

Understanding the motivating factors that influence online employee advocacy by examining the tension between personal and corporate voices at the Communications Authority of Kenya and Brandings Kenya Limited

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ABSTRACT

Employee advocacy is crucial for maintaining a strong reputation and effective strategic communication in the current era of a digitally enhanced work environment. The idea to enable employees as advocates or brand ambassadors has been, over the years, proven to build credibility, trust, and visibility. In Kenya, this shift is particularly pronounced in sectors such as telecommunications and corporate communication; however, there is a lack of research on what motivates employees to advocate online for their employers. This study was guided by three main theories of corporate communication; Agenda-Setting Theory, Reputation Management Theory and Organizational Culture Theory. Adopting a mixed-methods approach (70% quantitative and 30% qualitative), the research examined both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators of employee-driven brand promotion in a digital, reputation-conscious work environment. Stratified random sampling was used in determining the target respondents for the quantitative aspect of the research, and purposive sampling was employed when selecting respondents for the qualitative aspect of the research. Questionnaires were distributed via Google Forms for quantitative survey data collection, while Zoom and Google Meet were used for the qualitative interviews. The study achieved 470 responses; 24 of which could not be used, resulting in a final sample of 446. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using Excel's Data Analysis Toolpak. In quantitative data analysis, independent t-tests and one-way Analysis of Variance [ANOVA] were conducted to examine whether there were statistically significant differences in advocacy behaviors across different job groups. Further, qualitative data were thematically inscribed, with transcripts being manually coded in Excel using conditional formatting to identify repeating themes, patterns, and key insights relevant to the dynamics of employee advocacy. To enhance understanding and ensure methodological rigor, the study used a convergent integration strategy. The findings indicate that 91% of employees are actively engaged in social media advocacy. The findings further indicate that stakeholder engagement ($r = 0.75$) and corporate voice ($r = 0.71$) have a significant influence on organizational reputation. Key motivator for online employee advocacy includes alignment with company values (31%) and personal branding (29%), both driven by intrinsic and extrinsic factors. It can be concluded that digital employee advocacy enhances brand reputation and fosters stakeholder engagement, emphasizing the importance of strategic support and clear policy. Qualitative insights reveal emotional connection, autonomy, and clear policies as key factors. The study highlights the need for strategic policies, reward programs, and communication training to promote responsible employee advocacy, contributing insights to global and regional digital engagement.

Keywords: Corporate Reputation, Corporate Voice, Online Employee Advocacy, Personal Voice, Stakeholder Engagement

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age of interconnectedness, the lines between personal identity and organizational affiliation are becoming increasingly fluid, especially on social media platforms where individual self-expression and organizational branding often overlap. Employees are no longer passive receivers of organizational communication; they are now active stakeholders with the ability to co-create corporate messages, expand brand presence, and impact public opinion. Through channels like LinkedIn, Twitter (now X), Facebook, and Instagram, employees can willingly, or in some cases unknowingly, participate in online advocacy on behalf of their organizations. This has transformed conventional concepts of corporate communication, questioned centralized, top-down models of dissemination, and brought about a more decentralized, employee-centric model (Thelen & Men, 2023).

Employee advocacy worldwide has drawn scholarly as well as managerial interest due to its twofold effect: increasing brand visibility while fostering the authenticity of communication (Smith et al., 2018; Thomas, 2020). What is now commonly accepted is that employees who share brand content, stories, and values on social media tend to create more trust and engagement compared to traditional corporate sources. Researchers like Sindhuja and Dunstan (2024)

theorize that employees can be viewed as "part-time marketers," who naturally expand the organization's messaging within their networks. Yet with this opportunity arises a multitude of tensions: In what ways can organizations encourage advocacy without encroaching upon personal identity? What determines if an employee will advocate for his or her employer online?

At the core of this research is the necessity to examine these questions through the prism of motivation. Motivation, both intrinsic (e.g., personal pride, organizational identification, authenticity) and extrinsic (e.g., recognition, rewards, managerial support), is an independent variable of consequence that affects the dependent variable: employee engagement in online advocacy. While some employees are motivated by corporate values alignment or building their personal brand, others need institutional prodding, social media training, or overt recognition to become advocates. Organizational culture, leadership support, communication clarity, and perceptions of autonomy and trust drive these motivational drivers (Lee & Kim, 2021; Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

In the Kenyan context, research on employee advocacy is still scanty. Despite the growing uptake of digital communication methods among local organizations, there has been little empirical study on what drives employees to advocate online, especially in semi-autonomous public institutions and digital marketing startups. The Communications Authority of Kenya (CA), as a regulatory body with formal structures and communication protocols, provides a controlled communication environment (Communications Authority of Kenya, n.d.). In contrast, Brandkings Kenya Limited (BKL), a lively digital marketing startup, depends on creativity, flexibility, and informal interactions. These two organizational settings provide a valuable basis for comparing how structural, cultural, and motivational factors influence employee advocacy.

This project aims to fill an urgent need in employee advocacy scholarship by examining motivational factors driving online advocacy activities of employees at CA and BKL. Although global scholarship has started to unravel the dynamics of employee-led communication (Brockhaus et al., 2020; De Kerpel & Van Kerckhove, 2025; Ilic & Tranell, 2018; Snyder & Honig, 2016), little localized knowledge exists on how organizational type, sector, and culture shape advocacy practice. Furthermore, the equilibrium between personal authenticity and corporate representation in the online environment is an under-studied phenomenon, especially for contexts where professional identity is deeply rooted in institutional representation.

