levels. The statistics in Table 5.1 show that the levels of engagement are very low on HEIs social media platforms and this means that they need to implement measures that would improve activities on their social media platforms and among them is the implementation of the SMM model in Figure 5.2.

### **5.6.2 Implement mobile App developed on the concepts in Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.4 for HEIs for managing and monitoring SMM activities and performance**

HEIs must implement a mobile App for their SMM or subscribe to an existing one as mobile Apps make it easy to monitor social media activities and measure ROI. The responses from the research findings showed that most HEIs have not put in place a system to monitor social media performance. When respondents were asked to indicate whether paying for school fees and services would be easier using social media or a social media App, the response showed that 90% felt that it would be easier. A mobile App designed on the concept of the models in Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.4 is likely to improve engagement, lead, conversion and reach for HEIs. The mobile App

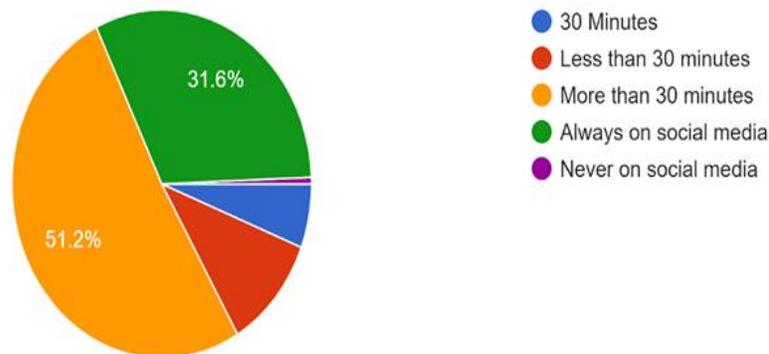
would be liked to online payment platforms such as PayPal and Western Union so that it would be possible for students to pay their school fees using social media platforms or the mobile App.

Most prospective students spend enormous amount of time on social media and HEIs must take advantage of this by ensuring that they create sticky sites to their social media platforms. The information in Figure 5.5 shows most respondents spend more than 30 minutes in a day on social media and this is an opportunity for HEIs to advertise using paid Ads and google listing integrated on their social media pages or platforms.

Findings in a research conducted at Mulungushi University found that internet usage in Zambia has increased from 0.2% in 2000 to 20.4% in 2016 (Mutuka, 2017). The findings by Mutuka are related to the answers provided by respondents in the result in Figure 5.5 below. The increase in internet usage could be driven by users spending more time on social media sites and this may provide an opportunity to HEIs for marketing.

How much time do you spend on social media in a day?

320 responses



**Figure 5.5: Time on social media**

### **5.7 Contribution to the body of knowledge**

A researcher can make a meaningful contribution to knowledge by using a different approach to solving an identified problem (Chidi, 2018). Four main approaches to contributing to knowledge

include solving trending issues, developing unique methods, the research contribution area being the first and developing a new model or approach (Chidi, 2018). This research developed a new model for SMM of HEIs and the research was also the first contribution in the study of SMM in Zambia.

### **5.7.1 Effectiveness of social media marketing**

Before this study brought out findings on the effectiveness of SMM in HEIs, there was no preceding study that investigated that aspect of marketing in Zambia. The literature review brought out similar studies in countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Australia and the USA where social media is a huge driver for marketing activities. Specifically, in Australia and in the USA Universities such as Columbia and Deakin that are using social media effectively for student recruitment (Mahaney, 2012). In Zambia the studies on social media were previously focused on the use of social media as a learning aid and not a tool for marketing (Akakandelwa & Walubita, 2017). This research has contributed to the body of knowledge by investigating the effectiveness of SMM in HEIs.

### **5.7.2 Development of a model for marketing HEIs**

The analysis of findings in this research brought out two models discussed in Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.3. In Figure 5.2 the researcher proposed a model for marketing HEIs in Zambia including the best combination of social media platforms that can be used for marketing HEIs. The combination of the social media platforms brings out Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn as the best combination for marketing HEIs. The model also includes the need for online segmentation, and analyzing SMM performance using the proposed tools in Figure 5.2. The model in Figure 5.3 on the other hand is a model for measuring marketing performance for social media and before this research this did not exist.

