USING BLOGS TO CREATE A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: A CASE OF THE BLOGGING INDUSTRY IN KENYA

BY

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STUDENT’S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college, institution or university other than the United States International University

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This research report has been presented for examination with our approval as the appointed supervisors.

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Dr. Zachary Mosoti

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ABSTRACT

The study was aimed at investigating how blogs have been used to gain competitive advantage in the various industries. The study was guided by the following research questions: To what extent have blogs and blogging been used to achieve strategic advantage in Kenya? What are the challenges that Kenyan blogs and bloggers face? How do Kenyan blogs and blogging affect relationships and implementation of strategic competitive advantage?

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population for this study comprised of 212 blogs which are observed and considered as active by the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE). The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, while the sampling technique adopted was stratified sampling. A sample size of 43 was chosen based on the percentage method. Data analysis was carried out using Statistical Package for Social Services (SPSS), and the findings are presented using tables and figures. The findings for the three research questions are presented in chapter four with the study regression analysis being presented last to determine any relationships between the study variables.

The study revealed that the challenges faced by bloggers include: creation of Relevant Content, lack of marketing, lack of management and maintenance, freedom of Speech and Law Restrictions, reputation Risk. These challenges hinder bloggers and blogs from gaining and implementing strategic competitive advantage which can make them to stand out from the rest.

The study also revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that blogs/blogging and bloggers help companies build and maintaining the brand image, blogs have been used as an alternate advertising avenue instead of traditional advertising (radio, T.V., print media, billboards), blog and blogging can be used to improve company information flow to its consumers, blogs can be used to create relationships between the company and the consumers, blogs receive regular clients whom the advertising companies are targeting and finally the number of visitors on a blog translate to valuable sales.

The study recommends the need for bloggers to position themselves well as thought leaders within the industry. The study also recommends the need for bloggers to have a consumer appeal so that they appear authentic, and they bring a level of humanity back to a faceless corporation and that is authenticity. The study further recommends the need for bloggers to establish protocols in respect to employees having and posting their concerns or views regarding their work environment, seeing that blogs offer a new medium through which the staff’s feedback can be captured, information
concerning particular details which are deemed too tedious to share on email can be shared on this forum as well as help in promoting the organizations in various strides.

The study highly recommends the need for bloggers to maintain honesty and openness as well as being responsive in creating conversations by answering comments while bearing in mind that their online creations may live forever online, whether wanted or not. Additionally the study recommends that bloggers can gain a strategic advantage by targeting baby boomers since such provides for untapped potential to influence purchasing decisions as nearly 57% are asked for product and service recommendation almost twice a week and of those who were asked to make recommendations in the past one year, 89 percent advised their fellow boomers.

The study concluded that bloggers and blogs can be used to achieve a competitive strategic advantage solely or in corporation with organizations if they adopt the following strategies achieving credibility, followed by positioning then direct marketing and finally responding to customer issues. This shows that the bloggers and blog platforms can be utilized to position a company, product or brand advantageously in the market to reap the greatest profit.
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I would like to take this opportunity to give thanks all the people who assisted in putting a foundation for this research report.

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DEDICATION

To my unborn child and my niece Abigail Kamwende, may this be a reminder that you can do anything you set your mind to. To my mother, for the love, constant support and prayers.
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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

Strategic management is defined as the analyses, decisions, and actions an organization undertakes in order to create and sustain competitive advantages (Dess, Lumpkin and Eisner, 2008). In reference to the above definition, analyses refers to the analysis of the company’s strategic objectives, mission and mission as well as the analysis of both the external and internal environment. The decisions inferred are those of which area or industry should the company compete in which in turn affect a company’s domestic and international (if present) operations.

Competitive strategy is defined as the approach a firm intends to use in order to succeed in each of their strategic business areas (Ogutu and Samuel, 2011), thus giving the company an advantage over its competing rivals in maintaining a large market share in comparison and defending against competitive forces. There are many routes to gain competitive advantage, according to Porter an organization can develop a generic competitive strategy of differentiation or cost leadership, capable of delivering superior performance through an appropriate configuration and coordination of its value chain activities (Porter, 1985). In adopting cost leadership a firm requires to have the lowest production or service cost in order for the profits earned to be above the industry’s average. According to Stonehouse and Snowdown (2007) the different strategies can be applied all with different results resulting. A differentiation strategy involved creating the company’s product or service perception as superior than its competitors in the mind of the consumer, based on a combination of quality, brand, superior performance and price which greatly relies on the company’s marketing endeavours. A focus strategy involves use of either the differentiation or cost leadership strategy in a narrow market segment (Stonehouse and Snowdown, 2007).

Over the last three decades the emergence of the internet has greatly impacted the communication. New communication media such as social media and telephony can give marketers the opportunity to greatly personalize the place or business and increase their reach of both current and possible consumers (Bernhardt, Mays and Hall, 2012) by providing multiple mobile channels while allowing real time two way communication to take place and has all been available by presence and use of the internet. According to Stanford (2011) the internet may be applied as an effective tool in marketing and its
growth has now brought it under consideration by many companies for usage as a competitive tool.

According to the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customers’ requirements, profitably, which is in the words of Kotler (2005) it is “the marketing concept holds that the key to achieving organizational goals consists in determining the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than competitors”. This is further supports that marketing as a means of achieving this, following the definition that it is a process of promoting ones business or online site using social media channels (Porter, 1985) thereby enabling one to engage and connect with international markets as well as receive feedback (Brogan, 2010)

Social media refers to the means of interaction among people in which they create, share and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Ahlqvist, Black, Halonen, Hernonen, 2008). Kaushik (2012) defines social media primarily as internet or cellular phone based applications and tools to share information among people. He continues that social media expedites conversation and connection among people and includes popular networking websites, like face book, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, my space, you tube, twitter, bookmarking sites and many more. Burrus (2010) states that “the sooner organizations embrace social media, the faster they can penetrate new markets and win new business”. To illustrate this, he first defines Web 2.0 which refers to a second generation of web development and design which focuses on fostering social networking via the internet. He then coins the term Business 2.0 which he describes as the use of web-based social applications to foster teamwork and customer relations.

According to Strategy Analytics Report (2007), social media users were to exceed 1 billion thereby causing a growth which required many companies to re-strategize given that social media is tasked with putting the public into public relations and the market into marketing thus marketers are viewing this as an advantage and using social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Flickr and Pinterest among others, to achieve public relations, marketing and advertising (Brogan 2010).

As evident above, numerous studies have been conducted on the uses and different impacts of social media but rarely have the mentioned blogs or blogging as part and parcel of the different social media outlets. Nevertheless, the interest in blogs and
blogging has increased dramatically in recent years. According to Bertot, Jager and Grimmes (2012), blogs are websites in which contents is dispatched in a structured format via a series of postings usually focused on a particular subject. Bloggers have increasingly been described as influential agenda setters as blogs have been found to have influence on media coverage of politics (Ashbee, 2003; Sweetser, et al., 2008; Wallsten, 2007) as well as facilitating communication among individuals (Baker and Moore, 2008; Hodkinson, 2007) and organizations (Kelleher and Miller, 2006; Sweetser and Metzgar, 2007). Although research projects interested in various aspects of blogs and blogging are on the rise, few articles have looked at blog research in a cumulative manner.

According to Kuhn (1962), young research paradigms search for generally acknowledged ways of conducting research. What themes have been dominating in blog research through its rather short period of existence? What kinds of research approaches have been applied? Posing and answering questions like these are important in order to reflect on the current state as well as future development of blog research. In line with this, Webster and Watson (2002) claim that literature reviews are important for solidifying and strengthening scientific foundations. Also research reviews regarding Internet–related subjects have been undertaken in a variety of scholarly contexts for example by employing an interdisciplinary view, Rice (2005) analyzed research papers presented at the 2003 and 2004 Association of Internet Researchers conferences, finding similar results regarding the subjects addressed at the two conferences. Focusing on Internet research within the field of communication studies, Kim and Weaver (2002) analyzed 561 articles in 86 journals and books. They found that the most frequent research focus was law and policy (22.5 percent of the articles), followed by uses and perception (18.9 percent) and economic (13.7 percent).

Internationally much ink has been spilled on the question of blogging’s relationship to journalism, by academics as well as by journalists and bloggers themselves with most holding the idea that at least some blogging constitutes “participatory journalism” or “citizen journalism,” and the question of how these relate (or don’t) to earlier professional movements for “public” or “civic” journalism. Reporting and blogging clearly overlap. Newspapers from the Washington Post to the tiny Northwest Voice (serving Northwest Bakersfield, in California) have embraced blogging as a source of public comment and, in the latter’s case, news. Meanwhile any number of blogs have tried to engage in on-the-ground reporting and with time blogs have become a primary
source of news and information during catastrophes whose sheer scale challenges the
reach and resources of traditional news organizations (such as, in 2004 and 2005, the
Indian Ocean tsunami, the London subway bombings, and Hurricane Katrina) (Graves,
2007) and the source of news on trends that attract a large majority of the society who
have limited time to obtain information from traditional channels of information.

Bud Hunt, a media specialist and English teacher at Olde Columbine High School in
Longmont, Colorado, became interested in the way new forms of technology like wikis,
blogs, and podcasting could be integrated into teaching as he observed that children are
deeply involved in using the internet, e-mail writing and playing around with different
applications therefore such new forms of technology like wikis, blogs, and podcasting
could be integrated into teaching (Millard, 2006).