Using a mixed-methods design, this research provides both theoretical and practical insights. Theoretically, it broadens understanding of how motivational factors operate in specific organizational contexts in Kenya. Practically, it offers guidelines for managers and communication strategists aiming to harness the power of employee advocacy while maintaining authenticity and ethical standards. The study is also timely, given the increasing emphasis on transparency, brand trust, and stakeholder engagement in the digital age. Its recommendations aim to inform organizational policies, employee engagement efforts, and communication systems that promote responsible and effective advocacy. Lastly, this research situates itself at the intersection of organizational communication, digital branding, and human resource strategy, contributing to a more nuanced model of how motivation impacts employee participation in online advocacy. It addresses global debates while grounding its analysis in local realities, effectively highlighting both the opportunities and challenges of employees acting as digital ambassadors for their organizations.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In today's digitally driven communication environment, organizations are increasingly relying on employees to serve as online advocates, using their social media platforms to spread corporate messages, shape public opinion, and enhance brand recognition. This shift from centralized, institutionalized communication to a more decentralized, employee-driven advocacy is changing how organizations communicate. While the potential benefits of employee advocacy are well-documented in existing research – including increased trust, credibility, and engagement (Men & Stacks, 2014; Thomas, 2020) – the reasons that motivate employees to participate in such advocacy are not yet fully understood, especially in developing economies and multicultural organizational settings.

At the center of this shifting communication paradigm is a multifaceted and under-studied tension: the balance between personal identity and corporate voice. Employees work in hybrid digital environments where personal beliefs, values, and reputational threats intersect with institutional interests. A few studies have noted that employees can resist engaging in advocacy when their efforts are not recognized, when they feel a lack of alignment with the organization's values, or when communication policies are unclear or overly restrictive (Majd & Zadeh, 2020; Guillaume & Pochic, 2009). Further, without proper motivation, either intrinsic (e.g., personal pride, identity, trust in the organization) or extrinsic (e.g., recognition, reward, leader support), employees can withhold engagement in advocacy, resulting in missed opportunities for brand amplification, inconsistent corporate messaging, and decreased employee engagement (Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Lee & Kim, 2021). Despite the growing body of international literature on employee advocacy (Smith et al., 2018; Sindhuja & Dunstan, 2024), a significant gap remains in contextually driven studies that examine the determinants of advocacy behavior among African organizations.

In Kenya, where digital adoption is increasing among organizations, few empirical studies have examined how employees navigate the intersection of personal and professional identities in their online interactions. Moreover, there are no comparative studies that explicitly contrast motivational factors across different types of organizations, such as bureaucratic public institutions versus agile, private-sector digital companies. The Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) and Brandkings Kenya Limited (BKL) offer an interesting comparative context for this research. As a semi-autonomous public organization, CA operates within a strict hierarchical system that emphasizes compliance with protocols and formalities. BKL, on the other hand, is a private digital marketing company known for its focus on creative freedom and informal communication practices (Communications Authority of Kenya, n.d.; Brandking Kenya Limited, n.d.). Both organizations promote employee involvement in online brand promotion; however, little is known about how their staff perceive, internalize, and respond to this expectation.

This study aims to address current empirical and theoretical gaps by examining the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational influences underlying online advocacy among CA and BKL employees. By focusing on these two different organizations, the study hopes to uncover how organizational culture, communication clarity, leadership support, and personal identity influence advocacy behavior. Understanding such motivational mechanisms is necessary not just for academic discourse but also for creating evidence-backed strategies that facilitate authentic, effective, and sustainable employee advocacy in Kenya and similar contexts.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To investigate the significance of online employee advocacy in the digital era at CA and BKL.
- ii. To analyze what motivates employees to engage in online advocacy for their employers at CA and BKL.
- iii. To determine how online employee advocacy can be enhanced at CA and BKL.
- iv. To assess how employees navigate the balance between personal expression and corporate guidelines at CA, and BKL.
- v. To evaluate the effects of employee advocacy on online engagement at CA, and BKL.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was guided by three main theories of corporate communication; Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs, 1992), Reputation Management Theory (Doorley & Garcia, 2015), and Organizational Culture Theory (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016).

2.1.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

The relevance of Agenda Setting Theory (AST) to this study is rooted in its core idea that the media greatly influence what the public considers important by shaping which topics are seen as significant. The theory originates from Walter Lippmann's 1922 book, *Public Opinion*, in which he described how mass media help shape public opinion. Although Lippmann never used the term "Agenda Setting Theory" himself, his work laid the groundwork for its later development by McCombs and Shaw in their 1972 book, *The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media*. During the 1968 U.S. presidential election, their research showed that media coverage of specific issues closely aligned with the issues the public later viewed as most important. AST offers a way to understand how employees, through their electronic communications, can influence organizational reputation and public discourse. Littlejohn and Foss (2009) state in the *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory* that AST centers on the relationship between media focus and audience perception. In the context of employee advocacy online, employees often act as unofficial representatives of their companies, and their social media posts can significantly impact public opinion about the organization.

Coleman and Banning (2006) argue that agenda-setting is not just about choosing issues but also about framing them through language and representation. This is clear in Wandibba's (2023) research on Kenyan political campaigning, where political narratives, conveyed by both traditional and social media, shape the public agenda. Similarly, in employee advocacy, individual voices—whether supportive or dissenting—can reinforce or challenge the organization's intended image. Therefore, AST provides a strong means to understand the conflict between corporate and individual voices in online employee advocacy, illustrating how personal accounts shape organizational agendas and public opinion. Additionally, AST indicates that media do not tell people what to think but what to think about. Likewise, employees' online activities help shape public perceptions of organizational priorities and values, such as brand promotion or personal expression. This interaction demonstrates how messaging exchanges between organizations and individuals set the tone for conversations in digital spaces, much like media shapes political narratives. Employee digital engagement can either support or undermine corporate messaging, impacting stakeholders' perceptions. Just as the media images of political leaders influence election outcomes (Coleman & Banning, 2006), employees' online personas can impact a company's public image.