The model for social media marketing will enable HEIs to effectively manage their brands online and enhance service quality on their social media platforms so that they can increase hit rate to their social media sites. The model will also enable HEIs to position their institutions more effectively and achieve market expansion through online advertising.

## **5.8 Conclusion and Recommendations**

The results of the findings in this research show that the concepts in the conceptual framework made in Figure 2.3 in Chapter three were proved. The research results show that SMM has an effect on the marketing performance of HEIs in Zambia. Further the research objectives set out in Chapter one has been achieved. The research objectives have been achieved in that the social media platforms used in HEIs are identified, SMM leads to increased recruitment in HEIs and that SMM has an overall effect on marketing performance in HEIs. The assumption made in the hypothesis that social media has an effect on marketing HEIs has been proved through the analysis of the findings shown in Figure 4.19 in Chapter 4.

The results of the regression analysis in Table 4.27 in Chapter four show that social media is effective in marketing of HEIs. The results showed a significant relationship between the social media variables and the marketing performance variable, Can Social media Increase Student (CSMISN). Since the results on the dependent variable CSMIN against the independent variables are significant, the researcher recommends that social media be incorporated in the overall strategic marketing of HEIs. If social media produces results to increase revenue as the findings in Table 4.14 in Chapter four then Professionals in HEIs managing social media must include it as a significant marketing strategy in their strategic marketing plans.

### **5.8.1 Recommendations to HEIs**

The findings in Chapter four have also resulted in answers provided to RQ3 and RQ2 set out in Chapter one. In this regard the researcher recommends that Strategic management in HEIs develop a social media strategic plan based on the models prescribed in Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.3. These should have specific SMART objectives linked to their overall marketing goals. The social media strategic plan will result in HEIs maximizing revenue and ultimately increasing their student numbers and market share.

The model for SMM in Figure 5.2 is a holistic approach to managing SMM in HEIs and therefore the researcher recommends that Professionals managing social media in HEIs use it to enhance marketing performance. The researcher in addition recommends that strategic management in HEIs adopt the funnel model in Figure 5.3 and use it for measuring performance of SMM against their marketing performance in order to justify investment in SMM to their Boards.

This research has identified Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter as the most popular social media platforms in HEIs. The recommendation is that management in HEIs must incorporate these platforms in their social media strategies if they want to maximize marketing performance. These social media platforms are part of the model in Figure 5.2 recommended for SMM in HEIs.

### **5.8.2 Recommendations for future studies**

This study has developed a model for social media marketing that HEIs can use to enhance their marketing strategies online and to increase brand visibility using online tools and platforms. One area it has not covered is integration of social media platforms with web resources for higher marketing performance. Researchers may want to investigate the effectiveness of social media platform integration with internet marketing. HEI's require a more complex approach to online marketing, social media marketing as well as traditional marketing models that are set apart from other industries where such tools have been rapidly tested and have yielded results.

The researcher also recommends studies to be carried out in the area of implications of poor social media regulations on marketing HEIs. Literature in this study revealed that in many African countries including Zambia regulatory framework surrounding social media are not fully developed and this poses challenges in using social media in formal sectors of marketing.

## **5.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This Chapter discussed the findings from Chapter Two and Chapter Four and brought out recommended models for SMM that HEIs can use in the process of marketing. The discussion in this Chapter was based on the results of data analysis from Chapter Four and also from Chapter Two the literature review. The Chapter discussed findings from both the quantitative and qualitative research samples and used the literature review as part of data triangulation. Finally, the conceptual framework played out in Chapter Two was revised to include the findings from the data analysis and presented as a framework for SMM for HEIs.

