



THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON DURBAN CONSUMERS'
CHOICE OF BRANDS

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DECLARATION

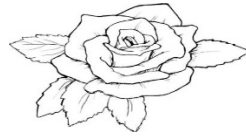
I, the undersigned, Paballo Patience Ntobaki, do hereby affirm that unless otherwise specified, this dissertation is the product of my own work and it has not been submitted to any other tertiary institution for a degree award or other purposes and all the authors whose work contributed to this study have been accordingly referenced.

I hereby give consent for this dissertation to be made available for inter-library loan, photocopying, and made available to outside interested organisations and students.

Signed

Paballo P Ntobaki

Date

DEDICATION

All my humble efforts I dedicate to my late mother, Rosina Ntobaki, whose love and precious memories I live by. A strong and gentle soul who believed in education and taught me to believe in hard work and that so much could be done with so little. Mme, you are, and have always been the fountain of my inspiration.

Likholo li satla Lekhoakhoa

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“For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations” (Psalm 100:5).

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ABSTRACT

Social media has eternally changed the purchasing cycle of consumers. Instead of merely making a purchase, today shoppers have added two vital rudiments that come prior and post purchase in the buying the process. By use of blog posts, review, forums and tweets, today consumers conduct online research on brands that they have an interest of purchasing and opinions posted by other consumers have an immense power to influence their decisions (Agresta, Bough and Miletsky 2010:32). This creates a measuring tool that can be utilised to direct efforts towards real time. Taking note of what users are saying in social media and engaging in their discussions is a great way of influencing these discussions. Social media is mostly if not wholly characterised by ratings, comments, reviews, and other features that are found on website that indicates what users think of the content being discussed (Evans and Bratton 2012:38).

The aim of this study is to determine the influence of social media marketing on Durban consumers' choice of brands, while the primary objective is to determine the degree to which social media marketing influences consumers' decision making when selecting a brand. According to TNG (2013) above 60% of traffic on the internet created by the African continent comes from South Africa.

A method of study adopted by this research to achieve the set objectives was quantitative in nature. Convenience and purposive sampling were two non-probability sampling techniques employed to recruit participants in this study. All Durban consumers above the age of 18 who are active social media users were the population targeted by this study. 88% response rate was achieved as only 400 questionnaires out of 450 were collected. The study used a structured self-administered questionnaire which consisted of 45 items to gather primary data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilised in this study. Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.0.

The outcomes of this research advocate that social media is a very powerful communication tool that can be used to influence consumers' decisions when selecting a brand. All users emphasised that they are active on computer generated

platforms of which Facebook is the most used network among Durban consumers. Literature reviewed in this study indicates that social media plays a significant part in the way users learn, explore, and share brand information. Generally, reviews and product ratings produced by users are the most favoured information sources among consumers in social media (Nielsen 2011). Consumers point out that social media is very important to them as it creates brand awareness which they make use of when making a purchase decision. Consumers in this study indicated that the more aware they became of a brand via social media, the more they would want to buy the brand and vice versa. Conversations about certain brands on social media create awareness about those brands among consumers (Liu and Lopez 2016).

The study recommended that brands should incorporate promotional activities, contests and competitions on its social media brand page posts to increase traffic and excitement among consumers. Another recommendation was that marketers should identify a personality that will represent a brand well in social media, giving it a vital feel that will entice the target audience. The study also recommended further research on the influence of opinion leaders on consumers' choice of brands, the influence of specific social media channels and the influence of social media on specific age groups to give broader insight of social media marketing to marketers and brand managers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces social media and briefly discusses its relationship with consumer behaviour, and how it is used as a communication tool both by marketers and consumers as well as social media networks usage by South African consumers. The purpose, objectives, rationale and delimitations of this research are outlined in this chapter. The chapter ends by outlining the structure of the rest of the study.

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In a reasonably short period, the Internet has formed a notable existence as a channel of communication, business instrument, marketing approach, and social setting significantly transforming and restructuring marketing practices (Lorenzo-Romero, Constantinides and Alarcoín-del-amo 2013: 77). Advancements in social media, defined by consumer produced contents and social networking sites have major effects for consumption and the study of consumer behaviour. The transparent nature of the internet has smoothed the path for consumer produced contents and social networking sites to be genuine, reliable voices which consumers pay attention to. As brands are gradually embedded in social networking channels, the rivalry between brands has developed into an arena where businesses co-own their brands, co-direct their brands' economic approaches, and co-define symbolic values of their brands with their users (Jin 2012: 687). Utilising the internet, social media, mobile applications, and other virtual communication technologies have turned into part of billions of people's day-to-day lives (Gamble and Stephen 2016: 17).

This study aims to identify the influence of social media marketing on Durban consumers' choice of brands. In order to achieve this aim, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram are the major social media networking sites this research is focusing on. The afore mentioned social networks were chosen because of their usage and popularity amongst South African consumers as Duff (2014) points out that 11.8 million users makes Facebook the leading social media network followed by YouTube's 7.2 million users, and Twitter with its 6.6 million users. Again, 1.1 million users of Instagram also made it one of the most popular social media network in the country. The study will add to the existing knowledge of brand managers as well as marketers and provide recommendations in relation to social media marketing, brand awareness and communication and the behaviour of consumers when selecting or purchasing a brand. To achieve the set objectives of this study, a descriptive design will be employed and data will be collected using quantitative approach of data collection. Self-administered questionnaires will be distributed electronically to social media networks users in Durban. Non-probability sampling will be adopted when recruiting respondents. Convenience and purposive sampling are techniques that will be utilised in generating the sample population of the study. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20) will be used to analyse the data.

Lin, Foster and Scifleet (2013: 51,53) state that social media has transformed the balance of power in the market place as consumers are now well informed and know how to evaluate, select and purchase products, hence it is tough to persuade and keep them. Brands influence customer choice. Customers influence other customers. These chains of events affect repurchases, which further affect future earnings and long term organisational sustainability (Oliveira and Sullivan, 2003). Therefore, social media marketing represents communication opportunities and require new and unconventional thinking (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Xiaofen and Yiling (2009) add that social media ensures that consumers experience brand orientation and product orientation.

This investigation will contribute to the areas of social media marketing, brand awareness and consumer behaviour. This research would be of assistance to marketing and brand managers as the information generated from the study will reveal why consumers favour social media as their source of information during the buying decision process, why they trust others' opinions better and most importantly why they see social media networks as the best platforms to interact with brands. Accordingly, the information generated from this study will be useful for brand managers and marketers in their efforts to utilise social media as part of their marketing strategies.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

In present day, social media has brought about dynamic changes in the way that companies and consumers interact. Due to the advancement in technology, consumers today request speedy, expedient and crystal clear information on brands. Social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram provide public platforms and easy access to companies and brand information that could influence the purchase decision of consumers.

With the emergence of social media, customers are more demanding and have higher expectations of brands; this is because communication is now two-way with consumers in control. Consumers are skeptical and untrusting therefore relationship marketing strategies need to be modified to lodge this leading trend (O' Brien 2011:37).

Additionally, having immense information about other competing goods obtainable anywhere on portable devices, consumers can effortlessly express and issue their views to large audiences, and businesses may find it gradually challenging to contain information shared about brands (Malthouse, Haenlein, Skiera, Wege and Zhang 2013: 270).

Given the situation, it is still not certain whether organisations in the Durban area are utilising social media as a significant component of their marketing strategies. It is also not certain what Durban consumer's attitudes towards online brands research during consumer buying decision process are; more precisely the effect of social media marketing when used as a research tool.

1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this study is to determine the influence of social media marketing on Durban consumers' choice of brands.

In order to fulfil the above aim, this research addresses the following objectives:

- To identify current marketing strategies used to communicate brands in social media networks.
- To determine the effectiveness of those strategies to arouse consumers' willingness to purchase the brands.
- To investigate whether consumers are willing to engage with brands on social media platforms to gain more information on brands specifications, performance, prices, promotions and brand reputation.
- To ascertain if consumers prefer brand recommendations made by other consumers on social media networks through like and share buttons.
- To determine the degree to which social media marketing influence consumers' decision making when selecting a brand.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the current marketing strategies used to communicate brands in social media networks?
- Are the current marketing strategies effective enough to arouse social media consumers' willingness to purchase brands?
- Are consumers willing to engage with brands on social media platforms to gain more information on brands specifications, performance, prices, promotion and brand reputation?
- Do consumers prefer brands recommendations made by other consumers on social media networks through like and share buttons?
- To what extent does social media marketing influence consumers' decision making when selecting a brand?

1.6 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The motivation for this study grew as a result of the ever- increasing advancement in technology and the internet, more especially the opportunities being presented by social media to brand managers, marketers as well as consumers. the use of social media keeps rising rapidly in user quantities and in intensification of usage by existing users, it is anticipated that each year it presents exceptional trends or milestones (South African social media Landscape 2016).

While social media subject delights in a lot of publicity and companies are beginning to incorporate it into their marketing strategies, academia has only given inadequate attention to strategic and commercial aspects of this phenomenon, more especially its relevance and significance as a strategic marketing instrument (Constantinides, Romero and Boria 2008: 2).