2.1.2 Corporate Reputation Management

The Corporate Reputation Management (CRM) theory is central to this study; it offers a model for analyzing how businesses strategically build, sustain, and defend their public image in an increasingly participatory and online communication landscape. Originally developed by Fombrun in 1998, corporate reputation has been described as the collective opinion of an organization among its stakeholders—such as consumers, employees, investors, or the general public—based on the extent to which the organization meets their expectations. This reputation is shaped by a variety of stakeholder perspectives, which are dynamic, multi-dimensional, and influenced by internal and external forces. CRM theory is particularly relevant in this advocacy research due to its ability to critically examine employees' roles in shaping public perceptions through their online presence. In digital spaces, where employees function as individuals and unofficial representatives of their companies, personal and corporate identities often overlap. Their views, endorsements, and posts—whether deliberate or accidental—contribute to the organization's reputational capital. By analyzing these interactions, the study examines how employee advocacy either reinforces or complicates the organization's image, revealing tensions between corporate and personal voices.

In the digital age, characterized by user-generated content and democratized brand influence, the importance of CRM has increased significantly. As Syed Alwi et al. (2020) note, individuals are now technologically empowered to shape narratives, post content, and influence brand perception independently. With this shift, organizations can no longer solely rely on top-down communication strategies; instead, they must consider the reputational impact of employee engagement online. Platforms such as LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and Instagram allow employees to share their work values and experiences publicly, whether aligning with or contrasting corporate messages. As a result, firms need to actively manage how these stories affect their reputation among different stakeholder groups. CRM theory thus offers key analytical concepts to understand the reputational risks of online employee advocacy. It places issues of employee agency, stakeholder opinion, and online presence within the framework of how organizations must protect and maintain their public reputation. In this study, CRM theory guides the analysis of how organizations respond to and manage reputation impacts arising from the convergence or conflict between employee voices and corporate communication.

2.1.3 Organizational Culture Theory

Organizational Culture Theory (OGT) provides a valuable framework for understanding how personal expression and corporate communication intersect in online employee advocacy. At its core, OGT suggests that an organization's shared values, beliefs, and norms—embedded within its culture—shape employee behavior, communication, and decision-making (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016). The theory offers a helpful perspective on how deep-rooted cultural dynamics influence how employees represent their organizations online, especially where their work and personal identities overlap. According to Schein (cited in Kenedi et al., 2022), organizational culture includes the underlying assumptions, values, and social rules that guide internal policies, communication, and behavior. These elements not only impact internal interactions but also affect how employees see themselves as advocates of the organization in public. Management practices—including information flow systems and behavioral expectations—serve as both indicators of corporate culture and tools to maintain a consistent organizational voice. When employees internalize the organization's culture, they are more likely to communicate in ways that align with the brand identity, thereby enhancing the brand's credibility and reinforcing its core values externally.

The relevance of OGT to this study of online employee advocacy makes it possible to explore how organizational culture impacts employee engagement and the harmony of corporate representation. For example, in organizations with high levels of trust, transparency, and support, employees can easily become genuine brand ambassadors, using their platforms to promote the organization in ways that reflect both their values and those of the company. Conversely, in misaligned or fragmented cultures, employees may send conflicting or inconsistent messages online, which could weaken the company's voice. This conceptual framework also enables research to examine how employees navigate the cultural forces that influence their communication choices. In digital advocacy, employees often balance autonomy and conformity, authenticity and branding, especially in unregulated or ambiguous social media environments. OGT helps us understand how organizational dimensions, such as openness, reciprocity, and shared goals, shape these negotiations. As Schultz (2012) suggest, internal organizational culture not only influences the authenticity of employee advocates but also determines how external stakeholders interpret the organization's messages. Significantly, OGT also enhances our understanding of how organizational culture moderates the trade-off between personal and corporate voices in online communication. It provides the theoretical foundation for measuring how internal norms influence advocacy practices and how these practices either align with or oppose the organizational cultural structure. In doing so, the theory supports the broader question of how culture guides employee-driven narratives and overall online employee advocacy metrics.

2.2 Empirical Review

Despite the growing research on employee advocacy, significant contextual gaps remain, especially in African and Kenyan settings. Most existing studies focus on corporate workplaces in North America and Europe, where cultural, technological, and organizational conditions differ greatly from those in developing countries. This research addresses that gap by exploring employee advocacy motives in a semi-autonomous public institution and a private digital company in Kenya, offering a localized perspective on a global phenomenon.

Employee advocacy is the voluntary act of employees promoting an organization through social or digital media (Thomas, 2020; Sindhuja & Dunstan 2024). As organizations shift toward decentralized communication, employees become informal spokespersons, sharing branded content, company culture, and organizational values (Mansell, 2019). Their messages are seen as more credible than official corporate messages. However, advocacy behavior is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors, including identity, motivation, and organizational support. Motivation is key to employee advocacy. Intrinsic motivators include alignment with company values, pride, and seeking meaning; extrinsic motivators involve praise, rewards, or career exposure (Makki & Abid, 2017; Christopher et al., 2022). According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2024), long-term advocacy is more likely if employees feel autonomous and personally invested. The literature also indicates that employees are more likely to engage when they see their advocacy as meaningful — beyond self-interest, contributing to team identity or company purpose (Latvala, 2017).