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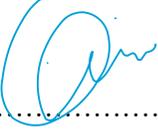
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## Appendix 1: Non- disclosure agreement

I Francis Mukosa declare that I shall not in any way use the data collected and analyzed in this research for purposes of disclosure to business competitors or to give any institution a competitive advantage over the other. The researcher further declares that they shall not disclose the identity of the respondents in both the qualitative or quantitative samples especially where these respondents are known to them.

Sign.....

Date: ...20/10/2021.....

## Appendix 2: Structured Questionnaire

### Questionnaire for enrolled students in Higher Education Institutions

#### PURPOSE

This questionnaire is designed to collect data about how Higher Learning Institutions use social media for marketing purposes in Zambia. The respondents are assured that the information they will provide shall remain confidential and will be used only for purposes of the research being conducted on the effectiveness of social media marketing for Higher Learning Institutions in Zambia. We hope you will be able to take time and carefully complete the questionnaire. You can use “X” mark to indicate your responses on each item.

**Thank you for your time**

**The researcher**

#### Section A-General information

<b>1. Select Your Learning Institution</b>	University of Lusaka	Lusaka Apex Medical University	Africa Research University	UNZA	Mukuba University	OAK	Northrise University
<b>Place X</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Zambia Open University	Cavendish University	Coppertone University	St Bonaventure University	Mulungushi University	ZCAS	
<b>Place X</b>	8	9	10	11	12	13	

## Section B-Demographic Information

2. What is your Gender      Male      Female  
 Place an X                      1              2

3. What is your age range	16-25	25-34	35-44	45-54	Above 55
Place an X	1	2	3	4	5
4. Which social media platforms are you signed up for	Facebook	Twitter	WhatsApp	Instagram	Non
5. Which is the best social media platform for marketing HEIs					

## Section C-Social media and enrolment decisions

Key	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Place an X	1	2	3	4	5
6. Social media platforms are helpful in making enrolment decisions					
7. Do adverts on social media cause you to visit a particular learning institution					
8. Social media platforms influence your choice of learning institution					
9. Social media platforms for your learning institution are effective in providing you with information about courses					
10. Your institution's social media page is well designed and easy to use					

## Section D-Social media platforms used in Higher Education Institutions

Key	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Place an X	1	2	3	4	5
11. Social media may not be responsible for your decisions to enrol in particular courses at your institution					
12. Which combinations of social media platforms are mostly used in your institution					
13. Mobile apps and social media are the best combination for student communication					
14. Your institution's social media platform allows for student interaction					
15. It would be helpful if my institution had a mobile app					

## Section E-Social media and marketing

Key	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Place an X	1	2	3	4	5
16. Can social media increase sales revenue for HEIs					
17. Can social media increase student numbers					
18. Can social media increase market share for HEIs					
19. Does social media have an overall effect on marketing HEI					
20. Your institution's social media platform allows for student interaction					

## Section F-Social media Apps and student enrolments

21. Do you use mobile Apps	Yes	No
Place an X	1	2

Key	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Place an X	1	2	3	4	5
22. Mobile apps can increase revenue for learning Institutions					
23. It would be helpful if my institution had a mobile app					
24. Are students influenced by mobile apps to make payments to learning institutions					
25. Payment through mobile Apps would make it easier for you to settle outstanding bills					
26. Mobile apps can increase revenue for learning Institutions					

## Appendix 3: Semi structured Interview

### Social Media/Marketing/ experts' interview guide

(Adapted from: Ali-Choudhury, Bennet and Savani, 2009)

#### Interview procedures:

**Overall subject:** Social media marketing in higher learning Institutions

**Time required:** 1 hour to 1 hour 45 minutes.

**Audio voice recorder:** Request to record the interview and if participant is agreeable then switch on before introductions begin.

**Ethics and confidentiality:** Give an idea about research ethics and confidentiality. Remind the interviewee that their sensitive personal data and contact details will not be used in any analysis or given to anyone else. Inform the interviewee that views they express in the interview are used for research purposes only and that they will not be referred to by name in the journal article or other publications.