This study is projected to increase the understanding of the use of social media in creating brand awareness and promoting brands in order to influence decision making of consumers upon purchase. Consumers have access to vast amount information on brands and their competitors, they also count on reliable sources such as people they have personal connection with hence they turn to social media to enquire and share

their experiences on brands, suggest brands to friends and family or to critique them. As a result, brand managers and marketers must exploit opportunities presented by social media to promote their brands and to avoid a bad reputation. Therefore, motivation for this research is based on the need to understand the effect social media marketing has on consumer' decision making when selecting a brand.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is confined to consumers who live in Durban and engage in social media activities. Furthermore, the scope extends itself to those who use social media to assist in their decision making process in the selection of brands.

1.8 DELIMITATIONS

The study will mainly focus on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube due to the broad nature of social media marketing communications and emphasis will be on individual and collective behaviour and attitude towards these above mentioned networks.

1.9 LIMITATIONS

Due to the high financial resources involved in sampling a larger population, the study will address a small sample of the population who use social media in Durban. Limited time will also restrain this project to be conducted in areas beyond Durban. Thus caution is recommended when generalising the results of the study to the whole population of South Africa.

1.10 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study aims to determine the influence of social media marketing on Durban consumers' choice of brands. Mooij (2005:13) writes that businesses do not compete with products but with brands. Therefore, exceptional brand communications rely on positioning a leading, intelligible brand notion as a way of establishing, connecting and sustaining consumer involvement (Dahlen, Lange and Smith 2010:8). Brands have genuine power to persuade customers to purchase one product compared to other alternatives existing in the same product category, but the worth of a brand emanates

from its ability to position itself exclusively in the minds of customers as purchase decisions of pricey goods are more complex and comprise more risk, hence consumers choose to recognise reputed brands that ease the risk substantially (Baisya 2013:17). Consumer behaviour does not essentially reflect the actions of an individual as consumers in the marketplace may take on different roles such as collecting information, influencing the outcome of the decision or being the buyer or user of the product or service. These fore mentioned roles can come about in person, on the telephone, social media or emails (Pieters 2013: 5).

According to Sema (2013:4, 5) social media is intended for advertising, but then again it can be used as a tool for brands or businesses to interact with their customers. On the other hand, social media gives consumers and potential customers an opportunity to communicate directly with brand managers and marketers. Meanwhile online consumer is a thriving market globally, most shoppers utilise social media as tool to look for and buy items, and brand managers and marketers take advantage of this opportunity to advertise their brands. Boulianne (2015: 524) adds that social networking sites are indisputably prevalent. Facebook and YouTube are amongst the top three websites globally with Twitter and LinkedIn sidling up in eighth and thirteenth stations. Moreover, Worldwideworx and Fuseware (2016) report reveal that Instagram and Facebook are flourishing. A quarter of all South Africans are currently using Facebook while Instagram has experienced the fastest growth of all the social networks in South Africa over the year 2015, and then Twitter marginally increased its user base followed by a video sharing network, YouTube. It is expected that each year signifies new highlights as social media user figures keep rising and spiralling usage of existing users.

In light of this, Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schoffe (2012:772) affirm that social media provides a chance for customers to interact with hundreds or even thousands of other customers around the globe, enterprises are not the lone source of brand communication anymore. This custom of customers becoming fans of brands on social media networks and utilising social media as a growing source of information about brands leads to the notion that social media in addition to conventional marketing communication tools wields a significant impact on a brand's success. On the other hand, Mukerjee (2012: 4) claims that the conventional marketing approaches have proven to be vain in a period disrupted by geo-political, social, cultural, technological

and economic domains. Consumers' desires, attitudes and demands have also taken a huge turn requiring modern marketing practices. Thus, Information obtained from social media networks is more influential than that obtained from commercial sources in motivating consumer purchases (Okazaki 2009:439).

1.11 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional quantitative research method to investigate the influence of social media marketing on Durban consumers' choice of brands. The target population of this study was be consumers aged 18 years and older who are active on social media platforms and reside in Durban. Convenience and purposive sampling techniques are two types of non-probability sampling techniques that will be employed in recruiting respondents. While the projected sample size will be 450, the response rate is envisaged to be around 80%. A survey was carried out with a structured questionnaire consisting of 45 questions to obtain primary data from consumers and partaking in the study was completely voluntary. A pre-test was conducted with 10 questionnaires distributed to the consumers to ascertain validity of the measuring instrument. The questionnaires were distributed to the researcher's online friends through emails and social media networks and the first 400 responses received will be used in this study. This study employs both descriptive and inferential statistics and the collected data will be analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 20).

1.12 OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION CHAPTERS

This research study is divided into five chapters. The following is an overview of each chapter:

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter includes introduction and background of this study. The problem statement, aim and objectives, rationale of the study, scope of the study, delimitations and limitations, theoretical background and a brief research design are covered in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks. In this chapter existing literature relevant to the theoretical background of the study is reviewed with more emphasis on electronic word of mouth, social media marketing, brand equity and consumer behaviour. This chapter also comprises of theoretical frameworks and

theories that are related to the utilisation of social media platforms and the influence they have on consumers during brand selection.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology. This chapter describes the type of research methodology adopted by this study. It also provides the method data collection and the techniques used to analyse the collected data.

Chapter 4: Research Findings. Here analysis of data and results using various statistical techniques are presented, discussed and interpreted.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations. This chapter is determined to present conclusions and recommendations drawn from this study. Areas that call for further investigation on the use of social media platforms in marketing brands are also highlighted.

1.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented an introduction to the study and discusses the research problem. The aim, objectives, and the rationale that motivated this study are also given. Furthermore, the framework of the study chapters and brief details were presented. The next chapter will present the review of relevant existing literature and theories that illuminate how powerful social media is in marketing brands.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced this study and provided the background. A comprehensive theoretical framework relating to the role of social media on South African consumers, the influence electronic of word of mouth communication and the influence of social media marketing on brands selection are presented in this chapter. Brand equity, consumer decision making process and social media marketing strategies are also discussed in this chapter.

2.2 THE INTERNET

Advertising on the internet is repeatedly pronounced as the highest accountable advertising method (just as direct marketing methods like direct mail), as the marketer can share the number of sales and clicks that are an outcome of a certain marketing activity. However, perception overlooks any influence the marketing activity could bring regarding brand building or amplified determination to purchase or utilise (Poynter 2010:289).

The internet plays a substantial part in the advancement of co-creation concept. The web makes an avenue of synchronisation and sharing accessible and extensively spread thus, it creates opportunities to engage customers in product development (Zwass 2010). There are various motives that could drive consumers to engage in co-creation practices, for instance interest to participate, disappointment with current goods, inherent curiosity about co-creation, learning and information-attainment, sharing personal ideas or getting financial prizes (Füller 2006).

As a result of intimate interaction with other people, consumers may well nurture a sense of belonging to internet users involved in co-creation processes in addition to winning a certain social identity, equally being presumed as a benefit (Hoyer, Chandy, Dorotic, Krafft, and Singh, 2010).

2.2.1 Durban Internet Users

According to Writer (2015) Effective Measure carried out a demographic study on 197000 South African internet consumers. Data collected reveal that there is a practically smooth split between male and female when looking into Internet users' gender in South Africa. The study further indicated that Durban makes up 8.96% of those internet users.

2.3 SOCIAL MEDIA

According to Safkon (2010:4) the first part of the term, "Social", refers to the visceral desires human beings have to associate with others. This has been done by humankind in one way or another from the beginning of time. Humans have a need to belong to collectives of people whom they are at ease to share thoughts, ideas, and experiences with. The latter part of that terminology refers to the channels humans utilise to form those associations with others. Be it written words, bells, drums, the telegraph, television, radio, the telephone, e-mail, photographs, websites, audio, mobile phones, text messaging, or video, media is any technology used to form a connection.

Since the commencement of computer networking, the internet has been a home for socialisation and thus, it is called social media. Collaboration, sharing and communication are promoted through blogs, social networks like Facebook, or microblogging platforms such as Twitter (Barefoot and Szabo 2010:3). Brennan and Schafer (2010:13) state that social media uses web 2.0, exceedingly scalable and accessible broadcasting systems that convert and transmit media monologues into social-media web sites. Barefoot and Szabo (2010:3) add that though wired communication is not a new concept, it is indeed a vastly networked technology that makes immense, online communication available to any person with an internet connection around the globe. Moreover, it enhances a participatory aspect to online interactions.

It is logic to employ social media in an internet marketing establishment as it is an additional online medium through which shopper acquisition activities can be conducted. By this, social media users' behaviour will be understood by online marketers and online metrics must be created to measure social media activity (Salt 2011:27). Social media has transformed our societal relations not only in every-day life. Social media usage has gradually become influential as a marketing instrument

to form and manage consumer relationships and it has also been found to impact consumer's buying behaviour (Ruane and Wallace, 2013). This means that marketing strategies must be cautiously manoeuvred and executed in order to enable dealings under dynamic and varying environmental circumstances to build customer relationships and impact consumer behaviour (Hoffman et al., 2005). Brennan and Schafer (2010:11) conclude that the speedy change and development in social media and its web make-over have and will carry on to transform marketing, shopping, socialising, publishing, gaming, and music.