In Kenya, blogging is reported to have started in 2003, according to the Bloggers
Association of Kenya (BAKE), and since then the trend has grown tremendously. From a
report written by Vnzomo (2013) on the State of Blogging and Social Media in Kenya –
Luncheon with US Ambassador (Center for Intellectual Property and Information
Technology Law (CICIP) Blog) which is under Strathmore University Law School, it is
noted that the U.S Ambassador also recognized the impact of blogging and social media
as a possible rise of startup business that could tap into the 1.3 billion US dollar for
startups and entrepreneurs announced during the Global Entrepreneurship Summit, 2015.
A report released by BAKE in 2015, titled the ‘The State of Blogging and Social Media
use in Kenya’, there is an estimated 15,000 registered blogs in Kenya with 3,000 of those
being active blogs registered in Kenya on different blogging platforms such as
Wordpress, Blogger and Tumblar (BAKE, 2015).

As blogging is slowly becoming a viable business for many seeking careers in the digital
space due to lack of conventional blue and white collar jobs, this research seeks to
highlight the impact of using blogs to achieve strategic competitive advantages in the
business environment.

1.2 Statement of the Problem
A study undertaken by Larsson and Hrastinski (2011) reported that there had been
several studies which have focused on other sectors of the economy and in other areas
under different times on the adoption of social media as a marketing tool (Luo, Wang and
Han, 2013; Bernhardt, Mays and Hall, 2012; Mitic and Kapoulas, 2012; Edosomwanet
but there is an increase in the use of blogs and blogging to enhance competitive advantage in various industries, but no studies have been done to ascertain their impact.

This goes to show that blogs and blogging is of interest to academics from a variety of scientific disciplines but in as much as research projects are on the rise and focus on various aspects of blogs and blogging, few articles have looked at blog research on a cumulative manner and recommendations have been made that as research into blogs and blogging move further, contributions from many complementing fields are needed (Larsson and Hrastinski, 2011). There has been no exhaustive research which has been done to ascertain the impact of blogs and blogging on creating a strategic competitive advantage in any industry which forms the basis of my interest in the research area.

1.3 Purpose of the Study
The purpose of the study was to establish how blogs and blogging has been used to create and/or gain a competitive advantage in Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions
The study was guided by the following research questions

1.4.1 To what extent have blogs and blogging been used to achieve strategic advantage in Kenya?

1.4.2 What are the challenges that Kenyan blogs and bloggers face?

1.4.3 How do Kenyan blogs and blogging affect relationships and implementation of strategic competitive advantage?

1.5 Justification of the Study
The findings of the study will be of benefit to the following stakeholders;

1.5.1 Social Media Practitioners
Practitioners of social media can use the findings of this study to predict the outcomes of using a particular social media strategy over another. Rather than go through a process of trial and error, they can instead save time and resources by analyzing which strategy works well in which condition. They can also use the findings of this study as a stepping stone to their own study of the effects of social media.
1.5.2 Companies and Organizations

Some organizations are slow to implement social media in their communication strategy because they are yet to understand the impact that it can have in helping them to achieve their overall objectives. This study will paint a clear picture of how blogs and blogging should be utilized to ensure that an organization can reap the benefits, rather than struggle to remain relevant.

1.5.3 The Government

The findings are critical as it gives the policy makers the necessary information on the prevailing conditions on the adoption of social media more so, specifically blogs and blogging in this industry thus will facilitate better policy directions.

1.5.4 Academicians and Researchers

The findings act as point of reference to other scholars as there is not much research done in the prevailing conditions in this field yet.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study will be conducted by undertaking a survey of the highly accessed blogs according to BAKE categorization which accounts for 212 blogs, focusing on different industries and/or categories. The blogs and bloggers are largely of Kenyan origin or writers residing in Kenya and more specifically, Nairobi.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Strategic Management

The analyses, decisions, and actions an organization undertakes in order to create and sustain competitive advantages (Desset al., 2008)

1.7.2 Competitive Strategy

The approach a firm intends to use in order to succeed in each of their strategic business areas (Ogutu and Samuel, 2011)

1.7.3 Blogs

Websites in which contents is dispatched in a structured format via a series of postings usually focused on a particular subject (Bertotet al., 2012)
1.7.4 Bloggers

Influential agenda setters as blogs have been found to have influence on media coverage of politics (Ashbee, 2003; Sweetser, et al., 2008; Wallsten, 2007).

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter explained in detail the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, scope of the study, and significance of the study as well as brought to familiarization definition of terms used in the study, the outline research questions that form the basis for literature review in chapter two. Chapter three will expound on the research methodology used in the actual field survey. Chapter four will represent the findings from the survey using descriptive statistics including tables and figures. Lastly, chapter five will detail the study summary, discussions, conclusion and recommendations.
CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction
This chapter set to analyze what strides had been made by other researchers globally, regionally and locally with regards to blogs, bloggers and blogging and the impact in creating and achieving competitive advantage. The findings have highlighted the research gap thereby helping the researcher identify where to start the study.

2.2 Achieving Strategic Competitive Advantage Using Blogs
The primary social media outlets on the Web and their primary audiences include, Facebook and Twitter; Future/Current Students and Alumni, LinkedIn Industry and alumni. Blogs: Industry and general public (Pens State University, 2013). According to Brossard and Scheufele (2013) more and more people are turning to blogs and other online-only media sources for information. They noted that these same people are even steering clear of traditional news outlets, even though these outlets have online versions. Brossard and Scheufele say that almost half of Americans currently rely on nontraditional online sources and get the bulk of their information from mediums such as blogs, twitter, and Facebook (Mwendwa, 2014).

The diversity in the Kenyan blogging space having been continued to be observed in the topics covered such as Technology, Fashion, Food, Health, Human Rights, Environment and County Governments as well as in the inclusion of Kenyans in other counties into the space through skills training programs carried out by BAKE around the country. The growth of blogs in Kenya in depth on topics of choice and diversity have, in the last 4 years elicited interest from the Kenyan corporate sector with brands seeking to work with bloggers as an additional platform for advertising and marketing through banner advertisements, commissioned product reviews, promoted blog posts and social media campaigns (BAKE Report, 2015).

2.2.1 Direct Marketing Avenue
Brands must adopt new technologies to communicate and be present in the social media-world; otherwise it will be difficult to survive in today’s competitive market (Rayudu, 2010).

Advertising is the method of informing consumers by establishing corporate images, form positive attitudes toward targeted products or services, and persuade consumers (Fu
& Chen, 2012). In a paper written by Marken (2006), 27% of internet users read blogs with the top 400 blogs having a reach of 50 million people all according to Pew/Internet, the writer further tabulated that there is a 58% annual increase in blog readership that is expected to be evident according to the numbers and growth projections across the total global internet and this can be attributed to being one of the main reasons why service sellers and agencies are adding blogs or blogging as a valuable Public Relations (PR) tool to their service offering for clients. Marken (2006), further emphasized that blogs and blogging has some potential and it has some pitfalls.

Firms utilize blogs in their marketing strategy to either establish or improve customer relations, to create a visible and popular presence on the web, or to achieve awareness (Rettberg, 2010).

According to Loken and Haugen (2014), blogs offer companies a pool of consumers with similar interests which they can utilize to communicate with consumers, shape their attitudes while at the same time create a high level of interaction, relationship and loyalty.

While Podcasts and blogs have been attributed to embracing a successful element of direct marketing as the enable the building of a dialogue between the company and the consumers as well as extending the company’s brand image, it was expected that in the long run it could be beneficial in helping the company to build a community around its brand and invite the consumers inside the CEO’s office (Yeomans, 2006).

Since blogs might be very influential because they can provide high readers coverage, and they can produce strong persuasive influences at relative low costs, compared to traditional marketing and advertising. Consequently, a blog can play a significant role in the entire buying process from initial information search to considering choices and making final buying decisions (Loken and Haugen, 2014). A former study shows that blogs have become a powerful advertising medium that can be used to reach a wide range of consumers (Fu & Chen, 2012).

The most popular blogs are more commercial and daily-life inspired in the sense that they make money from ads on their blogs (Rettberg, 2010). Loken and Haugen (2014) note that customers become an important part of advertising as they contribute their views and opinions on the product or company, when a blogger publishes an ad or review. Research has found data that indicates that an increasing number of internet users utilize
information on blogs to shape their attitudes towards companies, brands, products or services and make buying decisions (Fu & Chen, 2012).

2.2.2 Positioning

Positioning, defined as how the company competes and serves customers in a given market, with emphasis being on customer bonding, the attraction, satisfaction and retention of customers. If done correctly, a blog can also position your company and its employees as thought leaders within the industry. This can put your company in a position of greater authority within your industry (Finchum, 2010).

According to Ball (2009), blogging is not optional. She emphasizes that if you have a business, you must have a Web site and if you have a Web site, then one must have a blog. This will enable the businesses to create an ongoing conversation with customers, prospects and other business associates. Blogs can be used to create a competitive advantage by increasing a company, its products and services visibility by posting unique, fresh content and using common search terms which will make the company’s website accessible to more people searching for similar companies with the same product and service offering.

2.2.3 Achieving Credibility

Blogs will help a company achieve credibility to their customers and thus increase the company’s market share through being the key advisors or information givers on the company’s business reach, information on key trends as well as being the referral on key news and opinion topics in line with the company’s business offering that affect the target consumers. This will create a relationship whereby the customer will be a repeat reader or visitor of the company’s website. According to Yorman (2006) the overriding consumer appeal of blogs is that they appear authentic, and they bring a level of humanity back to a faceless corporation which is echoed by Stibbe (2007) who held that businesses can and do blog successfully but the mark of a successful one is still authenticity.