Personal branding has also become a crucial factor. Employees utilize online media to create professional personas, blending advocacy with career objectives such as increasing visibility or establishing thought leadership (Ashforth et al., 2016; Ilic & Tranell, 2018). However, this dual identity generates tension because employees must manage self-expression within organizational boundaries, especially in highly regulated industries (Miles & Muuka, 2011). Research indicates that advocacy generally relies on digital freedom, perceived audience, and organizational support (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009).

Organizational culture and value alignment also influence advocacy behavior. Positive environments that promote openness, inclusiveness, and pride are more likely to enhance employee engagement (Kenedi et al., 2022; Butler et al., 2016). Employees are more likely to become brand ambassadors when their personal values align with organizational values (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2014; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016). Recognition and reward systems further encourage advocacy by emphasizing its importance (Cavdar et al., 2023).

Despite increasing interest in employee advocacy, there is limited research on what specifically motivates employees in the African context, particularly in public versus private organizations. Most existing studies are from Western corporate environments, where cultural norms, technology access, and employer-employee relationships vary widely. This study addresses that gap by examining motivation among employees in two different Kenyan organizations, providing context-specific insights into the dynamics of employee-led online advocacy.

Table 1

Research Gaps

Research Gap	Study Area	Authors
Limited understanding of motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) driving online employee advocacy.	Focus is mostly on brand outcomes rather than underlying motivations.	Makki & Abid (2017); Christopher et al. (2022); Rauben (2023)
Lack of research on employee advocacy in regulated sectors, particularly on identity negotiation.	Regulated sectors remain underexplored in the context of employee advocacy.	Gross et al. (2021); De Kerpel et al. (2023).
Geographical gap, scarcity of studies on employee advocacy in African contexts.	Most studies are situated in Western organizational settings.	Latvala (2017); Lee (2021)
Limited examination of how social media policies influence employees' willingness to advocate.	Existing studies describe policy content but not behavioral impact.	Andreas (2022); Goldman (2019); IBM (2021); Cisco (n.d.)
Underexplored impact of identity negotiation in digital advocacy.	Little focus on emotional, psychological, and reputational tensions faced by employees	Ashforth & Kreiner (2016); Duarte et al. (2017); Sugandha (2022)

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

As defined by Bhattacharyya (2006), a research design refers to a systematic, planned framework that structures the entire research process to ensure logically coordinated data collection and analysis aligned with the research objectives. It provides the foundation for a logically sequenced, focused, and methodologically sound investigation. The study used a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design (Sandelowski, 2000; Morgan, 2013), beginning with

quantitative data collection and analysis, followed by a qualitative phase aimed at explaining and elaborating on the quantitative results. This design was especially suitable for the research's goal of exploring the complex interaction of personal and company voices in online employee advocacy.

Standardized questionnaires were administered to collect quantitative responses measuring employees' advocacy engagement, motivation drivers, and perceived impacts on brand reputation. Trends from the data were identified using statistical methods such as descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The following qualitative phase involved in-depth interviews with communication officers and senior managers, which provided opportunities for follow-up probing of themes identified from the survey data. Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts revealed the socially constructed meanings of advocacy behaviors and broader dimensions that quantitative measures alone could not fully capture. By combining both data types, the research employed procedures like data transformation and triangulation (Santos et al., 2017; Morgan, 2013), thereby ensuring methodological consistency and increasing the validity and contextual richness of the findings.

3.2 Study Population and Sampling

The study focused on two strategically chosen organizations: the Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) and Branding Kenya Limited (BKL). They were selected because of their strategic importance to digital communication and employee support. Bhattacharyya (2006) affirms that selecting a study site and population should depend on relevance to research goals, availability, and the potential to generate meaningful, context-specific results. Following this reasoning, the CA and BKL offered contrasting yet complementary environments that enriched the examination of employee advocacy practices. The CA, the country's communications industry regulator established under the Kenya Information and Communications Act (1998), serves as a key case for studying employee advocacy within a formal policy framework. It oversees broadcasting, telecommunication, cybersecurity, e-commerce, and digital media. BKL, on the other hand, is an independent digital communications consultancy that helps organizations develop digital strategies. Their digital storytelling and audience targeting provided a flexible, innovation-driven environment to observe employee voice and advocacy in action.

The study involved 460 lower-grade staff and 10 higher-grade staff, including managers and corporate communications leads. This sample was carefully chosen to represent both employee and management views on organizational communication culture and strategic goals, which are key factors influencing employee advocacy. Positions with direct involvement in digital communication, such as corporate communication officers, public relations specialists, and digital content managers, were given priority because of their close connection to employee advocacy efforts.

3.2.1 Sampling Frame

Participants were carefully selected for their direct involvement in creating and sharing advocacy messages, providing insights into employee voices in organizational communication. Focusing on these professionals aligned with the study's theme of employee-led digital advocacy. Bhattacharyya (2006) emphasizes the importance of contextually based sampling, especially when examining complex social behaviors. The two-site approach offered a detailed view across different settings. The sample included internal actors and external stakeholders such as consumers and social media users who encountered advocacy campaigns by CA and BKL employees, covering both the production and interpretation of content. This targeted, representative sample aimed to give a comprehensive understanding of online employee advocacy.