2.3.1 Social Media Adoption Phases

According to Blanchard (2011: 59) social media adoption or integration happens in the following distinct phases.

- **Phase one:** Test Adoption. This is a level where companies officially build their social media presence. Proper URLs and account IDs are requested.
- **Phase two:** Focused Adoption. At this level strategic functions in the company start to utilise social media to upkeep their distinct departments. This indicates that the organisation managers are starting to comprehend that social media can augment company's reach, departments such as Marketing and Public relations have a tendency to of being the first to take on the opportunity.
- **Phase Three:** Operational Adoption. At this point other departments join in on social media when they see their counterparts' success in achieving departmental goals through social media channels. Inside cooperation tools and channels are upgraded and more social media roles arise.

2.3.2 Social Object Theory

Social object theory advocates that all fruitful interactions and courses on social media focus on an object and that people communicate about matters or substances

(Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre 2011). All connections have social objects implanted in them. In the online world, a network like Facebook offers settings for a number of object setups to guarantee that connections can blossom within the network's framework. Facebook's ability to offer users multiple objects to share is one of the factors it prospers. These objects include, family and friends, events, quizzes, and so on. Other social networks offer a more specific or dedicated set of objects. For instance, users on flicker take part so they can share photos. These pictures are the objects that offer significance to the platform and encourage individuals to join in. The social object that YouTube centers around is video (Tuten and Solomon 2013:85).

2.3.3 Types of Social Media:

According to Boswell (2016) social media comprises of diverse technologies, yet they have a common fundamental aim of encouraging communication. Examples of social media platforms include; Forums, Blogs, Microblogging, Social bookmarking, podcasts, videos, Image Sharing sites, Social networking sites, Virtual communities such as online gaming, and Community-moderated content such as wiki. However, the manner in which they are categorised here is different from that of (Safkon 2010:9)

- **Blogs**

According to Mickler (2011:57) a web-based log commonly known as a blog is a social media instrument used to deliver the ideas, thoughts, experiences, and opinions of the writer. Reed (2011:69) further adds that a web-based-log can be the focus of a brand's social media. It can be used to accumulate additional media, by incorporating video, images text, as well as audio. Posts from other websites, like flickr photos or twitter updates. Column should be created to facilitate new subscribers to the blog's latest content. It is easier to set up a website using a blog and it can also be used as a dominant business site.

Ryan (2014:164) points out that blogs are becoming a significant marketing resource by integrating a personal touch to a brand, aiding brands to make social relations in a progressively anthropological online world. Mickler (2011:58) states that a blog assist brands to express their personalities the same way it aids to communicate brand value to consumers. Mickler (2011:59) further states that fruitful commercial blogs are characterised by length perspective, comments and frequency.

- **Microblogging**

Mickler (2011:64) defines microblogging as the process of blogging generated using limited words, video, or pictures. These pictures, videos and words are shared to thousands of people in a speed of light. Ryan (2014:166) states that microblogging turned out to be prominent with conventional audience, brands, commerce and the ordinary media speedily.

- **Podcasts**

Mickler (2011:61) states that podcasts are acoustic records that are created with an initial sound track and an ending addendum recording, with a broadcasting program in between. Content usually consist of opinion pieces, interviews, tips or reviews. Reed (2011:86) implies that, based on the practicality of the material provided to with prospective patrons, podcasting helps build a community around a brand.

- **Image sharing sites**

According to Reed (2011:117) image sharing uploading and distributing ones' images on a website where others can see them. Most image sharing sites do not charge when creating an account especially a rudimentary account with restricted storage space. Most let participants to favourite, comment and tag with keywords to help probing. Most allow members to comment on each other's images, and members to tag their images with keywords to aid searching. Members are also allowed to create a profile page where they can provide information about themselves. Baker, Baker, Bormann and Nehher (2013:165) state that image sharing sites work similar to other networks. Participants should be operational in the website so as yield results. Product display, influencing buyer mood and document deals are some of the many photo sharing advantages. Baker et al (2013: 169) further state marketers should identify the target audience for the photos to be shared as various image sharing sites tailor to different patrons. Marketers should also identify

demography and social traits of the target audience in order to aid them to choose the finest sequence of image sharing sites to upload photos on.

- **Video**

Baker et al. (2013: 151) mention that creative, engaging and funny videos spread naturally even though not all video creators can be so lucky. To be influential, videos must be online and watched though it is not always easy to find the paramount manner to share an online video that precisely influence the target audience. However, in order to beat this obstacle and effectively dispense an online video a marketer will first have to create a video and share it online, then friends or insiders share the video and ultimately online viewers will begin to share the video to their personal accord. According to Reed (2011:100) Videos are more effective when there is an optical component to a brand like video tours of offering. Also when included in a website, videos boost rankings in search engines, augment brand recognition and encourage word of mouth as it affords an alternative way for consumers to find the brand.

- **Social bookmarking**

Mickler (2011:73) describes social bookmarking as a channel that allows consumers to vote on the best content on the online utilising internet software. Mickler (2011:75) further states in principle bookmarking functions by running a small program run on a webpage. All initiated clicks are recorded with time and date and then content hyperlink gets published to another to another computer that is online.

- **Social networking sites**

Baker et al. (2013: 178) refer to a social network site as a wired facility where participants can create relations founded on friendship, shared interests, kinship, business advantage, or other reasons. A social network site simplifies these connections by allowing participants to create a private or public profile, provide who should join them, and share their relations with others. Social network amenities facilitate the practice of sharing information, like status,

events, interests, and pictures, in distinct channels. According to Reed (2011:130) social networking works for brands since connections, list, word of mouth, and trust can be built through it. Mickler (2011:77) adds that shoppers who utilise social networks acknowledges the opportunity to interact with brands, escalating company pages on networks such as Facebook that lets customers to post updates, videos, information, and questions straight to the brand.

- **Wikis (Community-moderated content)**

Ryan (2014: 167) mentions that wikis are online gathered web pages which are plainly open for anybody to generate, edit, comment on, discuss and in general contribute to. They are possibly the absolute drivers of mass collaboration. Ryan (2014:168) further states utilising wikis as a marketing instrument merely a new notion and their worth may not yet be obvious as other types of social media. Nonetheless, they are an influential collective instrument, and with the association between brands and consumers in control, wikis will increasingly be utilised by organisations in the near future.

- **Virtual communities, i.e., online gaming**

Virtual worlds, like second life (<http://secondlife.com>), have the functionality of social networks but appear like video games. They are more difficult to utilise than social networks, since users first ought to learn the interface. The excitement and publicity that surrounded them died down ages ago, however, they still have to be treated the same as other types of social media. Virtual communities' characters are avatars – computer-generated demonstrations of real people, behind their key-boards, the world over. Creating a personal virtual community is easier with an application termed Unity (<http://unity3d.com>) Reed (2011:139).

2.3.4 Common Social Media Features

The fcommon social media features are discussed by Nations (2016) as follows:

- **User accounts:** A site that lets guests to create personal accounts to log into has an element of social interaction. Interaction and information sharing cannot take place without a user account.
- **Profile pages:** A profile page is an essential social media tool that epitomises the user. It usually contains personal details like a profile picture, memoirs, recommendations, website, feed of recent posts, recent activity etc.
- **Friends, followers, groups, hashtags and so on:** people utilise their accounts to interact with other users and to subscribe to specific kinds of information.
- **News feeds:** Participants join others on social media to get real-time information from them and this happens through news feed.
- **Personalisation:** Social media sites usually provide users flexibility to organise account settings, customise profile presentation, consolidate friends or followers, and manage information from news feeds.
- **Notifications:** Social media customarily gives users notifications of specific information, and users have can regulate which types of notifications they want to receive.
- **Information updating, saving or posting:** any site or application that lets people to post anything, through a user account or without one is social. Be it a text message, an image, a video or an article link
- **Like buttons and comment sections:** The two most popular means of interaction on social media are a like button and a comment sector where users share their point of views.

2.4 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Social media marketing is the practice of marketing by means of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. By using the social feature of the internet, social media marketing is capable of connecting and interacting on a greatly modified and vigorous level than using traditional marketing (Nations 2016). Weaver (2013: 103) describes social media marketing as efforts made to appeal to new clients utilising particular marketing approaches. Whether marketing efforts are directed to other businesses or to customers, social media marketing is essential to most businesses as there are several ways it can help reach the target audience. Egan (2011:51) agrees and adds that the subjective nature of social networking approach provides abundant social exchange advantages for organisations, instilling organisations with human like character. This leads to longstanding relations between organisations and clients, as stands the key objective of marketing means founded on the philosophies of relationship marketing. Martin (2010:126) says that social media works best when it is part of an overall marketing strategy that uses many different marketing tools.