Loken and Haugen (2014) noted that bloggers today are striving for credibility and trustworthiness, thus they are spending a lot of time online searching for inspiration, information, cross-checking their data and facts in order to create a page that is authentic and reliable while many people consider bloggers to be individuals with a lot of
knowledge about the subject(s) they write about. Thus, individuals read blogs to keep themselves updated with the latest trends. Hence, blogs are by many considered to be vital and valuable sources of information (Scott, 2011). In addition to a blog becoming a destination for customers and prospects to learn more about the company’s business, the blog allows these visitors to share comments, testimonials, questions and feedback (Ball, 2009).

Stibbe (2007) hold that blogs can also help change perceptions. He enforces this line of thought by giving an example of Microsoft which wanted to put a human face on its business which was widely perceived by the market as arrogant and impersonal and thus went ahead to hire Robert Scoble, and his blog, scobelizer.com, blazed a trail for thousands of Microsoft bloggers. As a result of the step Microsoft's openness supports its brand and creates a surprisingly positive forum for feedback from customers and staff.

2.2.4 Responding To Customer Issues

Catching and responding to complaints in a timely manner is also essential to brand reputation management. In addition to offering a quick reply, you want to work out the problem in a way that is satisfying to the customer and has positive results for your business (Stauss and Schoeler, 2004). The interactions you have with existing and potential customers via social media are just as important as face-to-face conversations, as people will remember how you treated them and will recommend your company based on those experiences (Business Online 360, 2013).

Loken and Haugen (2014) noted in their paper that since most bloggers permit readers to leave comments to a post of which critical comments are usually accepted by the bloggers. Furthermore, people that disagree with the blogger or the message often create debate and engagement that in some situations can be informative and helpful. Nonetheless, bloggers have the right and ability to regulate and remove comments which they deem as either spam or profanity (Scott, 2011). According to a recent survey, it is evident that social media has contributed in helping companies create and solidify their relationship with customers with the complementary use of social media networking sites and tools along with Client Relationship Management (CRM) systems (Karpinski, 2008).

The use of social media and CRM tools helps the companies utilizing them to achieve and understand a new level of customer intelligence which according to Myron (2009) enables the companies to listen to their customers’ sentiments on products and services,
to gather data and ultimately provides the companies’ business strategists and marketers with a confidence level high enough to make crucial decisions that will steer the company in a positive direction

2.3 Challenges Faced by Blogs and Bloggers

There are various challenges that blogs and bloggers in general face and this cuts across most countries. The following depicts such challenges that are experienced and this affects largely social media usage and more specifically the blogospheres.

2.3.1 Creation of Relevant Content

One of the major challenges of social media marketing is posting of relevant content (Stauss and Schoeler, 2004). It is obvious that company blogs and posts sometimes lack that professional touch hence lack company image, these will erode the company image. Occasionally, companies use celebrity in their social media marketing strategies. This strategy sometimes backfires when the celebrity image is tainted thus eroding the image of the company (Li, 2010).

According to Laff (2007), organizations are beginning to wrestle with the power of blogging while attempting to establish protocols in respect to employees having and posting their concerns or views regarding their work environment, seeing that blogs offer a new medium through which the staff’s feedback can be captured, information concerning particular details which are deemed too tedious to share on email can be shared on this forum as well as help in promoting the organizations in various strides.

2.3.2 Lack of Marketing

A common challenge faced by blogs and bloggers is having a great blog but lacking in marketing. Good marketing entails the blogger going beyond adding the address to everything they write and the ability of the blog and bloggers to reach out to the online community by actively commenting on other sites and by making sure ones site is listed in directories (Stibbe, 2007).

According to Li (2010), middle managers are likely to be unwilling to dedicate resources to collaboration initiatives such as social media, and may be threatened by the power that employees accumulate through the relationships created through increased social networking and information flow that social media enables. Along with this are firms that do social media marketing wrong because they have not invested in using agencies or
consultants who know how to do social media marketing. Firms afraid to spend the money it takes to do social media marketing right, use their failure to achieve desired results as proof that social media marketing expenditures are not valid (Business to community, 2013).

On the other hand, social marketing requires a dedicated staff that works constantly to monitor, track, and respond to the fire hose of brand chatter that goes on twenty-four hours a day (Li, 2010). This can present some organizational issues in terms of managing and quantifying the work and it can be a slippery slope for marketing departments because their daily activities can easily morph into full-time publishing duties, leaving little room for strategizing and planning and making it more difficult to quantify results (Pamorama, 2013).

2.3.3 Blog Management and Maintenance

Another challenge being the most obvious is the amount of time and effort it takes to maintain an effective blog (Finuchum, 2010) with Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) holding that one of the biggest challenges when starting any new business endeavor is allocating enough time and resources to make it work.

Challenges of Social Media Technology (SMT) are becoming more salient when we consider not just the technology itself, but also the dynamics of the users of the technology. The amount of time and effort it takes to maintain an effective blog. The benefits listed above can only be achieved if the blog is updated regularly with good content. For those not willing to put in the time and effort, it is best not to have a blog at all than to have a blog that hasn’t been updated in months (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

2.3.4 Freedom of Speech

Despite the numerous gains made by Kenyan bloggers in creating unique and rich content about Kenya on the internet as well as in providing alternative employment to young people, the perceived threat posed by bloggers in Kenya can largely be attributed to the bloggers who write on politics and recently, on devolution as well as social media users who are outspoken about their political views and opinions on the current political leadership and governance in Kenya (BAKE, 2015).

According to Freedom House’s report on the state of Internet Freedom in Kenya 2014, despite robust constitutional protections for freedom of expression, Kenya’s Parliament
passed some of the most repressive media legislation in the country’s 50-year history in 2013. The Kenyan Government is seemingly becoming intolerant of voices of dissent and dissident citizens online who have continued to become more vocal on social media and blogs (BAKE, 2015).

### 2.3.5 Blogging within Law Restrictions

Many Kenyan bloggers and influencers are unaware of the existing Kenyan laws that touch on internet use, the freedoms provisioned for from the Kenyan Constitution 2010 as well as the limitation that are in the existing laws according to BAKE (2015). Nonetheless ignorance of the law is not a defense and this means that social media users, which includes bloggers, need to familiarize themselves with the Penal Code (Freedom of the Press 2014, Report).

Internationally, public companies and their advisers struggle with the challenges of communicating responsibly with stockholders and other market participants in light of the dangers associated with corporate communications in a litigious environment, according to Pinedo and Tanenbaum (2007) hence to avoid insider trading information and leakage that would put the company’s and possibly individuals at risk.

In Kenya, there has been increasing pressure from government through the Communications Authority (CA) and the Media Council to regulate bloggers and subject them to the same manner of strict regulation as journalists. At a forum with bloggers representatives from CA and Kenic, two government bodies, affirmed the thinking of government to regulate bloggers. Officials from various government institutions have stated that this is something that needs to be done so as to regulate what bloggers say (BAKE, 2015).

### 2.3.6 Privacy

Privacy is fast becoming one of the biggest areas of concern both online and offline (Lewis, 2010). A considerable amount of attention has been focused on how social networks deal with personal information, with Facebook becoming a case study in both how not to handle personal information and how to backtrack and pay more attention to its users rights (Aula, 2010).

Similarly, businesses are going to find their privacy policies and practices subject to intense scrutiny going forward. In addition to these general challenges, there are a
number of scary questions lurking on the sidelines. One of these is how online publicity will undermine offline privacy and what institutions like banks are going to do to address the security gaps that online publicity on the social web will create (Get Smarter, 2013). Disclosure of confidential information is seen as a risk from a number of different perspectives. Employees can unintentionally disclose information in social media. This can occur, for example, when writing a blog or posting messages in social media, and can be related to the merging of private and professional identity. Additional concerns exist regarding personal privacy on social networking sites. Lewis (2011) argue that in order to understand the privacy behaviors in SMT, we must consider the changing nature of the technology, the various users, and the diverse purposes and meaning each type of user attributes to technology.

2.3.7 Reputation Risk

Social media if not managed well and with no strategies and policies can have a huge effect on brand image. Papworth (2009) noted that the primary external challenge related to social media adoption and use in organizations is company reputation management. Many companies use social networking technology in their marketing efforts to communicate with customers and attract new business (Light et al., 2008). However, as Aula (2010) argued, Social Media (SM) can also represent a reputation risk when using it for corporate communication. Regarding reputation management, he holds that it is imperative to remember that SM content cannot be controlled in advance, and that content cannot be managed in the same way as TV and newspapers.

Kaplan and Haenlein, (2010), advised companies to remember that the integration of SM and traditional media is key, as these two arenas are both part of the company’s corporate image, and thus of the company’s reputation. With brand reputation also comes handling negative comments. This is usually the challenge that leads to a company spiraling out of control with their SM campaign. At some point, someone is going to say something about the company that may not be liked. It might be a comment on the blog or a random Tweet, but how this is handled will determine how successful a company will be with their social media campaign. The thing is there isn’t really one set method of handling negative comments (Trusov et al, 2009).

Farhoomand et al. (2000) have identified social challenges in the adoption of electronic commerce (e-commerce) as technical issues such as the lack of adequate infrastructure.
Also, Storm et al. (2002) list internal challenges in e-commerce adoption as a lack of knowledge or awareness within the organization, and resource limitations. These issues are also relevant in the context of social media and more so on blogs: although infrastructure for social media is typically easily available, organizational resistance and the justification of costs and resource usage are still relevant topics that need to be addressed.