3.2.2 Sampling Size

Initially, a minimum of 110 employees was established to ensure representativeness and analysis. The actual sample comprised 470 respondents, thereby enhancing reliability and facilitating detailed analysis of attitudes, behaviors, and online advocacy experiences. The quantitative sample was proportionally allocated across strata using stratified sampling, involving 460 participants in this phase. For the qualitative part, purposive non-probability sampling was employed to obtain high-quality, in-depth insights from high-priority informants. This influenced the recruitment of 10 senior-level participants and a few external stakeholders, who were selected for their experience and connection to the research focus. Out of the total tally of respondents, 24 responses were unusable, reducing the final data set to 446.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

The study used various data-gathering tools aligned with its mixed-methods design to explore employee online advocacy from both empirical and interpretive perspectives. Following Bettis and Gregson's (2001) pragmatic approach, it combined problem-focused, adaptable tools instead of adhering to a single epistemology, integrating structured measurement with contextual inquiry. For the quantitative phase, a survey was conducted using a Google Forms questionnaire to measure advocacy behaviors, motivations, advocacy frequency, age, job description, and perceived



impacts on brand reputation. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews conducted via Google Meet and Zoom gathered detailed responses from a purposive sample, examining personal advocacy perspectives, motivators, and organizational influences.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel for descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Motivation variables were sorted by frequency and tested for correlations with engagement levels and perceptions of fit with company values. Qualitative data were thematically coded, enabling the identification of categories such as emotional connection, personal identity, trust in management, and perceptions of policy clarity. These themes were then used to triangulate the quantitative findings and offer more nuanced insights into the observed patterns.

Table 2

Quantitative Data Analysis Techniques

Analysis Technique	Purpose	Tool/Method Used
Descriptive Statistics	Summarize sample characteristics	COUNTIF, AVERAGE, STDEV
Inferential Statistics	Compare group differences	t-test, ANOVA via Excel Data Analysis Tool
Correlation Analysis	Assess linear relationships between variables	CORREL function in Excel
Linearity Testing	Confirm suitability for correlation/regression	Scatterplots, CORREL
Multicollinearity Testing	Detect highly correlated independent variables	VIF calculation via R ² from regression
Data Visualization	Summarize findings graphically	Pivot Tables, Bar Charts, Pie Charts

3.5 Data Integration

To enhance understanding and ensure methodological rigor, the study used a convergent integration strategy. This involved comparing and synthesizing results from the quantitative and qualitative analyses to find points where they agreed or differed. Using Excel dashboards, PivotTables, and summary matrices, key trends in advocacy behavior were cross-referenced with qualitative themes.

Table 3

Data Integration

Quantitative Finding	Related Qualitative Theme	Integrated Insight
Higher advocacy in certain departments	Leadership support in those departments	Leadership plays a critical role in shaping advocacy norms
Strong correlation between advocacy and engagement	Positive stakeholder feedback on employee posts	Employees shape brand identity through informal influence
Low advocacy in regulated roles	Cautious communication culture	Policy sensitivity limits advocacy expression

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was secured from the appropriate institutional authorities. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and data were stored securely. Interviews adhered to the ethical standards of research, and participants had the right to withdraw at any time.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate and Demographic Profiles of Respondents

Over six months, the study achieved a response rate of over 101%, with 470 responses, compared to the initially set target of 110. After data recording, 24 responses were incomplete; hence, 446 responses were usable. The response rate exceeded expectations, showing the effectiveness of multi-channel dissemination and personalized solicitation, as noted by Asare and Daniel (2017). Their findings, which suggest that clear communication and user-friendly channels improve response quality, are supported.

The demographic analysis revealed a diverse group of respondents based on occupational roles, age, social media use, and levels of professional experience — all crucial for collecting a wide range of opinions about employee advocacy. The findings also suggest that most employees use social media, giving them a strong potential to act as effective digital champions for their organizations. The survey participants represented a broad spectrum of job levels. The majority (65%) held junior to mid-level positions, while 35% occupied senior roles. Senior roles included Senior



Officer level and above, whereas junior and mid-level roles consisted of Junior Officer level and below, including part-time, external, and casual staff who have been with the organization for six months or more.

Table 4
Distribution of Respondents by Job Designation

Job Position	Frequency	Percentage
Director	7	2%
Assistant Director / Chief Manager	18	4%
Manager / Principal Officer	43	9%
Senior Officer	100	21%
Junior Officer	123	26%
Assistant Officer	99	20%
Support Staff	74	16%
External Staff	4	1%
Part-Timer	2	1%

The age distribution of respondents showed a concentration in the mid-career age ranges. The largest portion of participants (about 157 respondents) were aged 35-44 years, making up the highest number among all groups. This was followed by the 25-34 age group, with 123 respondents, indicating strong participation from early-career professionals. The 45-54 age group included roughly 110 respondents, representing a significant share of experienced workers. Conversely, the youngest group (under 25) and the oldest group (55 and above) were less represented, each with around 20 respondents. Additionally, 11 respondents did not disclose their age. This pattern suggests a highly active and engaged middle-aged workforce, with lower representation among the youngest and older age groups.