Kerpen (2011: 60) states that when existing clients like a brand, it starts to receive momentum utilising promotions, ads, content, and rapid circulation of the social grid. In order to get more likes and followers on social media networks and sales in general, customers should not be told like a page but why they should like it. On the other hand, Ryan (2014:154) indicates that brands must avoid taking control of open dialogues but to participate in them, and attempt to have an affirmative influence on its course. Basically, that is what social media marketing is about. Certainly consumers are talking about a marketers' industry, company, competition, brand, and other subjects related to what the company does. Therefore, it is best to be conscious of these conversations, by listening, engaging, and developing relationships with the involved communities.

Fang (2011:2), does however, warn that if social networking facilities are not utilised properly, business' image and reputation can be fiercely damaged, as it stands with all medium used for marketing commitments. Weber (2009: 4) denotes that social networking marketers need to cautiously create a strategy for better utilisation of social networking platforms as business disciplines. Clapperton (2010:1) agrees and supplements that organisations must not just take on a social networking strategy without appropriate business development ahead of time. Utilising social networking

tactically, in conjunction with conventional marketing channels, is a best approach of attaining genuine business results (Clapperton, 2010:178). Kerpen (2011:166) adds that social media cannot be effectively utilised by an organisation if it is just embedded in to advertising or marketing. Practice and understanding have to be incorporated in different departments and functions of the organisation so as to elevate the results from social media usage. Evidently social media affords or opportunities for advertising, public relations, and marketing, however it also includes customer relationship management, customer service, sales, human resources, operations, and research and development. Kerpen (2011: 167) further recommends that brands should regulate, generate, implement, and quantify promotions, giveaways, competitions, other marketing platforms, and content to be circulated on Facebook and other social networks. Marketing function is social media's current habitat, although it is necessary to place it in each department.

2.4.1 Social Media Marketing Vs Traditional Marketing

Brand and mortar (2016) mentions that transformation of technology has permitted society to change from traditional approaches of marketing to social media marketing. Deciphering between conventional and unconventional methods of marketing is not difficult. The main distinguishing elements are accessibility and price. Social media marketing is wired and is rather economical, and in certain instances, it could be at no cost. Through channels like, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, brands can be marketed and advertised swiftly, as well as being able to reach local, national and global target audience. Traditional marketing techniques consist of original print transcript such as flyers, newspaper, magazines and business cards. It works at a slow speed and it does not spread to large audiences.

Moreover, Dacosta (2016) utters that social media has taken over digital marketing industry and has extremely outdone the deep-rooted techniques of traditional Marketing on various grounds. The utmost dissimilarity between Social Media Marketing and Traditional Marketing is the manner in which they are utilised to interconnect with potential and existing shoppers. Traditional Marketing depends on techniques like cold calls, business events, radio advertisements, television advertisements, print commercials, and email broadcasts are Outward Marketing which means a conversation is started by a business when in promoting its brand

using direct advertising techniques. Social Media Marketing, on the other hand utilises Inward bound Marketing where sales activities rely on the efforts of its customer base to learn about and buy a product. It is a docile sales structure that lets customers to become familiar with the brand ahead of marketing campaigns.

2.4.2 The Difference between Traditional and Social Media Marketing

According to Roy (2016) the following are the differences between traditional and social media marketing:

- Social media extends a large target audience, whereas traditional media's target audience is usually more besieged.
- Social media is flexible (adjustments can be made once distributed), while traditional media, when printed or distributed.
- Social media is instant, whereas traditional media could be hindered because of press times.
- Social media is a reciprocal discussion, and traditional is single -way.
- Social media usually has unpredictable demographic facts, while traditional media is precise.

Social media sites are more collaborative and interactive in comparison to traditional media followed by marketers (Vukasovič 2013:99).

2.4.3 Strategic Planning and Social Media Marketing

According to Tuten and Solomon (2013: 29) strategic planning is the practice of recognising objectives to achieve, determining in what way to achieve those objectives using certain approaches and manoeuvres, applying activities galvanise the strategy, and gauging how sound the strategy reached the objectives. Strategic planning is a three-tiered process, commencing at the top level, and then moving to the middle level and finally lower area of the corporation, including marketing.

2.4.4 Social Media Marketing Strategy



Figure 2.1 Social media marketing strategy

Adapted from Chatterjee (2016)

➤ **Set goals**

The organisation's overall needs must be assessed and the manner in which social media will be utilised to meet them should be decided on. Undeniably several of tailored goals will be developed, although every organisation must integrate only a few in its strategy for example; recalling customers, shrinking marketing costs and increasing brand awareness (Daoud 2016).

➤ Determine audience

User characteristics help to describe the audience in addition to pursuing the correct market, in particular settings, as well as delivering the right messages at the right time. When the target market's information is identified, it comes to be less difficult and economical to pursue them on social media (Daoud 2016).

➤ Choose Platform

Levy (2013) expresses that marketers should select social media platforms that have a great potential to reach the target market and distribute the form of media that is appropriate the business. Not every platform is suitable for most businesses and people, its best to be outstanding on a few platforms than to have a mini representation in many platforms. Corcione (2017) adds that in order to produce an effective social strategy, marketers must be familiar with how each platform operates, which audience is reached by each network and how best the organisation can utilise each network. Bonham (2016) mentions that with so many social media channels on the market, selecting which one to use can have long-term effect on a personal promotion and a company. While Twitter made a shocking decision to close Vine, a six-second video capturing application, Instagram integrated a live video streaming. This is evidence that social media channels selected to be included in a marketing strategy matter.

➤ Create content

When developing an online presence, it is essential to plan the nature of the content that will be conveyed to prospects and existing customers, and its delivery frequency (Folger 2017). Smarty (2016) states that content is significant whether a buzzword is preferred or not, since it is what followers get in response to their interest and support. It is an approach to entertain them and divulge information. But more importantly, it is the fail-proof and the utmost unswerving and way of building a brand, not in material alone, but in authority. Social media

content is not essentially dissimilar to any other marketing effort; it is an additional arrangement of similarly valued content displayed for enhanced social sharing. Folger (2017) further articulates that the kind of content conveyed will mainly depend on the organisation and the aims of utilising social media and be applicable to both. Hence, content must be fresh, appropriate, and concentrate on customers instead of the organisation.

➤ Implement

Implement the virtual tactics and marketing strategies, consisting of Social Media profiles creation, consumer engagement, content development and promotional campaigns with inducements to buy. Implementation will occur on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, blogs, YouTube and other social channels such as Stumble Upon, Digg and optical social daises like Pinterest (Speyer 2012).

➤ Track and measure progress

Begin with outlining the Key performance indicators (KPI) for the social strategy, and the KPI anticipations must be in line with the metrics that will be utilised to track for every social network, in order to be measured easily. It must then be checked that web analytics tools are arranged properly to lock up all significant information (Gurd 2017). Patterson (2015) recommends that tools such as Sprout and google analytics that provide a complete set of social media analytics should be used to identify which of posts drive total revenue, conversions and traffic.

➤ Adjust

Patterson (2015) suggests that when a marketer comprehends which content is impelling the greatest engagement, conversions and site visits, that information can be used to upsurge achievement. New social media posts and content should be parallel to the previously successful ones. Grounded on analysis of previous phase, a marketer must

evaluate marketing strategies; apply ratified commends, examine and track continuously during the course of the arrangement (Speyer 2017).

2.4.5 Three Phases of Social Media Marketing Maturity

Blanchard (2013:33) writes that businesses create experimental, conversion and premeditated phases of Maturity lifecycle of Social media marketing, they project methodically to ascertain that the activities of social media marketing are aligned with marketing communications and marketing strategies and have the capacity to meet marketing objectives precisely.

2.4.6 Social Marketing Road Map

Report by Marketing Sherpa (2010:69) suggests that the following is a practical method for mapping a social marketing strategy:

➤ **Research**

A first step to effective social marketing strategy is gathering information on target market, social usage and competitors and outlining the target audience's common characteristics, observing their discussions and their favourite communication channels. This is an opportunity to gauge brand recognition, communicate and assess the company, its competitors, its existing resources, and its social and digital assets that adds value to the strategy.

➤ **Objectives**

Outline objectives associated with social metrics and target market. Section, choose and arrange the audience by social status. When likely, arrange objectives in line with fiscal metrics like Return on investment, cost-per-lead and trades changes instead of qualitative measures like reaction.

➤ **Actions**

Generate a social marketing strategy that has a calculated course of action. The course of action should be applied when quantifiable objectives are set. This section will lay down the social marketing strategies, execution timelines, promotions and presentations, roles and accountabilities, guidelines and

techniques, and resources the stratagem will need. The structure of linking conversations and the audience to the centers of content, jetty pages and change points will also be stipulated.

➤ Devices

Pick channels that suitable for the stipulated social marketing structure and strategies. An effective strategy is expected to endure the transitory existence of current well known social platforms. Thus, ROAD Map at this instant has been skeptical of technology. However, proper social channels (or Strategies) that fit successfully into the current social marketing structure must be evaluated and chosen.