2.4 Implementation of Strategic Competitive Advantage

2.4.1 Building and Maintaining the Brand Image

Que Publishing (2011) holds that it is no longer enough to simply know the tools of social media, organizations need to know how to apply them strategically to gain a sustainable, competitive advantage. They introduced Humanize, with an aim to provide proven strategies for using social media to create comprehensive change and opportunities for growth. Humanize is a tool which is said to help readers change the organization from the inside out while addressing critical elements of the organizational behaviour, process and culture in order to create a success that goes beyond profit and loss.

Even though blogging tools are free and can be unofficial, blogs should still be written using good language and following a clearly depicted train of thought as the content of the blogs are a direct reflection of the company’s image. Thus, this goes to show that planning, honesty and openness are important virtues to maintain given that such online creations may live forever online, whether wanted or not (Evans, 2008)

According to the Nielsen Company, Digital advertising continues to grow as marketers follow fragmenting audiences across screens. Within the digital medium, which has traditionally been dominated by direct response advertising, brand marketing growth is now outpacing direct response (Nielsen Report, 2014) with a major shift pointing towards a more screen-agnostic approach to advertising and this fuels marketer’s need for brand relevant metrics that go across screens in a world where agencies and media owners continue to offer digital-only measure of success.

Yeomans (2006), who is the founder of Custom Communication, Blogging4Business a one day conference organized by Custom Communications and has over the years become a success and crucial for company’s seeking to be part of the blogging sphere, says that some of the biggest companies on the planet are launching interactive news,
commentary and 'brand experience' blogs and noted that Coca-Cola, Starwood Hotels, Honda, Nokia, Benetton, Ducati, Guinness and HSBC caught the ‘blogging fever’.

2.4.2 Alternate Advertising Avenue

According to Li and Bernoff, (2008) “Groundswell” is a term that was coined by Forrester researchers, and it is used to describe the consumer online activity and user generated content and it is from this point that companies started taking into consideration their engagement and participation in online conversations with companies the likes of Lego and IBM taking the bold step of building internal community forums and corporate blogs while Dell and Ford companies began to reach out to their customers using online social media tools and with time, the marketing functions within other companies were forced to integrate social media in their marketing campaigns.

With this in mind, the use of Facebook and Twitter, having gained popularity in their use in marketing as a way of reaching the masses, it also gained favour to the businesses to use social media sites as they proved to be relatively low cost-to-implement while overtaking the needs of the common and traditional advertising and promotional needs (Li and Bernoff, 2008).

As digital advertising continues to grow in Kenya with more and more brands seeing the value of advertising online using Google Adwords, Adsense, blogs and Social Media due to the increase in smart phone penetration in Kenya, bloggers and social media users with large followings have become influencers on brands to consumers. The value of online Kenyan advertising industry by the end of 2013 stood at Ksh.165 billion and this is forecast to rise to over Ksh.301 Billion by 2018. This is according to the Kenyan entertainment and media outlook: 2013 – 2017 report by PWC (BAKE, 2015).

2.4.3 Promoting Information Flow

In Kenya, as predicted by the Nendo 2014 report, the age of the influencer is upon Kenya and agencies need to find better ways to spend on digital. Mobile will take precedence, naturally. For the influencers there will be more focus on content creation and crafting careers online as well as disclosure (BAKE, 2015). Furthermore, brands are now appointing bloggers and influencers as brand ambassadors as has been the case with Sharon Mundia of www.thisisess.com who is now the brand ambassador for Store 66 and the new face of Samsung A series in Kenya. This goes to show that the adoption of
bloggers and influencers to be brand representatives is on the rise and this allows the target consumers to relate with, and want to emulate the ambassadors who seem to portray what the consumers would like to be, or want to have. Online media, advertising and influencers, largely appeal to the human need of wanting to belong, gaining recognition and achieving a certain status in the society according to their peers or the society’s outlook at large.

According to Phil and Sandström (2013), in their paper on a case study focusing on Sweden fashion bloggers and their impact on value creation and appropriation in social media, they concluded that the fashion bloggers have high credibility and thus facilitate the flow of consumer information and choice. The blogs contain both private and commercial information which enables the blogger to develop and create customer intimacy which is by far different from the traditional marketing channels which have distant between the customer and the organization to their disadvantage. Relationships that result from such avenues are of value to the blogs as a source of revenue through advertisements, brand creation and formation ad purchases from online stores. Phil and Sandström (2013), further emphasize that bloggers have become powerful intermediaries who are better placed and in contact with the customers’ sentiments compared to the fashion firms themselves.

2.4.4 Creating a Relationship with Customers

Miller, a Harvard professor echoed that the press is important in uncovering things and that they seem to uncover one-third of the news or information in advance thereby going on to create original information in most situations and scenarios and this information is often releases before the common or old ways of media information movement, this was after conducting an in-depth research on how the press digs up original information on accounting malfeasance (Blotter 2010).

Such an impact in the current age of information overload to customers has proven to be beneficial when companies, in a bit to beat their competition in marketing, will often use media such as Facebook, Twitter, Influencers, Blogs and Blogging forums to release their latest updates to their consumers. This goes ahead to create the much needed ‘buzz’ and being a ‘trending topic’ of discussion on such forums is profitable. The difference between the times required to create a television or radio campaign advertisement s much longer than what is required to create the buzz on other social media platforms to create
the buzz. This in the long run greatly impacts the market share captured by the company in comparison to its competitor’s (Shiau and Luo, 2013).

Companies can gain competitive advantage by targeting baby boomers according to a study research led by Shandwick which undertook its study by focusing on 502 U.S Boomers and observed that “Boomer-to Friend” communication provides for untapped potential to influence purchasing decisions as nearly 57% are asked for product and service recommendation almost twice a week and of those who were asked to make recommendations in the past one year, 89 percent advised their fellow boomers. The research concluded that nearly all boomers 93 percent identified boomer friends as being trusted information sources (Blotter, 2010). Therefore keeping the boomers informed is a crucial root to creating strategic competitive advantage.

The study by Blotter (2010) also noted that 42 percent of boomers stated that their purchasing decisions were influenced by a company’s social or environmental policies therefore companies should consider including messages regarding their socially responsible activities in communication with current and perspective customers. This further emphasizes that power of social media and blogs being the focus of this study, impacts the image of the company in the consumers mind and goes a long way in creating repeat customers or users of their products and services as well as possibly attracting new customers.

2.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented the literature review with regards to the research questions guiding the study. First and foremost, the extent to which blogs have been used to achieve competitive advantage so far is expounded on, then the challenges faced by the blogs and bloggers are explained and finally the extent to which blogs and bloggers affect the implementation and achievement of strategic competitive advantage. Chapter three will detail the research methodology to be adopted for the study.
CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
This chapter presents the research methodology that will be used to carry out the study. Research methodology is a way of systematically solving the research problem and may readily be understood as the science of scientifically studying how research is done. It discusses the research design that will be used, sample size and sample collection.

The chapter documents the methods and procedures the researcher adopted while conducting the study in order to answer the research questions as outlined in chapter one. The structure of the chapter follows as the research design being presented first, followed by the population and sample, data collection methods, sampling design to used, sample size to considered, research procedures to be followed, data analysis to be utilized and lastly the chapter summary.

3.2 Research Design
According to Calderon and Gonzales (2012), a research design involves establishing and stating the general research approach or strategy adopted for the particular project. It is the basis of planning. The research design should adhere to the research objectives. Calmorin (2010) defined research design as the specification of techniques and methodologies for acquiring the information required. It is a detailed outline on how the research will take place. It presents an over-all operational framework of the project that specifies what information is to be collected from which source by in what form and procedures.

The study adopted a descriptive research design which is defined as a statistical method that involves surveys and fact-finding enquiries of different kinds (Calderon and Gonzales, 2012). The key role of descriptive research is describing the state of affairs as it exists at present through quantitatively synthesizing the empirical evidence of a specific field of research. This study utilized purposive sampling since only blogs that regularly update their content and have growing readership are favourably approached by companies to work in campaigns or as brand ambassadors were sampled for the study.
3.3 Population and Sampling

3.3.1 Population

A population is the entire pool from which a statistical sample is drawn and population usually has some common observable characteristics (Calmorin, 2010). For this study, the population was composed of 212 blogs which are observed and considered as active by the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE).

**Table 3.1 Population Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blog Category</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mum Blogs</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topical</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious/spiritual</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment/agriculture</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.2 Sampling Design

3.3.2.1 Sampling Frame

According to Denscombe (2010), a sampling frame should comprise a comprehensively updated inventory of all that comprise the population for the research. A Sampling frame clearly defines the set of elements to be used by the researcher while selecting a sample
of the target population. The sampling frame was obtained from the commercial arm of BAKE, the Bloggers Association Limited.

3.3.2.2 Sampling Technique

Sampling technique plays a crucial role in diverse problem solving and because one sampling technique may not be suitable for all problems, specific sampling techniques are applied for different scenarios. Choosing the most appropriate sampling technique is equally critical so as to obtain an accurate representation (Saunders et al., 2013). Stratified and simple random sampling was utilized to ensure that various blog categories are represented in the selection of the study respondents where stratified sampling was used to group the bloggers by niche, while simple random was used give each blog or blogger a fair and equal chance of being sampled.