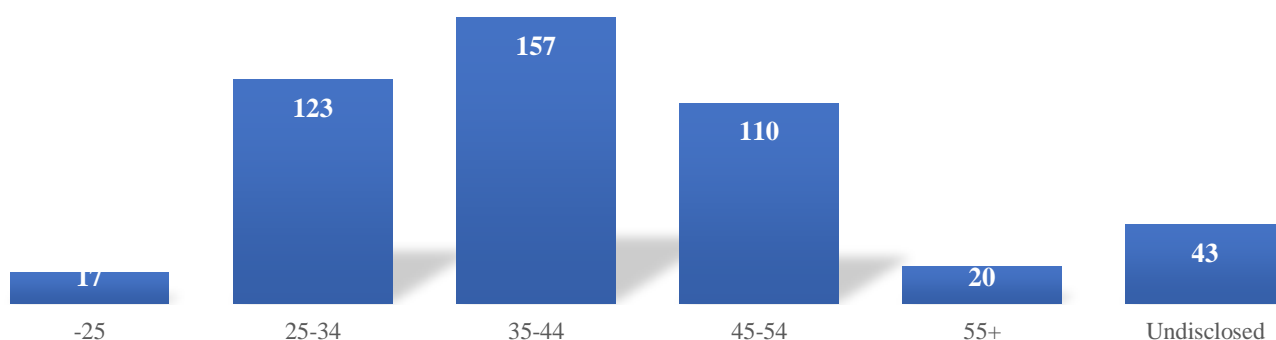


Figure 1
Age Distribution of Respondents

A significant portion of the participants (33%) reported weekly work-related social media use, with an additional 30% indicating multiple uses per week, as shown in Table 5. This highlights high overall rates of digital adoption among employees. The study also included a diverse group of employees from various career levels, providing a comprehensive view of employee advocacy across different experience levels (see Figure 3). Interestingly, fewer respondents reported using social media less frequently (18%) or daily (15%) for work. These high levels of social media activity further confirm the respondents' online engagement, reinforcing their suitability as a sample for studying online advocacy behaviors.

Table 5
Frequency of Social Media Use for Work-Related Purposes

Usage	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Weekly	154	33%
Several times a week	139	30%
Less frequently	84	18%
Daily	69	15%
Spoiled	20	4%
Null	4	1%

4.2 Analyses of Study Variables

4.2.1 Employee Advocacy

The research examined employee advocacy through two related but separate perspectives: the personal voice and the corporate voice. These viewpoints represent employee support for their organizations on social media, either voluntarily or following official organizational communication. The study indicates that a large majority of employees (91%) participate in advocacy behaviors. As seen in Table 6, the highest percentage of respondents identified corporate culture and values (31%) as the primary reason for motivation, indicating that employees are motivated by a sense of alignment with their company's purpose and principles. Closely following, influence and personal branding (29%) highlighted the importance of professional reputation and online presence. Other significant drivers included reward and recognition (18%) and pride in the company (13%), suggesting that both incentives and emotional attachments play vital roles in advocacy behavior. Very few respondents did not participate (4%) or provided invalid answers (4%), indicating a low overall disengagement rate.

Table 6

Frequency and Motivating Factors for Employee Advocacy

Motivating Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Corporate culture and values	147	31%
Influence and personal branding	135	29%
Recognition and rewards	86	18%
Personal pride in the company	60	13%
I do not engage	19	4%
Spoiled	20	4%
Null	4	1%

The personal voice shows how employees share their opinions and support the organization independently, often shaped by their sense of identity and pride in the company. These findings highlight that employees are motivated not only by rewards but also by intrinsic factors and the desire to build their personal brand in tandem with the organization's reputation (Christopher et al., 2022). This authentic form of advocacy is especially impactful, as messages based on personal experience tend to resonate more with external stakeholders. In contrast, the corporate voice reflects how employees participate in organized brand promotion that aligns with organizational messaging and policies. Although most respondents acknowledged the existence of social media guidelines, a significant percentage felt that they restricted them. Despite these challenges, the corporate voice remains essential for ensuring brand consistency (Doorley & Garcia, 2015). Well-defined advocacy policies are therefore crucial; they help employees understand the line between personal expression and professional representation, promoting advocacy for the brand while maintaining individual authenticity.

4.2.2 Corporate Reputation

The role of employee advocacy in shaping the corporate reputation drew mixed opinions from the respondents. A significant 38% believed that advocacy had a neutral effect, meaning it neither enhanced nor harmed the organization's public image. In contrast, 26% felt the impact was negative and cited potential misunderstandings between personal online representations and the company's brand identity. Meanwhile, 18% of participants believed that employee advocacy had a positive impact on corporate reputation, with 9% considering it to be very positive. Only 5% viewed the effect as very negative. This is shown in the table below. This aligns with the argument of Gross et al. (2021), who agree that satisfied employees are more likely to promote their company's image both inside and outside the workplace. They believe that happy employees naturally become brand ambassadors, helping to bolster a strong corporate image.

Table 7

Employee Advocacy Impact on Corporate Reputation

Impact of Employee Advocacy on Corporate Reputation	Frequency	Percentage
Neutral	176	38%
Negative	125	26%
Positive	85	18%
Very Positive	42	9%
Very Negative	22	5%
Spoiled	20	4%

In line with this analogy is Cavdar et al. (2023), who emphasize the importance of online brand advocacy, especially in sectors like destination management. Their findings show that companies need to create meaningful and

engaging experiences to motivate both customers and employees to advocate for them, thereby increasing awareness and trust in the brand. The data also reveal that employees who frequently use social media for work are more likely to see online advocacy as important or very important. Their online activities help shape the brand through consistent and positive messaging. When motivated by pride in the company and a commitment to corporate values, employees are likely to project a clear and positive image of the brand, helping to establish the company's reputation.

Corporate reputation, closely tied to how the public perceives the company, is greatly influenced by employees' online behavior. Advocacy can positively or negatively impact this reputation depending on how well employees' personal views align with the company's official message. Online activities such as social media posts, sponsorships, and other interactions act as public representations of the company's identity. When staff feel constrained by overly restrictive social media policies, they are more likely to disengage from advocacy altogether, which can weaken or create inconsistency in branding. To avoid this, companies should create simple, flexible guidelines that motivate employees while maintaining message consistency. By balancing structure with authenticity, organizations can promote employee advocacy that supports a strong, cohesive corporate reputation.