2.4.7 The role of social media on consumer behaviour

Conversations about brands, products or services are now speeded up among consumers as consumers frequently solve problems and share information, reducing the need for and they are frequently able to solve problems and share information, eliminating the need for involvement from product marketing group or customer care division. Forums have existed before, yet the real time make up of fresh media inspire communication where queries are responded to (Marcy and Thompson 2011:71).

2.4.8 The social information processing theory

According to Olaniran, Rodriquez and Williams (2012:45) The Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT) suggest that provided with opportunity and time to communicate, relations amongst people can create in online environments. The strength of the SIPT relies on its capacity to nurture interaction among characters by means of interactive behaviour. As a result, Social Information Processing has the prospective to help the creation of trust between computer-generated group members, founding team unity, and emphasising cross-communication in global groups.

Wather (2008: 459) mentions that electronic communication usually comprises asynchronous media, which is a method that lets one communicator to generate a message at a certain time and receivers to get it later at a point in time they want. The SIPT viewpoint can reason both methods to time-based misrepresentation

hypothetically, and both methods have been utilised in experiential research. Also when non-oral signals are not available, correspondents use their social and influential interaction to any kind of remaining signals via the network that they are utilising.

2.4.9 Electronic word of mouth (E-Wom)

Word-of- Mouth is the communiqué among users about a company, a product, or service which bases are perceived to be free from commercial impression, registered reduced search and assessment exertions, risk decrease, social guarantee and relaxation activity as the main elements that influence clients to pursue Word-of-mouth. The influence of e-Word-of-mouth is superior when the customer expresses vague situation.

Word-of-mouth is always perceived as the greatest method of marketing that is not tainted, and social media has constantly proved this point in countless ways. Consumers like feeling connected and sharing with others, businesses, brands and governments they trust and like (Kerpen 2011:4).

According to Solomon (2013:444) word-of-mouth is a result of information that people pass on to one another. Since information is transmitted between acquaintances, Word- of-mouth is usually more trustworthy and reliable than communication from prescribed marketing media. Schiffman and Kanuk (2009: 494) point out that in most instances, marketers are certain that word-of-mouth communication although most marketing managers believe that communicating through word of mouth is exceptionally operational, yet they often do not take notice that informal communication is not easy to regulate. Undesirable remarks, often in the form of speculations can infiltrate the market and disadvantage the product.

According to Van den Bergh and Behrer (2011:41) because they are fully rooted in human nature, stories have a habit of expressing both emotional and rational identities. Word-of-mouth can either be an advantage of a disadvantage for marketers as informal conversations amongst customers can break or make a brand or product. Moreover, clients consider destructive information more seriously than they do

constructive remarks. Tuten and Solomon (2013:95) highlight that a study by White house office of consumer affairs revealed that, 90% of patrons who are not happy will not consume from the same business again. Every one of these consumers will possibly share their disapproval with a minimum of nine other consumers and 13% communicate their unpleasant experience with more than 30 people.

Word of mouth has long been and influence on consumer decision making. Tuten and Solomon (2013:95) add that being aware of the pace and comfort which individuals make recommendation, share brand experiences, and both positive and negative product-related opinions with others, steered marketers into nicknaming word-of-mouth “word-of-mouse”. With the more convenience to channels brought by Social networking systems, peer-to-peer impact is more powerful with regards to the grounds that could stimulate buyer decision. Safkon (2010:6) agrees and adds that “an angry client will inform 10 to 20 other people about a bad experience” in person. However, with the presence of social media such as Facebook, twitter, and blogs, the 20 mentioned people can swiftly turn into 20, 000 or even 200, 000.

A good example is that of Ford South Africa’s Ford Kuga models equipped with 1.6 litres engines catching fire. According to Wheels 24 (2017) many South Africans responded to massive SUV recollections using #FordKuga on Twitter. Moerdyk (2017) says that the belief that “all publicity is good publicity” has been attested wide of the mark as Ford South Africa’s social media marketing has utterly damaged its brand. Ford encountered an intensity of customer reaction over a disturbing volume of its Ford Kuga models bursting into fire.

Ford’s Public Relations reply was typical and pitiful like several car manufacturers who react to crises by sitting back and expecting it shall die away. But, Ford’s Public Relations complication, renunciations and low media announcements, part of the problem was that Ford South Africa continued to promote its products on Facebook while a majority of commentaries made to those posts were from dissatisfied Ford owners, even those who did not have their Kugas burning. The other mistake ford made was to respond to these comments by saying they are sorry to hear a customer is having a problem and asking customers to send inbox messages with contact details to help them find solutions. As a result Ford’s resale worth of Kugas declined.

Baker, Baker, Bohmann and Neher (2013:33) suggest that social media prospers because individuals like making conversation with each other. Allegiance from existing clients could persuade them to promote a brand incidentally by sharing information about the product or service to friends and family. Businesses that join in the discussion are most likely to get endorsements on social sites for the reason that they are at the front of people's minds.

Social media channels:

➤ **Facebook**

According to Weaver (2013:40) a Facebook brand page lets a business to promote its brand to Facebook users throughout the social network. Brand pages are not similar to a personal profile, even though they are equally put out in a timeline layout.

➤ **Twitter**

Poynter (2010: 229) suggests that twitter is a type of microblogging that has grown swiftly with millions of users posting not more than 140 characters post or tweets since 2006 when it was launched. Because the twitter database is so open there are some very powerful ways of searching it, and the searches can be easily tied to specific geographic locations.

According to Weaver (2013:46) with tweeter it is essential to remain active. Retweet, tweet, and reply/comment frequently to improve credibility from followers in order for search outcomes to be updated and accessed easily. Twitter provides promoted tweets and promoted Trends which are an accumulation of promoted tweets. With promoted trends, followers see context-, time-, and event-sensitive trends promoted by marketing associates.

➤ **YouTube**

According to Weaver (2013:46) YouTube is the world's largest online video community owned by Google. YouTube is also one of the most frequently searched websites. This makes it the main site for marketers to get to significant markets in the form of a video as it is one of the most frequently used website. Apart from accessing YouTube on the website, videos can be streamed on or posted from a cellular phone. While Twitter has followers; Facebook has fans; a principal objective of YouTube is to attain subscribers.

Nations (2016) says most of successful social media marketing strategies revolve around the viral video and YouTube. Although it is costly and it consumes a lot of time, YouTube can effortlessly come to be the cornerstone of a greater social media campaign because of its social make-up. It is great for interacting with clients and getting them engaged with the product and marketing.

➤ **Instagram**

Instagram defined by Folger (2017) is an electronic photo-sharing service that allows users to screen pictures and distribute them via Instagram and other social media channels like Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr. Since its launch in 2010, Instagram now preserves more than 90 million active users every month, and 40 million pictures are posted every day. Pew research revealed that 13% of all Internet consumers utilise Instagram, and that it is particularly pleasing the 18 to 29 age group.

Users on Instagram can use exciting filters to change the appearance and impression of their pictures, and the pictures look like as squares rather than of the 4:3 trait ratio that is distinctive to most digital cameras. These Instagram features give a unique look to pictures. Small companies can post persuasive pictures, consisting of links to the company's Website and content in the caption sector in order for users to promptly connect with the company.

➤ **Social media marketing tactics**

Existing social media mottos are as follows; influence, authenticity, conversation, community, engagement, transparency and sentiment. To old marketers, these are acquainted words; to new marketers, they are the essence of a thriving real-time strategy Macy and Thompson (2011:59).

Weaver (2013: 42, 43, 48) and Leavy (2011: 44,189,196) suggest the following tactics to be utilised in social media platforms.

Fill a company timeline:

In recent times Facebook presented timeline, which impose companies and people to chat about their existence in a story board. This is an opening for a company to talk about its brand.

Run a contest:

Contests and promotions are the best approach to obtain fans swiftly. Consumers are keen to like a page when there is opportunity earn something. Conducting contests and utilising the sign-up section of your contest as a technique to collect supplementary information about the followers Weaver.

Advertise on Facebook:

Convincing content is crucial to winning fans hence more effort is given to organisations that create Facebook supporters when they spend than those that create free brand pages.

Make your videos searchable:

Videos must be searchable videos both on YouTube on in search engines. Ensure that videos can be accessed in a Google or YouTube search. Also include a YouTube video in a company website as it can attract new subscribers and build long standing audience Weaver.

Posts:

Keep the posts quick, fresh, and interesting.

Thought leaders:

Engage every domain expert and thought leaders from the company in the blogging activities to retain interest and excitement.

Listening:

Pay attention to the discussion in a community prior to joining it, as it aids to recognise the nature of the discussion to avoid offending followers.

Avoid Professionalism:

Engage in the on-going discussion without being excessively professional.