3.3.2.3 Sample Size

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2011) highlighted that statistical probability determines generalizations about populations from data collected using any probability sample. A larger sample size is associated with a lesser likelihood of errors hence a higher accuracy level. Out of target population of 213 blogs, a 20% selection from each category was selected to be the true representative of the population thus a sample size of 43 was chosen based given that according to Giorgi (2002), a sample size between 5-20% is ideal to represent the entire population. With 20%, the study was able to get the information that was both conclusive and unbiased.
Table 3.2 Sample Size Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blog Category</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mum Blogs</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topical</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious/spiritual</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment/agriculture</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Data Collection

Primary data was collected for this study by the use of survey questionnaires. Babbie and Benaquisto (2009) posit that this form of data collection is critical in ensuring consistency, accuracy and comparison of responses. The design of the questionnaire was in the form of a five point Likert scale and open ended questions. The Likert scale assesses the respondents’ opinions on a five point scale with strongly positive on one extreme and strongly negative on the other extreme. The open ended questions allowed the respondents to express their opinions freely without any kind of restrictions. This was necessary to highlight issues otherwise not addressed by the Likert scale.

The questionnaire developed had four sections with the first seeking to detail the respondents’ demographic characteristics. The second explored the extent to which blogs and bloggers have been used in to achieve strategic advantage in Kenya. The third
explored the challenges of blogs and blogging in Kenya. Fourth explored the strategies used to utilize blogs and blogging to achieve a competitive advantage.

3.5 Research Procedure
For this study, after the research proposal had been approved, an introductory letter was sought from the Chandaria School of Business to authenticate and facilitate the data collection process. A pilot was carried out using 10 members of the study population. The ten pilot subjects were later excluded from the study. The pilot was critical as it helped in identifying questions which were not clear to the respondents and adjustments made before the actual study.

The introductory letter and the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in hard copies for filling and for those who could not be met in person, google forms was used to distribute the questionnaires. The respondents were identified by the commercial arm of BAKE. The respondents were allowed a period of one week after which the duly filled questionnaires were collected for coding and analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis
Data analysis involves use of logical analytical tools to examine data collected for research purposes to generate summaries, observe trends and or patterns with the aim of making inferences so as to draw informed conclusions (Cooper and Schindler, 2003). For this study, the primary data collected was coded into numerical figures which were then entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis.

The analysis commenced with the descriptive analysis (frequencies and percentages) of the respondents demographics and further correlations were carried out to determine the relationships among variables. The findings obtained from the data analysis were summarized and presented in distribution tables and figures.

3.7 Chapter Summary
This chapter expressively presents the intended research methodology, procedures and design on this descriptive study and analyzing data with regards to the research objectives highlighted in the first chapter. The study adopted a descriptive research design. This chapter has also presented the population of the study which composed of 213 active blogs as monitored by BAKE with a sample size 43 being used on the percentage method. The sampling technique adopted was presented followed by the
research procedures, and finally the data analysis methods. Chapter four will present the results and findings of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the results and findings of the research questions as detailed in the first chapter and in reference to the data as collected from the respondents’ using the distributed questionnaires. General information regarding the respondents is covered in the first section, while the following second, third and fourth sections cover the different aspects with regards to the research objectives. A total of 33 questionnaires were returned out of 43 issued indicating 76% response rate.

4.2 Demographic Information

4.2.1 Respondents’ Gender

Table 4.1 reveals that the respondents’ pool comprised of 58% females while 42% were male. This shows that the women were well-represented in the study in comparison to the males.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2 Age of the Respondents

As seen in table 4.2 it is evident that 74% of the respondents were of the age 18-30, while the remaining 26% were 31-40. This implies that the blogging industry is mainly composed of youthful people.
Table 4.2: Age of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.3 Blog Category

As presented in table 4.3, the most common blog category was the one for Lifestyle with 16%, followed by entertainment 10%, creative writing 10%, travel, photography, food and fashion all at 6%, agriculture 3%, business 3%, Christian 3%, entertainment 3%, family 3%, health 3%, political issues.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blog Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business; Technology; Politics, Science, General matters of interest.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian blog</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Writing; Entertainment; Lifestyle</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith and Spiritual matters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Blog</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion; Lifestyle; Natural Hair</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion; Natural Hair</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food&amp; Travel</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History and Culture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENTORSHIP</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political and socio-economic issues</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>travel</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.4 Number of Years in BAKE

As seen in table 4.4 it is evident that majority of the bloggers (48%), are not members of BAKE. On the other hand 13% of the respondents have been registered with BAKE for 1 year, 13% have been registered for 2-3 years, 16% for 3-4 years while 6% have been reregistered for more than 5 years.

Table 4.4: Number of Years in Association with BAKE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1 Years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 Years</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 Years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 5 Years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Registered</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.5 Payment

Table 4.5 reveals that majority of the respondents (45%) do not receive any monetary payments, on the other hand 16% of the respondents receive 1-20,000 as monetary payment while 19% receive 21,000-40,000 as monetary payment from blogging. Similarly 6% of the respondents receive between 41,000 to 60,000 as their monetary payment.

Table 4.5: Payment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payment</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Monetary payment)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-20,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41,000-60,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61,000-100,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 100,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.6 Correlation Analysis

Table 4.6 reveals that there was positive correlation analysis between age and gender of the respondents with a correlation coefficient of 0.044.

Table 4.6: Age and Gender Correlation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7 further shows that there was a positive correlation between age of the respondents and the number of years in BAKE. This implies that the age of a blogger or blogs has a role to play when it comes to the number of years one is registered as a member of BAKE.

Table 4.7: Age and Number of Years Correlation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number of Years in BAKE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.324*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Years in BAKE</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
4.3 Achieving Strategic Competitive Advantage Using Blogs

The second objective of the study was to examine to what extent have blogs and blogging been used to achieve strategic advantage in Kenya. The following subsection presents findings with regards to this element of the study.

4.3.1 Increase in Number of Visitors on Blogs

Figure 4.1 reveals that 23% of the respondents strongly agree, 65% agree, 10% were neutral as 3% disagree that there is an increase in the number of visitors on blogs.

![Figure 4.1: Increase in Number of Visitors on Blogs](image)

4.3.2 Increase in Number of Banner Advertisements

Figure 4.2 reveals that 21 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 55 percent agreed, 3 percent were neutral, 9 percent disagreed and 12 percent strongly disagreed that there is an increase in the number of banner advertisements in blogs.

![Figure 4.2: Increase in Number of Banner Advertisements](image)
4.3.3 Increase in Number of Company or Brand Mentions in Blogs

Figure 4.3 reveals that 29 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 58 percent agreed, 5 percent were neutral, 3 percent disagreed and 5 percent strongly disagreed that there is an increase in the number of company or brand mentions in blogs.

![Figure 4.3: Increase in Number of Company or Brand Mentions in Blogs](image)

4.3.4 Bloggers Are Being Used To Endorse Company Products and Messages

Figure 4.4 reveals that 33 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 57 percent agreed, 2 percent were neutral, 6 percent disagreed and 2 percent strongly disagreed that bloggers are being used to endorse company products and messages.

![Figure 4.4: Bloggers Are Being Used To Endorse Company Products and Messages](image)
4.3.5 Bloggers Have Become the Face of Different Companies from International Markets

Figure 4.5 reveals that 29 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 62 percent agreed, 4 percent were neutral, 2 percent disagreed and 3 percent strongly disagreed that bloggers have become the face of different companies from international markets.

![Figure 4.5: Bloggers Have Become the Face of Different Companies from International Markets](image)

4.3.6 Bloggers Are Used By Companies to Test Their Products

Figure 4.6 reveals that 25 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 49 percent agreed, 5 percent were neutral, 9 percent disagreed and 12 percent strongly disagreed that bloggers are used by companies to test their products.

![Figure 4.6: Bloggers Are Used By Companies to Test Their Products](image)
4.3.7 Product Endorsements from Blogs and Bloggers Increases Awareness in the Market

Figure 4.7 reveals that 33 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 47 percent agreed, 12 percent were neutral, 0 percent disagreed and 3 percent strongly disagreed, that product endorsement from blogs and bloggers increases awareness in the market.

![Figure 4.7: Product Endorsements from Blogs and Bloggers Increases Awareness in the Market](chart)

4.3.8 Blogs and Bloggers Have Been Used To Communicate Authenticity of Brands

Figure 4.8 reveals that 15 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 62 percent agreed, 3 percent were neutral, 14 percent disagreed and 6 percent strongly disagreed that blogs and bloggers have been used to communicate authenticity of brands.

![Figure 4.8: Blogs and Bloggers Have Been Used To Communicate Authenticity of Brands](chart)
4.3.9 Blogs and Bloggers Have Been Used By Companies to Correct Negative Publicity Regarding Their Brands

Figure 4.9 reveals that 18 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 65 percent agreed, 4 percent were neutral, 11 percent disagreed and 2 percent strongly disagreed that blogs and bloggers have been used by companies to correct negative publicity regarding their brands.

![Bar Chart: Blogs and Bloggers Have Been Used By Companies to Correct Negative Publicity Regarding Their Brands]

Figure 4.9: Blogs and Bloggers Have Been Used By Companies to Correct Negative Publicity Regarding Their Brands

4.3.10 Visitors Comments on Blogs

Figure 4.10 reveals that 27 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 55 percent agreed, 4 percent were neutral, 4 percent disagreed and 10 percent strongly disagreed that visitor’s comments on blogs are used by the companies to respond to any customer issues or queries.

![Bar Chart: Visitors Comments on Blogs]

Figure 4.10: Visitors Comments
4.3.11 Bloggers Influence Opinion

Figure 4.11 reveals that 33 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 47 percent agreed, 12 percent were neutral, 0 percent disagreed and 3 percent strongly disagreed, that bloggers or influencers opinions on products and services are used by companies to improve their service and product offering.

![Bar chart showing the distribution of responses to a question about bloggers and influencers influence on opinion.](image)

**Figure 4.11: Bloggers Influence Opinion**

Table 4.8 further presents descriptive statistics with regards to achieving competitive advantage. As seen in the table achieving credibility had the highest mean of 4.7875, followed by positioning with a mean of 4.2375, then direct marketing with a mean of 3.5125 and finally responding to customer issues with a mean of 2.6250.