1. How do you understand Social media marketing?
2. Are there any challenges in the use of social media marketing?
3. How long has your institution used social media for its marketing activities?
4. What has been the impact of social media marketing on increasing student numbers?
5. What other purposes is social media used for other than just advertising or communication, is it for instance used for purposes of recruitment or online payment?
6. On Estimate what is the amount of revenue generated from social media platforms in relation to student recruitment?
7. What tools if any does your institution use to estimate return on investments for social media platforms?
8. What is the annual budget for social media marketing at your institution? Is the budget sufficient to be able to use social media effectively for marketing purposes?

9. Does your institution develop an annual social media marketing plan that is incorporated into the strategic marketing plan?
10. What are some of the social media marketing strategies used on the digital marketing platforms to market your institution, what are the main social media marketing tools incorporated in these social media marketing strategies?
11. What are the most common social media marketing platforms used at your institution?
12. Which of these platforms are the most effective for marketing and what can you give as some of the reasons why they are effective?
13. What is the highest number of likes that a single social media post has recorded for your institution?
14. Does your institution have a means of monitoring or tracking activities on social media platforms?
15. How do you collect click stream data and what do you use to analyze the data?
16. What paid social media tools does your institution subscribe to and how effective are those in increasing student numbers?
17. How has your institution used its social media marketing to sell its brand locally and internationally? Have any international students enrolled with your institution as a result of its social media campaigns, if so what are the numbers?
18. What would be the size of market increase since the introduction of online presence? Are there some online tools that you use to measure online market growth in relation to revenue?
19. How are the social media marketing activities for your institution different from other learning institutions? Does your institution have a competitive advantage through its online presence?
20. What do you think is the best strategy to manage social media marketing? Are there any new things you have implemented that sets your institution apart from its competitors?

*Adapted from: Ali-Choudhury, Bennet and Savani (2009)*

### Appendix 4 Summary of main Literature in the study

Author	Country of Study	Title	Research design	Nature of study	Main findings	Relevance to this study
Akakandelwa & Walubita (2017)	Zambia	Students' Social Media Use and its Perceived Impact on their Social Life: A Case Study of the University of Zambia	Survey research (240 Sample size)	Research paper	Social media has an impact on social life of learners at the University of Zambia and it is a relevant tool for course delivery	This study created a gap in looking at studies on social media marketing in Zambia as its focus was largely on social media usage as opposed to marketing purposes. However, it created a huge reference in that its emphasis on the use of social media by students at the University of Zambia is highly relevant since these form part of the HEIs virtual markets
Mwalimu, E. C., Mulauzi, F., & Mwiinga, T. M. (2017)	Zambia	The use of social media among University of Zambia Lecturers in teaching and learning	Survey research based on qualitative sample (30 Lecturers purposively selected)	Researched paper	The study brought out the fact that Lecturers use social media in the delivery at the University of Zambia particular the younger one	The study mainly focused on the use of social media as a teaching tool and not necessarily for marketing purposes. This created one of the gaps in the literature review around studies conducted in Zambia in relation to social media
Msuya, C. P., Düvel, G. H., & Rwambali, E. G. (2014).	Tanzania	The Influence of Independent and Intervening Variables on Adoption of recommended maize varieties in Tanzania.	Cross sectional research (Sample size 113)	Researched paper	The findings indicated that intervening variables are the most imminent in determining behavioural variables	The usefulness of this finding is that this research had to bring out clear intervening variables in order to determine the behaviour of social media audiences
Khan, S. (2017)	South Africa	An Evaluation of Social Media Marketing Strategies in Recruiting Prospective Students for Higher Education in South Africa. Johannesburg: Regent University.	Desktop research	Literature review	The study brought out the findings that in South African higher learning Institutions depend on the effectiveness of their social media platforms in order to recruit prospective students	The findings of where useful in that they brought out the effectiveness of social media marketing in the process of recruitment and forms the basis by which a comparative analysis can be done between the findings in this study and those that Khan found in South Africa