Social media marketing and brand equity

Integrated Marketing communications according to Kotler and Keller (2012: 517) is the practice of ascertaining that all communication techniques and systems are appropriate for shoppers and stakeholders, and are aligned with brand image. Baker et al (2013:32) say possibly the greatest of social media marketing function is to create a business's brand. In contrast to conventional branding, social brand building is about what consumers say about a business than what it speaks of itself. For a fresh service or product, the top significant task is usually to form broad consciousness to consumers that the service or product exists and the company provides it. This is certain for big brands and

for people. Utilising social media to develop a company's brand perception is one of the most operative methods to escalate sales eventually. Each action a company takes on social media can improve or weaken perception of the brand. A business can positively impact on brand perception by creating online relations with industry leaders; meeting and revealing references, tweets, comments, discussions, positive posts, and reviews, and gave credibility to the business's anticipated brand perception.

Baker et al (2014:33) further state that a presently recognised brand still has the chance to build a positive impression on the target market.

➤ **Social media in promoting brands**

Social existence builds a brand's content and voice by merely repeating statements in newsfeed and with the usage of hashtag throughout social networks (Chatterjee 2016).

Corcione (2017) sees social media networks as incredible resources for businesses looking to promote their brands online. The platforms themselves are free to use, but also have paid advertising options specifically for brands that want to reach even more new audiences. But just because your business should be on social media, that doesn't mean you should be on every network. It's important that you choose and nurture the social platforms that work best for your business, so that you don't spread yourself too thin.

➤ **Social media for organisations**

Chartered Institute of personnel development (2012:1) state that social media is shifting the manner in which people interact and share insights about the type of service they receive; the value of products bought and how people demand to be treated as citizens, consumers and as personnel. Communication has changed from a one way to interaction; an interaction that organisations have minimal or no control over but from which it can collect infinite amount of information to get more efficient information. Craig (2013) adds that social media channels assist the organisation to emphasis a set of information where it is required, while similarly facilitating problem solving in relation to: Misdirection or loss of information; insufficient information to make decisions; Information archived by the organisation but unavailable for consideration at

time decisions were made; anguished customer relationships due to untimely and ineffective information sharing marketers; and lack of accessibility to efficiently share experience, perceptions, and connections.

➤ **Social media for marketers**

Social Media Examiner report by (Stelzner, 2014) cited in Tugrul (2014:39) reveals that 92% of marketers who participated in the survey believe that social media is essential for their companies, 97% engage in social media marketing, 56% possess a minimum of two years' experience in social media marketing and amongst these, 65% devote a minimum of 6 hours in a week on social media endeavors. Accumulating traffic and publicity are the two key advantages of social media marketing, mentioned by 80% and 92% of marketers, correspondingly.

➤ **The power of liking and sharing in social media**

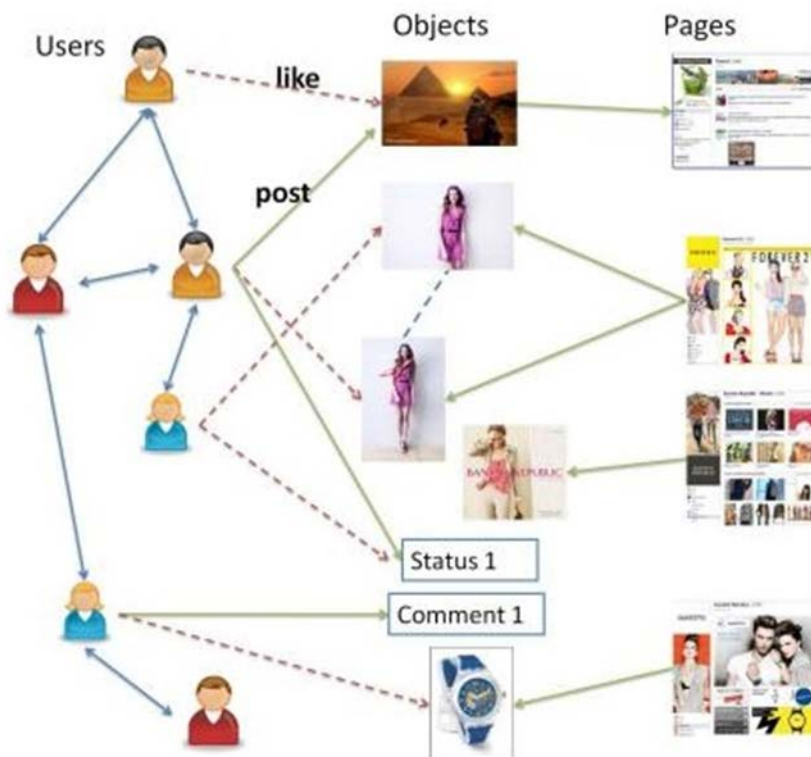


Figure 2.2: The power of liking and sharing in social media

Adapted from Jin et al. (2011)

'Like' has only just come to be a very prevalent online social utility. Various social media websites, such as Flickr, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, have a favorite or like button to give participants the opportunity express their how they feel about items (like comments, text messages, webpages, videos and photos) displayed businesses, by personal users or public figures. When an individual hit it on a like button related to an item, it is a signal that they are greatly fascinated by an item. Therefore, the 'like' button gives an additional precise means of assessing followers' interests better than non-direct signals, like user-service communication. Moreover, in certain social networks, for instance, Facebook, when an operator hits on 'like' to an item, such act will be instantly shared to their friends under certified confidentiality setting. Thus the "like" utility also offers a valuable and operative means of promoting and sharing information in social media. In point of fact, sharing with the use of a 'like' may possibly have greater influence as individuals usually give extra consideration to the items liked than those that are shared Jin, Wang, Luo, Yu and Hun (2011).

2.4.10 SOCIAL INFLUENCE THEORY

According to Peng, Yang, Cao, Yu, Xie (2016) social influence denotes the instance when people's behaviour transforms because of others encouragement. The power of social influence relies on the relation between persons, timing, network distances, networks and individuals attributes and so forth. Social networks are of vivacious significance in information circulation and extensive marketing, particularly when social media is joined with other strategies, such as endorsement systems and commerce. Impact intensification in social networks is described as looking for a subsection termed *seed set*, of nodules that may well generate the largest number of consumers spreading the provided facts Lu, Zhou and Wu (2016).

Abrahamse and Steg (2013: 1774) state that the efficiency of mass leaders can be credited to the so- called 'liking' norm. The more people like someone, is the more they will attempt to establish significant relations with them. People's chances of

conforming to an invitation are when they recognise correspondence like the same name or a birthday with the next person no matter how slight it could be. Therefore, a mass leader is operative because utilisation of prevailing social networks escalates the probability of information getting to a particular crowd, and the accumulating chances that individuals in network react to information because it emanates from a person they personally identify with. With the dominance of social networks, consumers can effortlessly note and stimulate each other's emotions Li, Cheng, Su, Li and Yang (2017).

2.5 Consumer behaviour

Schiffman, Kanuk and Wisniewski (2010: 23) define consumer behaviour as the behaviour that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs. Consumer behaviour focuses on how individual consumers and families or households make decisions to spend their available resources (time and money) on consumption-related items. That includes what they buy, why they buy it, when they buy it, where they buy it, how often they buy it, how often they use it, how they evaluate it after the purchase, the impact of such evaluations on future purchases and how they dispose of it. Consumers' behaviour is swayed by series of dynamics, including psychological, and psychographical. Nevertheless, it must be eminent that buyers' behaviour depends directly on their motivation to act (Anderson and Gaile-Sarkane 2010). Additionally, buying behaviour does not essentially display actions of one consumer, but can involve many. Those engaged in buyer behaviour can adopt more than one role. Others may take on the role of influencer and impact on the outcome of a decision, and others or all may possibly be users (Hoyer, MacInnis and Pieters 2013:5).

All things that people take note of are eventually affected by the practices intricate in perception. Perception starts being active immediately when humans begin to scan for factors to concentrate on, any object or an environment they constantly find themselves in. In order to concentrate on information that has aroused their interest, consumers are guided by perception (Jansson-Boyd 2010: 38, 39). Studies have also revealed that consumer decisions are outcomes of a composite organisation of mindful

efforts (Foxall, Oliveira-Castro, James and Schrezenmaier, 2011:2), and that they are also a result of consumers' insensible psychological practices (Bargh, 2002:28).

2.5.1 South African consumers

Richards, an account director at Ask Afrika quoted in Kgosiemang (2016) states that the growth of the imminent shopper segment together with technological progressions will be some of the most important influence on the changing buyer market. The visionary generation's stimulus is based in their amassed purchasing power and the influence they have on other groups. The way that present generation is transforming buyer behaviour changing is that in contrast to preceding groups, they have dissimilar outlooks, they have more knowledge of technology and they communicate differently with organisations says Richards.

This generation also has lesser tolerance level for sluggish reply time and is exposed to fresher and diverse ways of communication.

According to Sartender (2006) South African consumers are mostly mindful of brands. The middle class to be exact, has pretty great spending habits, this includes the new black middle class. These shoppers look for exclusive products and have a tendency of not spending much on basic supplies or housing. Consumers in South Africa are up-to-date. Furthermore, the ever changing economy of the country has given rise to high consumer buying power and a growth of black middle class, which presently has greater heights of disposable earnings.