**Table 4.8: Achieving Competitive Advantage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Marketing</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.5125</td>
<td>.54875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positioning</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.2375</td>
<td>.45273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving Credibility</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.7875</td>
<td>.40648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to Customer issues</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.6250</td>
<td>.70484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Challenges Faced By Blogs and Bloggers

The second objective of the study was to examine the challenges faced by bloggers and blogs. Table 4.9 shows that the challenges faced by bloggers include: creation of Relevant Content (82%), lack of marketing (70%), lack of management and maintenance (62%), freedom of Speech and Law Restrictions (58%), reputation Risk (51%).

Table 4.9: Challenges Faced By Blogs and Bloggers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Relevant Content</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of marketing</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of management and maintenance</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of Speech and Law Restrictions</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation Risk</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.1 Creation of Relevant Content

Figure 4.12 reveals that 56 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 26 percent agreed, 8 percent were neutral, 8 percent disagreed and 2 percent strongly disagreed that creation of relevant content is a challenge to blogs and bloggers.
4.4.2 Lack of Marketing

Figure 4.12 reveals that 48 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 22 percent agreed, 20 percent were neutral, 8 percent disagreed and 2 percent strongly disagreed that lack of marketing is a challenge to blogs and bloggers.

4.4.3 Lack of Management and Maintenance

Figure 4.13 reveals that 34 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 28 percent agreed, 20 percent were neutral, 6 percent disagreed and 12 percent strongly disagreed that lack of management and maintenance is a challenge to blogs and bloggers.
4.4.4 Freedom of Speech and Law Restrictions

Figure 4.15 reveals that 36 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 22 percent agreed, 36 percent were neutral, 2 percent disagreed and 4 percent strongly disagreed that freedom of speech and law restrictions is a challenge to blogs and bloggers.
4.4.5 Reputation Risk

Figure 4.16 reveals that 34 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 17 percent agreed, 19 percent were neutral, 3 percent disagreed and 6 percent strongly disagreed that reputation risk is a challenge to blogs and bloggers.

![Reputation Risk Chart]

Figure 4.16: Reputation Risk

Table 4.10: Ranking Challenges Faced By Blogs and Bloggers

Table 4.10 ranks the challenges faced by blogs and bloggers. The results show that the creation of relevant content was the highest ranked challenge with a mean of 3.81, followed by lack of marketing with a mean of 3.38, freedom of speech and law restrictions with a mean of 2.82, the lack of management and maintenance with a mean of 2.60 and finally reputation risk 2.59.

Table 4.10: Ranking Challenges Faced By Blogs and Bloggers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges Faced By Blogs and Bloggers</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Relevant Content</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of marketing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>.843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of management and maintenance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>.894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of Speech and Law Restrictions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation Risk</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>.553</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 Implementation of Strategic Competitive Advantage

The third and final objective of the study was to examine how Kenyan blogs and blogging affect relationships and implementation of strategic competitive advantage. The following subsection looks at the implementation of strategic competitive advantage.

4.5.1 Blogs/Blogging and Bloggers Help Companies Build and Maintaining The Brand Image

Figure 4.17 reveals that 66 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 12 percent agreed, 4 percent were neutral, 9 percent disagreed and 9 percent strongly disagreed that blogs/blogging and bloggers help companies build and maintaining the brand image.

![Figure 4.17: Blogs/Blogging and Bloggers Help Companies Build and Maintaining the Brand Image](image)

4.5.2 Blogs have been used as an Alternate Advertising

Figure 4.18 reveals that 54 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 32 percent agreed, 3 percent were neutral, 6 percent disagreed and 5 percent strongly disagreed that blogs have been used as an alternate advertising avenue instead of traditional advertising.
4.5.3 Blog and Blogging Can Be Used To Improve Company Information Flow to Its Consumers

Figure 4.19 reveals that 51 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 40 percent agreed, 4 percent were neutral, 2 percent disagreed and 3 percent strongly disagreed that blog and blogging can be used to improve company information flow to its consumers.

4.5.4 Blogs can be used to Create Relationships between the Company and Consumers

Figure 4.20 reveals that 60 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 26 percent agreed, 1 percent were neutral, 8 percent disagreed and 5 percent strongly disagreed that blogs
can be used to create relationships between the company and the consumers.

Figure 4.20: Blogs can be used to Create Relationships between the Company and Consumers

4.5.5 Blogs Receive Regular Clients Whom the Advertising Companies Are Targeting

Figure 4.21 reveals that 57 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 31 percent agreed, 2 percent were neutral, 6 percent disagreed and 4 percent strongly disagreed that Blogs receive regular clients whom the advertising companies are targeting.

Figure 4.21: Blogs Receive Regular Clients Whom the Advertising Companies Are Targeting
4.5.6 The Number of Visitors on a Blog Translate To Valuable Sales

Figure 4.22 reveals that 69 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 15 percent agreed, 5 percent were neutral, 7 percent disagreed and 4 percent strongly disagreed that the number of visitors on a blog translate to valuable sales.

![Bar chart showing the distribution of responses to the statement: The number of visitors on a blog translate to valuable sales.](image)

**Figure 4.22: The Number of Visitors on a Blog Translate To Valuable Sales**

Table 4.11 shows that blogs positively correlates to implementation of strategic advantage with Pearson correlation being 0.552.

**Table 4.11: Implementing Strategic Advantage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Strategic Advantage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>Pearson C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.552*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

Table 4.12 further presents descriptive statistics with regards to implementing strategic advantage. As presented in table 4.12 blogs/blogging and bloggers help companies build and maintaining the brand image had a mean of 2.652, blog and blogging can be used to improve company information flow to its consumers had a mean of 2.225, blogs can be used to create relationships between the company and consumers had a mean of 2.25 also blogs receive regular clients whom the advertising companies are targeting 1.95 and finally number of visitors on a blog translate to valuable sales had a mean of 4.15.
Table 4.12: Descriptive Statistics for Implementing Strategic Advantage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternate Advertising</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.625</td>
<td>.77418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Company Information Flow</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.225</td>
<td>.61966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Relationships</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.250</td>
<td>.74248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Clients</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.950</td>
<td>.63851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Visitors</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.150</td>
<td>.89299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Chapter Summary

The chapter presented the results and findings based on the research questions while taking into account the data collected from the respondents. The chapter followed a format of the general information of the respondents being covered in the first section, while the second, third and fourth sections covered the different aspects with regards to the research questions guiding the study. Chapter five will discuss the findings, give conclusions and make recommendations based on the findings.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The chapter contains four sections following the order of the summary, discussion, conclusion and recommendations. The summary details the important elements of the study such as the research questions, methodology and findings of the study, while the second section clearly discusses the findings of the study in regards to the guiding research questions. The third section follows, and details the study’s conclusion based on the results obtained from the results and findings as detailed in chapter four.

5.2 Summary

The study was aimed at investigating how blogs have been used to gain competitive advantage in the various industries. The study was guided by the following research questions:

- To what extent have blogs and blogging been used to achieve strategic advantage in Kenya?
- What are the challenges that Kenyan blogs and bloggers face?
- How do Kenyan blogs and blogging affect relationships and implementation of strategic competitive advantage?

A descriptive research design was used. The population for this study comprised of 212 blogs which are observed and considered as active by the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE). The study utilized a descriptive research design, and adopted stratified sampling as the sampling technique. A sample size of 43 was chosen based on the percentage method. Data analysis was undertaken using Statistical Package for Social Services (SPSS), and the findings obtained presented using tables and figures. The findings for the three research questions are presented in chapter four with the study regression analysis being presented last to determine any relationships between the study variables. The conclusion and recommendations of the study are presented last in chapter five.

The study revealed that achieving credibility had the highest mean of 4.7875, followed by positioning with a mean of 4.2375, then direct marketing with a mean of 3.5125 and finally responding to customer issues with a mean of 2.6250.

The study further revealed that the challenges faced by bloggers include: creation of Relevant Content (82%), lack of marketing (70%), lack of management and maintenance (62%), freedom of Speech and Law Restrictions (58%), reputation Risk (51%).
Finally the study revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that blogs/blogging and bloggers help companies build and maintaining the brand image, blogs have been used as an alternate advertising avenue instead of traditional advertising (radio, t.v., print media, billboards), blog and blogging can be used to improve company information flow to its consumers, blogs can be used to create relationships between the company and the consumers, blogs receive regular clients whom the advertising companies are targeting and finally the number of visitors on a blog translate to valuable sales.

5.3 Discussion
5.3.1 Achieving Strategic Advantage

The study revealed that achieving credibility had the highest mean of 4.7875, followed by positioning with a mean of 4.2375, then direct marketing with a mean of 3.5125 and finally responding to customer issues with a mean of 2.6250. In a paper written by Marken (2006), 27% of internet users read blogs with the top 400 blogs having a reach of 50 million people all according to Pew/Internet, the writer further tabulated that there is a 58% annual increase in blog readership that is expected to be evident according to the numbers and growth projections across the total global internet and this can be attributed to being one of the main reasons why service sellers and agencies are adding blogs or blogging as a valuable Public Relations (PR) tool to their service offering for clients. Marken (2006), further emphasized that blogs and blogging has some potential and it has some pitfalls.

The findings also agree with Ball (2009), who argues that blogging is not optional. She emphasizes that if you have a business, you must have a Web site and if you have a Web site, then one must have a blog. This will enable the businesses to create an ongoing conversation with customers, prospects and other business associates. Blogs can be used to create a competitive advantage by increasing a company, its products and services visibility by posting unique, fresh content and using common search terms which will make the company’s website accessible to more people searching for similar companies with the same product and service offering.