Table 8*Influence of Organizational Culture on Advocacy Motivation*

Motivation Factors	Frequency	Percentage	Alignment with Pride in Company Values
Corporate culture and values	144	30.64%	High
Influence and personal branding	127	27.02%	Moderate
Recognition and rewards, Influence and personal branding	109	23.19%	Moderate
Personal pride in the company, Influence, and personal branding	50	10.64%	Low
Personal pride in the company, corporate culture, and values	40	8.51%	Low

4.3 Inferential Analysis

4.3.1 Correlation Analysis

This section presents the correlation analysis of the two most critical study variables and the mediating variable: corporate reputation, employee advocacy (personal voice & corporate voice), and stakeholder engagement. The relations were examined using Pearson correlation coefficients, which indicate the strength and direction of the relationship between variables. The results, tabulated in Table 7, reveal consistently strong positive correlations, suggesting that employee and organizational communication activities, along with stakeholder engagement, have a significant influence on corporate reputation.

Table 9*Correlation Matrix of Study Variables*

Variable	Personal Voice	Corporate Voice	Corporate Reputation	Stakeholder Engagement
Personal Voice	1.00	0.67	0.52	0.58
Corporate Voice	0.67	1.00	0.71	0.64
Corporate Reputation	0.52	0.71	1.00	0.75
Stakeholder Engagement	0.58	0.64	0.75	1.00

The statistics reveal a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.52$) between corporate reputation and personal voice, underscoring the significant yet not dominant role of employee word-of-mouth in shaping the public image. According to Wæraas and Dahle (2020), stakeholder trust is more likely to improve through employee-generated content, as such content is considered more credible than official messages. Mansell (2020) also argues that this type of content humanizes the organization and provides authentic insights into company culture. However, the moderate strength of this relationship suggests that other factors, such as message consistency and the employee's credibility, also influence how personal advocacy affects reputation. The connection between corporate voice and corporate reputation is even stronger ($r = 0.71$), confirming that well-managed, effective organizational communication is crucial for shaping brand perception. Corporate voice reflects the company's stance and ensures consistent messaging, which is vital for building trust and maintaining long-term reputation (Lee & Kim, 2021).

This close correlation highlights the importance of strategic communication systems where employees are encouraged to share essential messages while maintaining authenticity. The strongest link identified was between stakeholder engagement and corporate reputation ($r = 0.75$), emphasizing the importance of open, responsive, and engaging communication with stakeholders. Active communication through multiple channels—such as electronic media, company events, or personal outreach—helps strengthen the organization's credibility and makes its brand more personal. Employees actively participate in this process through feedback, public responses to issues, and by

representing the company's dedication to openness and responsibility. Additionally, powerful dynamics are evident through inter-variable correlations. For example, personal voice is significantly correlated with both corporate voice ($r = 0.67$) and stakeholder engagement ($r = 0.58$), indicating that vocal employee advocates tend to align with organizational messaging and are more involved in external activities. Furthermore, corporate voice and stakeholder communication also show a positive correlation ($r = 0.64$), which underscores the value of internal communication consistency as a foundation for successful external outreach.

These correlations show that while individual voice improves authenticity, corporate voice enhances consistency, and stakeholder engagement broadens reach and credibility. All three elements work together to boost the company's reputation. For organizations striving to build a strong public image, this evidence recommends an integrated communication approach, including disciplined messaging, encouraging authentic employee voices, and developing relationships that build influence.

4.3.2 Regression Analysis

To assess the relative influence of communication-related variables on corporate reputation, multiple regression analysis was conducted using personal voice, corporate voice, and stakeholder engagement as predictor variables. The results, presented in Table 8, indicate that all three variables are significant predictors of corporate reputation, but they differ in their levels of impact.

Table 10

Regression Coefficients of Predictors on Corporate Reputation

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Significance (p-value)
Personal Voice	0.52	0.02
Corporate Voice	0.71	< 0.01
Stakeholder Engagement	0.75	< 0.01

Among the predictors, corporate voice was a strong and significant indicator of corporate reputation, confirming the vital role of official communication in shaping public opinion. Close behind, stakeholder engagement also demonstrated a strong positive influence, emphasizing the importance of open, two-way relationships between organizations and external publics. Personal voice, while still statistically significant, had a comparatively lesser impact on corporate reputation. These findings support the notion that corporate reputation is primarily established through consistent, strategic, and centrally managed communication efforts (Kenedi et al., 2022). A distinct corporate voice ensures message consistency, fosters organizational unity, and reduces reputational risks by conveying a shared brand narrative (Mansell, 2020). This aligns with the work of Gross et al. (2021), who argue that a consistent corporate story enhances brand identity and trust.

Although the personal voice plays a less prominent role, it still effectively builds reputation. Employees are authentic brand ambassadors whose advocacy, when aligned with corporate values, humanizes the brand and fosters stakeholder trust. The lower coefficient may, however, indicate challenges in keeping message consistency amid diverse personal expressions. This suggests that employee voices are effective but need to be strategically aligned to maximize their reputational impact (Makki & Abid, 2017). Importantly, the results support the idea that corporate voice is the core of corporate reputation, while stakeholder engagement and personal voice act as amplifiers.

The balance between employee-initiated advocacy and top-down communication must be carefully managed. Excessive top-down communication can lead to accusations of inauthenticity, while too much decentralized individual voice without corporate coordination risks brand dilution or fragmentation. Companies are therefore advised to adopt a balanced communication strategy: one that enables employees to speak naturally yet stays aligned with overall brand narratives. By investing in communication training, solid policy frameworks, and stakeholder-sensitive platforms, businesses can maximize the reputational benefits of both institutional and individual advocacy.

Besides the quantitative results, thematic analysis of open-ended employee feedback offered further insights into the reasons, limitations, and suggestions regarding employee advocacy. Three themes emerged from the qualitative data: Motivations for Advocacy, Perceived Constraints, and Suggestions for Improvement.