Newman, E. C., & Gabriel, O. A. (2019)	Nigeria	Effect of Social Media Marketing on The Conversion Rate of Deposit	Survey (sample size 140)	Researched paper	The study brought out the effect of social media marketing on the conversion rate of customers	The study is highly relevant to this research in the it stresses the importance of conversion in social media marketing
Kimani & Obwatho (2020)	Kenya	Influence of Social Media Marketing on Student Enrolment among Private Universities in Kenya	Survey research with a sample size of 230	Research paper	The research found that social media had an influence on student enrolment in private universities in Kenya	The findings of this research are highly important to this research since they enable comparative analysis to be carried out between this research and the findings of the current research
Vukic, M., & Vukić, M (2019)	United Arab Emirates	The impact of social media on the recruitment of students by higher education Institutions. Journal of research Centre for educational technology	Survey and interview research based on undergraduate students and focused on WhatsApp as a social media platform	Research paper	The paper revealed that social media in the UAE had huge impact on the recruitment of students since social media captured a larger part of the student population	The research findings in this paper a critical to this study in that they prove that using social media as a marketing tool can have an impact on recruitment in the UAE but however creates a question of whether this finding can be extrapolated to the Zambian scenario
Abbu, B., Ishad, A., & Mohammad, W. (2021)	India	Effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool: An empirical study	Empirical research study using survey sample	Research paper	Younger people are adopting social media with a higher pace than never before	The findings firstly bring out the possibility of social media being one of the effective social media marketing tools since the main target market of HEIs are younger people intending to take up study at any HEI. The study also concludes that social media is highly effective in as a marketing tool
Aman, K., & Hussin, N. (2018).	Malaysia	The effectiveness of social media in higher education.	Desktop Review	Literature review	Social media marketing in HEIs is highly relevant to introduce Institutions to its customers or other people	The paper links social media marketing to the overall marketing strategy. There must be a link between social media marketing and the marketing strategies
Ardan, D., & Mohammad, A. (2019).	Jordan	Impact of social media marketing on organizational performance.	Survey research using quantitative	Research paper	There is a strong positive impact on organizational	The research showed that marketing performance in organizations in impacted positively by the use of social

			methods (169 sample size)		performance of using social media	media. The study creates a comparative basis between the performance of organizations in the cosmetic sector and the education sector which is understudy in this research
Barrere, R. (2021).	United States of America	Social Media Marketing in future research. Harvard Business Review	Desktop review	Researched article in periodic	The article suggests that social media in the future of business globally	This study informed the literature of the current research in that it presented an argument that social media is the future of business and therefore HEIs should adopt its usage in marketing
Bobby, C. J &Edward (2009)	United States of America	An Experimental Study of the Relationship between Online Engagement and Advertising Effectiveness.	Survey research involving online engagement	Based on experiments using measurement scales	The study brought out the fact that there is a relationship between online engagement and advertising	Engagement is one of the variables in this study and since the study showed that there is a relationship between online engagement and advertising, it is highly relevant to adopt some of the metrics used in this study to provide critical conclusions in this research
Lockett, A. R. (2018)	United States of America	Online Marketing Strategies for Increasing Sales. California: Walden University.	Case study	Doctoral Dissertation paper	The study brought out the concept that the use of online marketing strategies could bring out increased sales revenue and higher marketing performance	The study was highly relevant to this research in that it suggested that the use of online tools resulted in a higher marketing performance and this led to the assumption that HEIs could adopt some of the online marketing strategies to increase their student numbers (Sales revenue)
Stagno, M. C., & Constantinides, E. (2017)	Netherlands	Higher education marketing: A study on the impact of social media on study selection and University choice.	Survey research (400 sample size)	Research paper	The study investigated the role that social media plays in influencing the choice of educational Institution	The study brought out the role that social media plays in the choice of educational institutions by students and is highly relevant in linking social media to marketing performance
Mahaney M (2012)	New York	The effectiveness of social media marketing in higher education: State University of New York, the college at Brockport	Case study	Thesis paper	The research answered questions of why students do not follow their schools on social media	The study is relevant in that it brought out how educational Institutions could not use engagement on social media to attract students to the schools at the state University of New York