According to Springleap (2015) the South African consumer, similar to numerous first-world shoppers, is passionate about new developments in smartphone technology. While there is an immense disproportion isolating the poorer and rich markets, it appears that every person has smartphone accessibility. Inexpensive contracts, stretching over a lengthy period, are conceivably the cause of this. Brands such as Samsung are not only providing a rich reflection of ground-breaking technology to the multitudes of South Africa, they are providing those who are devoid of an ADSL line and home-based Wi-Fi connection speedy and informal access to the internet. Social media channels such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook have turned into mobile apps. This effortlessly makes end users' need to engage in social activity, maintain latest news updates, and to unite with friends and family. (IT News Africa 2016) reports

that there is a growing interest by South African internet users to shop online. The report further discloses that 22% of South African internet users said they have made procurements online, and 48% anticipate doing the same in the future. However, Crosswaite (2013) says general South African growth in 2013 is commonly believed to be hesitant. Vendors shall be challenged by accumulative expenditure, and decreasing value as they try to persuade cash-strapped users to separate with their hard-earned money. Yet, consumers will utilise social media and the internet to communicate, and make comparisons of prices, products and experiences.

More than three and a half million South Africans were picked out of extreme poverty over a decade ago. Since 2015, the consuming class in South Africa advanced to about nine million family units, spending about 191 billion US dollars in private consumption. Yet, in spite of this prospect pool growth, South Africa's secluded consumption has been rising at a reasonably restrained annual rate of 2.8% in the past five years and a modest 1.6% in the year before that—unhurried than other main economies in Africa. Most consumers in South Africa are making careful financial decisions by finding different ways of decreasing expenditure. While 75% of South Africans admitted to progressively finding ways to save money, more than half are believed to be they are limiting their expenses by shopping at different shops to get better deals, looking for promotions and sales, comparing prices, and suspending purchases. By means of eating from home in place of dining out and preparing meals from scratch, South African consumers' habits are changing (Hattingh, Magnus and Ramlakan 2016). Changchit (2006: 177,178) says electronic commerce's impact on distinct business is differentiated based on numerous circumstances. The capacity to entice and keep clients is significant to the success of computer-generated businesses.

According to Peng, Ciu, Zhuang and Li (2016: 269) with the spread of online businesses and electronic shopping, it is now a prevalent practice for consumers to go through reviews of the products posted online before buying products. Peng et al. (2016) accordingly, companies have robust enticements to influence and monitor reviews on their particular websites or third-party communities to modify both the number and the excellence of the reviews in an attempt to guide shoppers' perceptions.

According to Lee and Ma (2010) electronic buyer appraisals express views of merchandise or service consumers and are displayed on company website or third party online network; these reviews usually contain a written open comment section, often accompanied by a numerical rating. Electronic appraisals can be an advantage to both the customers and the businesses that decide on to utilising them. Thakur and Aurora (2015:257) add that the major elements that sway buyer perceptions of electronic shopping are Convenience, Ease of Use, Satisfaction, Information, and Proper Utilization of the channels and Security/Privacy. The Internet can be an influential instrument for the producers for marketing and advertising products and services and by this they may possibly attract new clients or market the company as well. Ferreira (2016: 15) adds that the Internet has become a gradually common platform that simplify information search, decision, and buying. Through the internet, consumers can look for goods and envisage how those goods will satisfy their needs, compare products prices and join online discussions about those products with other consumers in online environments.

2.5.2 Consumer purchase decision journey

According to Kardes, Cline and Cronley (2011: 63) the only way to describe buyer decision making is on an effort scale, going from very low to very high. Repetitive select is done spontaneously, with slight mindful effort. Thus, it encompasses neither planning nor information search. Intermediary problem solving normally encompasses partial search of information and planning. Shoppers are hardly inspired to thoroughly assess each option; as a result, they employ meek decision rules or experiment to help their decision making. Here shoppers mostly do not have well recognised measures to assess brands or may not be familiar with the category of the product. Users normally employ thorough problem solving for seldom bought, exclusive products. As the decisions here are of high risk level, users usually commit excessive effort and time in collecting information and gauging choices before making purchases.

2.5.3 Consumer decision making process theory (model)



Figure 2.3: Consumer decision making process

Source: Riley (2015)

➤ **Problem/ need recognition**

According to Schiffman, Kanuk and Wiseblint (2010: 484) a need is usually realised when a user is confronted with a problem. According to Solomon (2013: 326) problem recognition happens when humans are experiencing a substantial dissimilarity

between their state of matters at the time and some state they yearn. Kardes, Cline and Cronley (2011: 71) agree that problem recognition occurs when users experience an imbalance between what they possess and what they desire. At times the physical or psychological uneasiness resulting from the imbalance is of adequate degree to oblige consumers to act. A need is a major psychological or physical condition of realised deficiency. Thus, needs are not directly generated from marketing determinations. This is dependable on the marketing notion that designates as an outside-in practice intended to satisfy and forecast customer wants and needs – not to generate them. Hawkins, Mothersbaugh and Best (2007:514) on the one hand, state that when a consumer realises a divergence between their desire and their current condition, problem recognition takes place. It is vital to notice that it is buyer's perception of the definite condition that initiates recognition of the problem.

Marketing consultants have indicated that, users buy goods to satisfy one or two of the following key needs:

1. Resolve a problem—evasion of discomfort or upset
2. Upsurge pleasure—delight and remain fashionable

Consequently, the unsurpassed technique businesses can use retail their merchandise is to find devices to influence consumers when making a purchase decision by presenting to them exactly how the business's product will resolve the current problem—in an improved manner than usual resolutions—or intensify their pleasure and satisfaction. This is exactly the motive companies must guarantee that immense online existence is established, particularly on social media as 74% of buyers rely on social media to make a purchase decision (Ahmed 2015). Jensen (2015) supports that social media is the best place to promote products and fundamentally aid consumers identify a need or learn something new. Half of Internet consumers aged 18 between 23 utilise social networks as their main online detection means, just as 43% of Internet consumers aged 24 between 32. In this phase, the idea is to intensify brand awareness.

➤ **Information search**

After identifying a want or a need, customers look for information about the different options presented to fulfill it. Information search may take place either externally,

internally or both ways. According to Solomon (2013: 327) as soon as customers realise a problem, they need a way to resolve it. Consumers may identify a need and then search the market for certain information. Nonetheless, many consumers specially, experienced buyers, like browsing for amusement or just keep themselves updated with new trends in the market. Schiffman and Kanuk (2009:533) say the recall of previous experiences could afford shoppers sufficient information when making a choice. On the one hand, in the case where consumers have no previous experience, they will have to employ a rigorous search of the external setting for worthwhile information which the choice will be based on. Hawkins et al. (2007: 532) add that when a need is realised, applicable information from long-standing recall is utilised to define a suitable solution, possible solutions' characteristics, and proper methods to compare alternatives, and so on. This is interior search. Should a solution not be met through interior search, then search efforts will be directed outside information appropriate to solve the problem. External information search may include personal sources, product experience, marketer-based information, and independent sources.

Generation Curious have the capacity to get hold of information about a business, product or brand anywhere, anytime. With online review websites, social networks and peer to peer communication about products and brands has blown up. The trick is, brand ambassadors and marketers usually struggle to notice these discussions, let alone sway them.

➤ **Evaluation of alternatives**

Schiffman and Kanuk (2009:534) advise when assessing possible choices, customers have a tendency to utilise two kinds of information: A "list" of brands which are used when making a purchase decision choice this list is often referred to as the evoked set. The second kind of information used when choosing a sample from all potential brands is a human attribute that assists simplify the process of making decisions. Hawkins et al. (2007: 566) shoppers usually make decisions built on emotional impact or on general attitude toward the brand or to diminish efforts or destructive emotions. A lot of these forms of choices encompass slight thought of particular product structures. Nonetheless, most choices encompass an assessment of the probable performance of the service or goods on one or more magnitudes.

➤ **Purchase**

According to Hawkins et al. (2007: 626) a customer must finish the transaction as soon as they have chosen the brand and store. This includes buying or leasing a product. Schiffman and Kanuk (2009: 545) indicate that the minute a customer buys a brand for the first time and purchases a lesser amount than normal; this procurement should be considered experimental. Schiffman and Kanuk (2009: 546) further mention that contradictory to experimental, where customers consume a product on a trivial measure and with no guarantee, as a signal of satisfaction customers buy again and this means repeat and larger amount of purchases for a business. When consuming durable products, customers go from assessment directly to long standing obligation through buying lacking the chance to test the product.

➤ **Post purchase evaluation**

According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2009:547) as customers utilise merchandise, specifically during probation consumption, they assess its performance according to their own experience. The point of after purchase examination that customers embark on is influenced by the significance of the merchandise decision and the experience developed in utilising the product.

A study conducted by E-Marketer in 2015 shows that some social media activities like seeing adverts, remaining the best with contemporary product trends and fashion, and also buying goods right through a social platform swayed digital purchasing behaviour too. Customers are undeniably ever more shifting to social media not just to be stimulated, but to make purchases as well. Purchase buttons, which have been acquiring recognition all through 2015, help increase sales (E-Marketer 2016).