Most respondents felt a strong personal connection to their company's values, seeing this as a main reason for their engagement in online advocacy. Pride and belief in the company's mission seemed to inspire spontaneous promotional efforts. As one informant said, "*I believe in what my employer stands for, and I want others to know it.*" These statements show a deeper internalization of corporate identity and highlight how organizational culture influences advocacy behavior. Some workers hesitated to participate in online advocacy due to unclear boundaries and restrictive policies. Some perceived a constant uncertainty about what can be shared online, suggesting that vague social media policies may discourage advocacy. One participant said, "*At times, I am not sure what I am allowed or not allowed to put on the internet, and that makes me reluctant to post anything.*" This highlights the importance of establishing clear and confident communication policies.

A few interviewees suggested ways to strengthen advocacy efforts, such as developing more supportive policies and officially recognizing workers' initiatives. They also emphasized that clearer guidelines and incentive programs are essential for encouraging greater participation. One response stood out: "If the company rewarded top advocates, more employees would be motivated to engage." These findings highlight the potential for organized support systems to foster a lively advocacy culture.

4.4 Discussion

This study examined employee advocacy dynamics in two organizational contexts, CA and BKL, to assess its impact on corporate reputation. The results offer a comprehensive view of how employee online advocacy is shaped by internal drivers, the corporate communications plan, and organizational culture. The themes that emerged highlighted both the opportunities and challenges of employee-led brand endorsements in the digital age.

The poll showed that about 91% of employees are engaged in advocacy, reflecting strong online involvement. Two key motivators for employee advocacy include aligning with corporate values and culture, as well as building personal brand reputation. According to Lee and Kim (2021), employees are more likely to advocate for their organizations when it enhances their professional reputation. In this context, advocacy serves a dual purpose: to promote the organization externally and to strengthen the employee's personal identity and career visibility. Moreover, with 33% of respondents regularly using social media for work-related activities, employees are well-positioned to act as digital ambassadors for their company.

The influence of employee advocacy on corporate reputation received mixed responses. While 18% of participants viewed it as positive, 26% saw it as negative, and 38%, the largest group, considered it neutral. This variety of opinions shows that the results of advocacy depend heavily on communication structure and perception (Wæraas & Dahle, 2020).

Quantitative findings further support this sophistication: corporate voice shows a stronger correlation with corporate reputation ($r = 0.71$) than voice at the individual level ($r = 0.52$). This indicates that official, routine message dissemination by the company has a more direct and reliable impact on public opinion. Although authenticity is enhanced through employee voices, their influence depends on alignment with broader organizational communications (Miles & Muuka, 2011). These results suggest that advocacy is not always feasible on an informal or ad hoc basis. Organizations must actively manage employee communication to avoid fragmented and contradictory messages that could harm the brand identity.

4.4.1 Challenges in Employee Advocacy

While very promising, the research identified key barriers to effective employee advocacy. One barrier is the perceived restriction by corporate policy, which may limit employee voice and authenticity. Employees are less likely to participate actively if they feel constrained or unsure about what messaging is permitted. Another barrier is the lack of clear social media guidelines. When there is uncertainty about what to post and how to craft messages, it often leads to indecision or apathy. Workers frequently feel unsure how to balance personalization with brand alignment without explicit guidance, which prevents the organization from gaining the strategic value of their posts.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The research examined online employee advocacy at the Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) and Brandings Kenya Limited (BKL) using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Findings indicate that employee advocacy is becoming a vital component of modern organizational communication, significantly influencing brand reputation, stakeholder relationships, and the company's online presence.

Social media was identified as one of the main channels through which employees participate in advocacy, amplifying the corporate voice and promoting organizational values. Its influence, however, was perceived differently. At the same time, some workers believed in its positive impact, others remained uncertain or skeptical, suggesting that successful advocacy must align with overall communication strategies and stakeholder expectations.

Motivations for advocacy encompass both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Employees are more likely to advocate when their values align with the organization's culture and when they receive visibility or recognition. A strong internal culture, ongoing support, and opportunities for personal branding all foster continued engagement. Employees also serve as relatable and credible messengers, which boosts stakeholder trust and humanizes the brand.

However, there is a tension between organizational control and personal expression. Employees are constrained by either poorly defined or overly prescriptive social media policies, which create uncertainty and caution. This suggests that more explicit guidance and more managerial support are necessary to help employees strike a balance between advocacy and maintaining authenticity and consistency.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, several practical suggestions are proposed to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of online employee advocacy. First, organizations need to develop clear, accessible, and structured social media policies. The research found that most employees are unsure of what constitutes acceptable online behavior, which makes them less willing to participate in advocacy.

Secondly, investing in corporate communication training can significantly enhance the consistency and credibility of content created by employees. Training should cover digital storytelling, social media strategies, stakeholder communication, and online criticism management.

Thirdly, it is crucial to foster a culture of inclusion, openness, and trust. The research showed that trust and autonomy significantly influence employees' willingness to advocate for their organizations. Managers should strive to establish an environment where employees feel respected, heard, and secure in sharing their ideas. Open discussions about communication practices, routine feedback channels, and safe spaces for dialogue can help develop such an environment.

Lastly, employee advocacy initiatives must be closely linked to the organization's overall stakeholder engagement strategy. Employees are often the first point of contact with external stakeholders, such as customers, regulators, and the public. To maximize this, organizations need to keep their employees informed, engaged, and prepared to act as representatives of the brand in a genuine way that also aligns with strategic goals. Including employee-generated messages in the organization's formal communication plan can boost visibility, enhance credibility, and build public trust.

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