Terry, A (2019)	Canada	Challenges and opportunities for use of social media in higher education.	Desktop review	Researched article	The research brought out challenges and opportunities that social media creates for educational Institutions	This research was relevant to this study in that it explored the opportunities and challenges that social media creates for educational Institutions. Some of the challenges and opportunities could help measure the effectiveness of social media on marketing performance of HEIs
Tahani, A. Z., Petri, N., & Vesa, K. (2020)	Finland	Technology and Social Media Usage in Higher Education: The Influence of Individual Innovativeness.	Survey research (502) sample size)	Researched article	The study showed that technology is used in HEI by both staff and students and that the most popular social media platform used was Facebook	The findings of this study were highly useful in this research as they identified Facebook as one of the most popular social media platforms and this gives rise to the question of which social media platforms are more effective for marketing HEIs in Zambia
Singhal, A. & Falcon (2020)	USA	Retrieved January 08, 2020, from-falcon: <a href="https://www.falcon.io/insights-hub/topics/social-media-management/10-successful-higher-education-social-media-marketing-strategies/">https://www.falcon.io/insights-hub/topics/social-media-management/10-successful-higher-education-social-media-marketing-strategies/</a>	Case study	Researched article	The findings where that there is potential for social media in higher education for marketing	The article brought out the Success of Columbia University in the USA in the use of social media for marketing purposes. This case study provided a basis for generating interest in this research to find out if this success in the USA can also be extrapolated to Zambia
Ming, C. J., & Yazdanifard, R. (2020)	Malaysia	How social media marketing can influence the profitability of an online company from a consumer point of view.	Desktop review	Researched article	The findings for this research are that social media allows for full engagement between customers and organizations	The findings in this research is important as it brings out how social media platforms can create engagement between customers and organizations and thereby increasing customer retention. This same concept might seem useful to HEIs in Zambia.
Shamster, S., Ameet, S., & Tushar, N. B. (2020)	India	Role of social media in brand building: the new age marketing strategy.	Survey research (265) sample size)	Researched article	The research found that consumers of goods and services are no longer using social media for only personal use but they are also using it to look out for marketing	The finding of this research is highly useful in that it creates visibility in this research that HEIs can place advertising and marketing campaigns on social media and be able to get a response from their target markets

					campaigns and adverts	
Nadeem, M. (2015)	United States of America	Customer Loyalty at Any Cost: Why Is Social Media Poorly Integrated with Marketing Strategy?	Social media Survey	Case study	The research found that most companies in the USA had poor integration of their marketing strategies and their social media strategy	The research indicates that to succeed in social media marketing, companies need to integrate their social media strategies with their marketing strategies in order for them to succeed. HEI's are no exception in this and should align their social media marketing with the overall marketing strategies
Nyangau, J. Z., & Bado, N. (2012).	United States	Social media marketing of higher education: A review of the literature.	Desktop review	Literature Review	The study revealed that both admissions officers and prospective students are actively using social media	The findings indicate that the active use of social media by admissions officers and prospective students is an indication that social media can be used effectively for recruitment and retention of students in HEIs. This is a useful finding for this research in that the same empirical finding can be tested in HEIs in Zambia
Klassen, M., & Helgesen. (2008).	Norway	Marketing for Higher Education: A Relationship Marketing Approach.	Desktop review	Literature review	The research found that student retention was only possible through value creation	The importance is this finding to this research was that HEIs must define their OVPs or online value proposition in order to add value to their social media marketing
Marcia Layton Turner	British Columbia	Social Media's Influence on College Choice	Survey research	Case study	The research found that social media influences choice of college study and programs	The findings of this are highly useful as they provide a basis for comparison between the set objectives in this research and its findings