The findings that 18% of the respondents strongly agree, 65% agree, further agrees with Stibbe (2007) who hold that blogs can also help change perceptions. He enforces this line of thought by giving an example of Microsoft which wanted to put a human face on its business which was widely perceived by the market as arrogant and impersonal and thus
went ahead to hire Robert Scoble, and his blog, scobelizer.com, blazed a trail for thousands of Microsoft bloggers. As a result of the step Microsoft’s openness supports its brand and creates a surprisingly positive forum for feedback from customers and staff. According to Loken and Haugen (2014), blogs offer companies a pool of consumers with similar interests which they can utilize to communicate with consumers, shape their attitudes while at the same time create a high level of interaction, relationship and loyalty. While Podcasts and blogs have been attributed to embracing a successful element of direct marketing as the enable the building of a dialogue between the company and the consumers as well as extending the company’s brand image, it was expected that in the long run it could be beneficial in helping the company to build a community around its brand and invite the consumers inside the CEO’s office (Yeomans, 2006).

The findings that 33% strongly agreed and 47% agreed while 12% were neutral, 0% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed to the question that bloggers influence users’ opinions goes to show that blogs might be very influential because they can provide high readers coverage, and they can produce strong persuasive influences at relative low costs, compared to traditional marketing and advertising. Consequently, a blog can play a significant role in the entire buying process from initial information search to considering choices and making final buying decisions (Loken and Haugen, 2014). A former study shows that blogs have become a powerful advertising medium that can be used to reach a wide range of consumers (Fu & Chen, 2012). The most popular blogs are more commercial and daily-life inspired in the sense that they make money from ads on their blogs (Rettberg, 2010). Loken and Haugen (2014) note that customers become an important part of advertising as they contribute their views and opinions on the product or company, when a blogger publishes an ad or review. Research has found data that indicates that an increasing number of internet users utilize information on blogs to shape their attitudes towards companies, brands, products or services and make buying decisions (Fu & Chen, 2012).

Finally the findings agree that catching and responding to complaints in a timely manner is also essential to brand reputation management. In addition to offering a quick reply, you want to work out the problem in a way that is satisfying to the customer and has positive results for your business (Stauss and Schoeler, 2004). The interactions you have
with existing and potential customers via social media are just as important as face-to-face conversations, as people will remember how you treated them and will recommend your company based on those experiences (Business Online 360, 2013).

According to a recent survey, it is evident that social media has contributed in helping companies create and solidify their relationship with customers with the complementary use of social media networking sites and tools along with Client Relationship Management (CRM) systems (Karpinski, 2008). This is evident from the findings where 18% the respondents strongly agree while 65% agree that blogs and bloggers have been used by companies to correct negative publicity.

Given that 27% strongly agreed and 55% agreed that visitors comments on blogs are used by companies to respond to any issues or queries echoes the fact that the use of social media and CRM tools helps the companies utilizing them to achieve and understand a new level of customer intelligence which according to Myron (2009) enables the companies to listen to their customers’ sentiments on products and services, to gather data and ultimately provides the companies’ business strategists and marketers with a confidence level high enough to make crucial decisions that will steer the company in a positive direction

5.3.2 Challenge Faced by Bloggers

The study further revealed that the challenges faced by bloggers include: creation of Relevant Content (82%), lack of marketing (70%), lack of management and maintenance (62%), freedom of Speech and Law Restrictions (58%), reputation Risk (51%). One of the major challenges of social media marketing is posting of relevant content (Stauss and Schoeler, 2004). It is obvious that company blogs and posts sometimes lack that professional touch hence lack company image, these will erode the company image. Occasionally, companies use celebrity in their social media marketing strategies. This strategy sometimes backfires when the celebrity image is tainted thus eroding the image of the company (Li, 2010).

According to Laff (2007), organizations are beginning to wrestle with the power of blogging while attempting to establish protocols in respect to employees having and posting their concerns or views regarding their work environment, seeing that blogs offer a new medium through which the staff’s feedback can be captured, information
concerning particular details which are deemed too tedious to share on email can be shared on this forum as well as help in promoting the organizations in various strides.

The findings also agree with Li (2010), that indeed middle managers are likely to be unwilling to dedicate resources to collaboration initiatives such as social media, and may be threatened by the power that employees accumulate through the relationships created through increased social networking and information flow that social media enables. Along with this are firms that do social media marketing wrong because they have not invested in using agencies or consultants who know how to do social media marketing. Firms afraid to spend the money it takes to do social media marketing right, use their failure to achieve desired results as proof that social media marketing expenditures are not valid (Business to community, 2013).

The findings agree with the Freedom House’s report on the state of Internet Freedom in Kenya 2014, despite robust constitutional protections for freedom of expression, Kenya’s Parliament passed some of the most repressive media legislation in the country’s 50-year history in 2013. The Kenyan Government is seemingly becoming intolerant of voices of dissent and dissident citizens online who have continued to become more vocal on social media and blogs (BAKE, 2015).

Additionally the findings agree that many Kenyan bloggers and influencers are unaware of the existing Kenyan laws that touch on internet use, the freedoms provisioned for from the Kenyan Constitution 2010 as well as the limitation that are in the existing laws according to BAKE (2015). Nonetheless ignorance of the law is not a defense and this means that social media users, which includes bloggers, need to familiarize themselves with the Penal Code (Freedom of the Press 2014, Report).

Internationally, public companies and their advisers struggle with the challenges of communicating responsibly with stockholders and other market participants in light of the dangers associated with corporate communications in a litigious environment, according to Pinedo and Tanenbaum (2007) hence to avoid insider trading information and leakage that would put the company’s and possibly individuals at risk. In Kenya, there has been increasing pressure from government through the Communications Authority (CA) and the Media Council to regulate bloggers and subject them to the same manner of strict regulation as journalists. At a forum40 with bloggers representatives from CA and Kenic, two government bodies, affirmed the thinking of government to
regulate bloggers. Officials from various government institutions have stated that this is something that needs to be done so as to regulate what bloggers say (BAKE, 2015).

On the other hand, social marketing requires a dedicated staff that works constantly to monitor, track, and respond to the fire hose of brand chatter that goes on twenty-four hours a day (Li, 2010). This can present some organizational issues in terms of managing and quantifying the work and it can be a slippery slope for marketing departments because their daily activities can easily morph into full-time publishing duties, leaving little room for strategizing and planning and making it more difficult to quantify results (Pamorama, 2013).

The findings also agree with Kaplan and Haenlein, (2010), who advised companies to remember that the integration of SM and traditional media is key, as these two arenas are both part of the company’s corporate image, and thus of the company’s reputation. With brand reputation also comes handling negative comments. This is usually the challenge that leads to a company spiraling out of control with their SMM campaign. At some point, someone is going to say something about the company that may not be liked. It might be a comment on the blog or a random Tweet, but how this is handled will determine how successful a company will be with their social media campaign. The thing is there isn’t really one set method of handling negative comments (Trusov et al, 2009).

5.3.3 Implementing Strategic Competitive Advantage

Finally the study revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that blogs/blogging and bloggers help companies build and maintaining the brand image, blogs have been used as an alternate advertising avenue instead of traditional advertising (radio, t.v., print media, billboards), blog and blogging can be used to improve company information flow to its consumers, blogs can be used to create relationships between the company and the consumers, blogs receive regular clients whom the advertising companies are targeting and finally the number of visitors on a blog translate to valuable sales.

The findings agree with Que Publishing (2011) which holds that it is no longer enough to simply know the tools of social media, organizations need to know how to apply them strategically to gain a sustainable, competitive advantage. They introduced Humanize, with an aim to provide proven strategies for using social media to create comprehensive change and opportunities for growth. Humanize is a tool which is said to help readers change the organization from the inside out while addressing critical elements of the
organizational behaviour, process and culture in order to create a success that goes beyond profit and loss. Even though blogging tools are free and can be unofficial, blogs should still be written using good language and following a clearly depicted train of thought as the content of the blogs are a direct reflection of the company’s image. Thus, this goes to show that planning, honesty and openness are important virtues to maintain given that such online creations may live forever online, whether wanted or not (Evans, 2008).

The findings also affirm that companies can gain competitive advantage by targeting baby boomers according to a study research led by Shandwick which undertook its study by focusing on 502 U.S Boomers and observed that “Boomer-to Friend” communication provides for untapped potential to influence purchasing decisions as nearly 57% are asked for product and service recommendation almost twice a week and of those who were asked to make recommendations in the past one year, 89 percent advised their fellow boomers. The research concluded that nearly all boomers 93 percent identified boomer friends as being trusted information sources (Blotter, 2010). Therefore keeping the boomers informed is a crucial root to creating strategic competitive advantage.

The study by Blotter (2010) also noted that 42 percent of boomers stated that their purchasing decisions were influenced by a company's social or environmental policies therefore companies should consider including messages regarding their socially responsible activities in communication with current and perspective customers. This further emphasizes that power of social media and blogs being the focus of this study, impacts the image of the company in the consumers mind and goes a long way in creating repeat customers or users of their products and services as well as possibly attracting new customers.

Finally the findings agree with Phil and Sandström (2013), in their paper on a case study focusing on Sweden fashion bloggers and their impact on value creation and appropriation in social media, they concluded that the fashion bloggers have high credibility and thus facilitate the flow of consumer information and choice. The blogs which contain both private and commercial information which enables the blogger to develop and create customer intimacy which is by far different from the traditional marketing channels which have distant between the customer and the organization to their disadvantage. Relationships that result from such avenues are of value to the blogs.
as a source of revenue through advertisements, brand creation and formation ad purchases from online stores. Phil and Sandström (2013), further emphasize that bloggers have become powerful intermediaries who are better placed and in contact with the customers’ sentiments compared to the fashion firms themselves.

5.4 Conclusion

5.4.1 Achieving Strategic Advantage

The study concludes bloggers and blogs can achieve strategic advantage if they adopt the following strategies achieving credibility, followed by positioning then direct marketing and finally responding to customer issues.

5.4.2 Challenges faced by Bloggers

The study further concludes that the challenges faced by bloggers include: creation of Relevant Content, lack of marketing, lack of management and maintenance, freedom of Speech and Law Restrictions, reputation Risk. These challenges hinder bloggers and blogs from gaining and implementing strategic competitive advantage which can make them to stand out from the rest.

5.4.3 Implementation of Strategic Competitive Advantage

Finally the study concludes majority of the respondents agreed that blogs/blogging and bloggers help companies build and maintaining the brand image, blogs have been used as an alternate advertising avenue instead of traditional advertising (radio, t.v., print media, billboards), blog and blogging can be used to improve company information flow to its consumers, blogs can be used to create relationships between the company and the consumers, blogs receive regular clients whom the advertising companies are targeting and finally the number of visitors on a blog translate to valuable sales.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Recommendations for Improvement

5.5.1.1 Achieving Strategic Advantage

The study recommends the need for bloggers to position themselves well as thought leaders within the industry. The study also recommends the need for bloggers to have a consumer appeal so that they appear authentic, and they bring a level of humanity back to a faceless corporation and that is authenticity.
5.5.1.2 Challenges faced by Bloggers

The study recommends the need for bloggers to establish protocols in respect to employees having and posting their concerns or views regarding their work environment, seeing that blogs offer a new medium through which the staff’s feedback can be captured, information concerning particular details which are deemed too tedious to share on email can be shared on this forum as well as help in promoting the organizations in various strides.

5.5.1.3 Implementation of Strategic Competitive Advantage

The study recommends the need for honesty and openness in the writings by bloggers along with joining the conversation by answering comments. It is vital to keep in mind that the creation may live forever online, whether it is wanted or not. Additionally the study recommends that bloggers can gain a strategic advantage by targeting baby boomers since such provides for untapped potential to influence purchasing decisions as nearly 57% are asked for product and service recommendation almost twice a week and of those who were asked to make recommendations in the past one year, 89 percent advised their fellow boomers.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Further Studies

The study recommends the need for an additional study focusing on blogs focusing on one particular category and not focusing on blogs on all areas at the same time. Additionally there is need to carry out a study that will examine the role of regulators in this blogging industry. This will give us a divergent view when it comes to the various challenges faced by bloggers.
REFERENCES


CIM: Marketing definition retrieved on January 29, 2016 from http://www.cim.co.uk/more/getin2marketing/what-is-marketing/


Karpinski, R. (2008) 'Forrester survey finds social media leading way toward CRM 2.0’, *B to B, 93* (8), p 15


Yeomans, M. (2006). Blogs can offer a big advantage to brands-if they're honest. New Media Age. p. 15
APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: COVER LETTER

Joanne Karanja,

P.O Box 267-00618,

Ruaraka,

NAIROBI

Dear Respondent,

RE: REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN MY RESEARCH PROPOSAL

My name is Joanne M. Karanja, currently pursuing a course towards completion of Masters of Business Administration (MBA) from the United States International University- Africa. In partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the degree, I am required to write a research project in the area of my study. My project thesis topic is: “Using Blogs to Create a Competitive Advantage; A case of the Blogging Industry in Kenya”. Kindly spare a few minutes of your time to fill in your responses of the questions in the questionnaire presented to the best of your knowledge.

Kindly note that all information collected through this questionnaire will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Your participation in this study will be highly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

Joanne Karanja
APPENDIX II: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1: Demographic Information

Kindly respond to the questions below by ticking in the boxes and write your answers where spaces are provided

1. Blog Name/URL ____________________________

2. Gender.

   Male       
   Female     

3. Age

   18- 30 yrs.  
   31- 40 yrs.  
   41- 50 yrs.  
   51- 60 yrs.  
   Over 61 yrs. 

4. What niche is your blog categorized under?

   Food        
   Fashion     
   Lifestyle   
   Technology  
   Business    
   Health      
   Creative writing  
   Entertainment 
   Sports      
   Photography 
   Other  (specify) __________________________
5. How long has your blog been registered with the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE)?

I am not a member of BAKE  □

0-1 years  □  2-3 years  □  3-4- years  □  Over  □

6. How long have you been actively blogging?

0-1 years  □  2-3 years  □  3-4- years  □  Over  □

7. Has your blog been approached by any organization for the purpose of advertising, mentioning the company or endorsing any of their products or organization related campaigns?

Yes  □  No  □

8. If your answer to question 6 (above) is Yes, how much do you receive (in monetary terms) in exchange of your services in Kenya Shillings per engagement or campaign?

0-20,000  □
21,000-40,000  □
41,000-60,000  □
61,000-100,000  □
Over 100,000  □
SECTION II: Achieving Strategic Competitive Advantage Using Blogs

Kindly answer the following questions using the following Likert Scale (5 = strongly agree… 1 = strongly Disagree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A) Direct Marketing Avenue</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. There is an increase in the number of visitors on blogs?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>10. There is an increase in the number of banner advertisements in blogs?</td>
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<td>11. There is an increase in the number of company or brand mentions in blogs?</td>
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<td>12. Bloggers are being used to endorse company products and messages?</td>
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<td>13. Bloggers have become the face of different companies from international markets?</td>
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<td>B) Positioning</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
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<td>14. Bloggers are used by companies to test their products</td>
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<td>15. Product endorsements from blogs and bloggers increases awareness in the market</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C. Achieving Credibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Blogs and bloggers have been used to communicate authenticity of brands</td>
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<td>8. Blogs and bloggers have been used by companies to correct negative publicity regarding their brands</td>
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<tr>
<th>D. Responding To Customer Issues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Visitor’s comments on blogs are used by the companies to respond to any customer issues or queries</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Bloggers or influencers opinions on products and services are used by companies to improve their service and product offering</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SECTION III: Challenges Faced By Blogs and Bloggers

Kindly tick (√) the appropriate answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges Faced by Blogs and Bloggers</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Relevant Content</td>
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<td>11. It takes approximately four to six hours to create a single blog post</td>
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<td>12. It requires research and time to create relevant and reliable content for a blog post</td>
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<td>13. The increasing use of internet has increased the risk of plagiarism of blog and bloggers work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of marketing</td>
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<td>14. To increase the reach of your blog you have to engage more than one social media site</td>
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<td>15. There is an increase in the cost of advertising on the social media sites due to increased competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of management and maintenance</td>
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<td>16. Blog maintenance requires some basic knowledge of information technology (IT) and skills</td>
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<td>17. Lack of IT knowledge and skills can lead to poor blog presentation</td>
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<td>18. The cost of hiring professionals to maintain the blogs is becoming increasingly high</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom of Speech and Law Restrictions</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Before posting any blog post one as to consider if their work will be flagged for being inappropriate by the Kenyan Government</td>
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<td>20. Cases of wrongfully using the freedom of speech law have increased in recent years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. As a blogger one has to take precaution in order to safeguard their personal life and general privacy</td>
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<td>22. Anonymity is highly encourages when posting about sensitive issues such as politics or whistle blowing on certain</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reputation Risk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. Negatively commenting about a company’s product or brand can lower your chances of working with other companies and/or brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. One has to have personal high moral standards and maintain them when working in the blogging industry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION IV: Implementation of Strategic Competitive Advantage

Kindly tick (√) the appropriate answer.

25. Kindly indicate the kind of impact you believe your blog and blogging activity can affect the implementation and achievement of strategic competitive advantage.

Building and Maintaining the Brand Image

Alternate Advertising Avenue

Promoting Information Flow

Creating a Relationship with Customers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of Blog and Blogging</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26. Blogs/blogging and bloggers help companies build and maintaining the brand image?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Blogs have been used as an alternate advertising avenue instead of traditional advertising (radio, T.v., print media, billboards)</td>
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<td>28. Blog and blogging can be used to improve company information flow to its consumers</td>
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<td>29. Blogs can be used to create relationships between the company and the consumers</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Blogs receive regular clients whom the advertising companies are targeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. The number of visitors on a blog translate to valuable sales</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The End

Thank you for your participation
## APPENDIX III: RESEARCH BUDGET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Line Items</th>
<th>Cost in (Ksh)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Proposal Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Materials</td>
<td>2,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Printing</td>
<td>3,400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Photocopying</td>
<td>4,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Internet</td>
<td>4,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Data Collection (Fieldwork)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Photocopying</td>
<td>2,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Travelling</td>
<td>3,400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research Assistant</td>
<td>10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Data Analysis &amp; Interpretation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Data Analysis</td>
<td>25,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Printing</td>
<td>2,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Report Writing &amp; Dissemination</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Report writing</td>
<td>1,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Binding &amp; Dissemination</td>
<td>5,700.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost</strong></td>
<td>Kshs 60,100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


## APPENDIX IV: IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Activities</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Proposal Development</td>
<td>January 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Data Collect (Fieldwork)</td>
<td>1st May 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Data Analysis &amp; Interpretation</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Report Writing</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Project Submission</td>
<td>July 2016</td>
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</tbody>
</table>