According to the PWC total retail survey 2016, 52% of South African consumers' purchasing behaviour is swayed by appraisals whereas 67% of 23000 consumers who participated in the survey in 25 countries say that writing or reading reviews or remarks in social media impacts on their online buying behaviour. Therefore, Ahmed (2015) advises that in principle, pages should be created with reviews, data, and statistics from contented shoppers and product information rather than of filling your social media network with business information. In a nutshell, if social media strategy in place is ineffective, it is because it needs to be reconsidered and refurbished instead being abandoned as it is evident that it drives sales.

2.5.4 Social Media Dependence Theory

Chen (2014:25) states that social media dependence theory explores the multilateral relations between the media, audience and the society at large. The theory proposes that an individual relies on media to gratify social and personal needs, affective, cognitive and behavioural changes in people are influenced by media's level of significance in their lives. The theory delivers hypothetical basis for study on different kinds of media and appropriate applications and Internet products too. A study founded on Internet Dependency relations (IDR) as an analyst of electronic buyer behaviour put forward that people who relied on the Internet to reach their behaviour orientation aims are expected to participate in buying activities more, and as a result stimulate their internet buying experience. The widespread usage of media dependence theory in reviewing different media created an opportunity for current studies on the consumer behavioral intentions and relations social media dependence. Actually, past study concerning electronic word-of-mouth advises that the level that shopper's dependence on the business website has positive effect on the integrity of electronic word-of-mouth whereas discreetly has undesirable effect on supposed risks. Moreover, where social media remarks are involved, customer's dependent on the website to mediate and link website perceived effectiveness and customer professed value. Buyer's reliance positively encourages buyer's trust and supposed value on the website.

2.6 The role of marketing on consumer behaviour

According to Quester, Pettigrew and Hawkins (2011:38) the circumstances in which users obtain information have an impact their behaviour as point to which we view and pay attention to marketing communication is defined by whether we are unaccompanied or in a company, in a noble temperament or a bad one, in a rush or not, and so forth. Peter and Olson (2005; 250) state that marketers create strategies to achieve certain objectives. Usually these objectives deal with upholding or improving sales or market share by a certain volume or fraction, substance to a financial plan restriction. To achieve these goals, marketers' emphasis on inducing customers' cognition, affective, and behaviour. Influencing these factors can involve both long-term and short-term strategies. For instance, constructing brand equity-shoppers' conviction about positive product qualities and positive significances of

brand utilisation- is often a longstanding strategy intended to stimulate lasting sales and the capability to charge greater rates. In other instances, marketers utilise strategies to persuade customers in the short period, while they hope the same customers will be long standing, loyal clients.

2.7 Branding and marketing

According to Du Toit and Erdis (2013: 2) individuals recognise marketing in diverse ways. Others think it is sales; others think it is promoting on a television or radio; while others think it means providing the right merchandise to clients at a reasonable rate, placing goods on the store surface, and so on. Marketing messages can be deliberate or unintended. Unintended marketing messages may well be by word of-mouth, constructive or undesirable buyers' experiences. Deliberate marketing messages can emerge through public relations, advertising, personal selling, direct marketing, and sales promotion (Fill 2011: 9). The planned utilisation of marketing activities, particularly when used together with Marketing Public Relations is proved to be operative in influencing reaction from target audience by augmenting emotional reaction, cognitive thinking, behavioural responses and constructing viable customer relations (Caywood2012:57).

Social media can offer numerous benefits to brands: it helps protect the brand image, engage users in brand building process, upturn sales, increase brand awareness, deliver additional positive associations and intensify customer loyalty to a brand. In social media brand, turn out to be reliant on the will and wish of an end user. Users personally choose the way they deduce a brand, like joint vision between consumers and a brand. Businesses looking to increase brand awareness should learn to deliver a widespread marketing message. Viral marketing or word-of-mouth communication when utilised jointly with other marketing communications channels can upsurge brand equity. Thus, businesses ought to formulate interaction with customers in social media (Zailskaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite 2013:143).

Creating a resilient brand is a composite task. The brand building procedure begins by developing of a resilient value proposition. When this is done, the following phase

is to get consumers to experiment the brand. If the product is properly created, it must deliver an acceptable experience and lead to an inclination to purchase again. To induce experimental and recurrence buying needs prompting instruments, delivered through promotion, advertising, public relations, direct marketing and selling. The business has to converse brand value and then strengthen associations of the brand to get consumer to experience and keep using the brand. By combining inducement of constant communications and satisfactory experience and usage, confidence, brand awareness, and equity are created (Vukasovič 2013:99).

2.8 Brand equity

Pullig (2008: 1) describes brand equity as the worth of a brand in the marketplace. A brand that is easily remembered and one that consumers are prepared to pay any amount of money for and endorse it to others. Marketplace multipliers and consumers' mentality influence consumers' reaction towards brands in different ways. Brand value is formed by greater market segments and higher price premiums, which partially results from more variable reactions to price reductions and inflexible reactions to price escalations (Keller and Lehmann 2003:29). In order to build successful brand equity, businesses have to create a private label brand, establish to positive associations with the brand name, arrange a great deal of brand awareness, and constantly strengthen brand image (Levy and Weitz 2009: 443).

Smith (2016) states the general acceptance of social media by users and brands has transformed the brand- consumer relation radically. A brand's online existence, especially their social existence, can be an advantage that forms brand equity, adding worth to the brand and the buyer. Whether offline or online, word of mouth is essential to find about new brands. It is one of the most extensive ways and means of discovery, and one that is widely trusted. Individuals finding out about new brands with this method do so regularly and naturally. Discussions between users and brands are similarly significant, be it an actual customer or a potential customer. Great discussions could be a brand's durable asset and increase brand equity.

➤ Brand awareness

According to Levy and Weitz (2009: 444) brand awareness speaks of a prospect's capacity to identify or remember that the brand label is a specific category of store, service or product. Thus, brand awareness is the strong point that links the brand to its positioning in consumers' minds. Storey (2016) says that social media is a vital instrument that, if utilised properly, can intensify the prominence of a brand in a place where a myriad easily vanish in multitudes. When utilising channels such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook, it is usually difficult to know where to begin to raise brand awareness. Social media marketing enhances a profile; hence businesses should have a solid online existence. It is also not easy to create a social presence that pushes the brand above the bar as competition has already created a presence online. However, Kasteler (2017) says the strategy to utilise social media to enrich online presence is to engage followers with valuable and appropriate material where they require it instead of creating it.

➤ **Brand association**

Brand Associations are the connections that are present between a brand and the other notions kept in a user's memory (Rutkauskaite 2012:11). According to Levy and Weitz (2009: 444) a brand's worth mainly originate from the associations that consumers generate for a brand name. Virutamasen, Wongpreedee, Kumnungwut (2015:195) add that Brand associations entail linking symbols and images with a particular brand or its advantages. Brand marketers would want to introduce new stratagems to reinforce brand association to additionally react to shifting corporate setting. Thellefsen and Sorensen (2015: 204) mention that there are three forms of associations: interest, contiguity, and resemblance. They all can be recognised in consumers' utilisation of brands. It is description-formation engaging information about the brand, collateral experience of the mind and a given mind that creates associations, not the brand. The information out of the mind creates conceptual images in the mind of consumers, before memory or knowledge links the inside with the outside – the linkage is called association.

➤ **Brand loyalty**

Relander (2015) states that marketers have comprehended that customer loyalty is created and recreated at every interaction between a brand and consumers.

Commonly labelled touch points, these interactions are significant to constructing and upholding resilient relationships with customers. Consumers who are loyal certainly do not only purchase repeatedly or more, they also do not consider other options or a brand's competition when making a purchase. Thus, brand loyalty construes that clients like and constantly purchase a particular brand in a merchandise category and are unwilling to change to new brands when their preferred brand is out of stock (Levy and Weitz 2009: 112).

To promote brand loyalty, marketers need to comprehend client engagement way better than their rivalry. The ideal or valued client may not be a person who buys frequently or a lot, but it could simply be an influencer who posts reviews and ratings. The reviews may persuade a 100 more consumers to make a purchase. Marketers may effortlessly observe the, frequency quantity and type of forum discussions, profile updates, reviews, blog posts, and the like. This detects prospects and also works technically as a warning system to any likely upcoming glitches. Consider pursuing a brand influencer instead of buyers only (Smitsh and Zook 2011: 53).

2.8.1 (AIDA model)

According to Gani and Grobler (2014:2) AIDA model, an abbreviation for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action is one of the supremely mentioned "pyramid of influence" patterns in marketing books about how consumers react to marketing efforts since it characterizes the authentic operative consumer's behaviour in reality. Hanlon (2013) states that the AIDA design recognises cognitive phases people go over when making a purchase. However, it is not virtuously a relationship between a customer and a business because social media has stretched it to achieve the diverse objectives through information supplemented by other consumers in communities and social network.

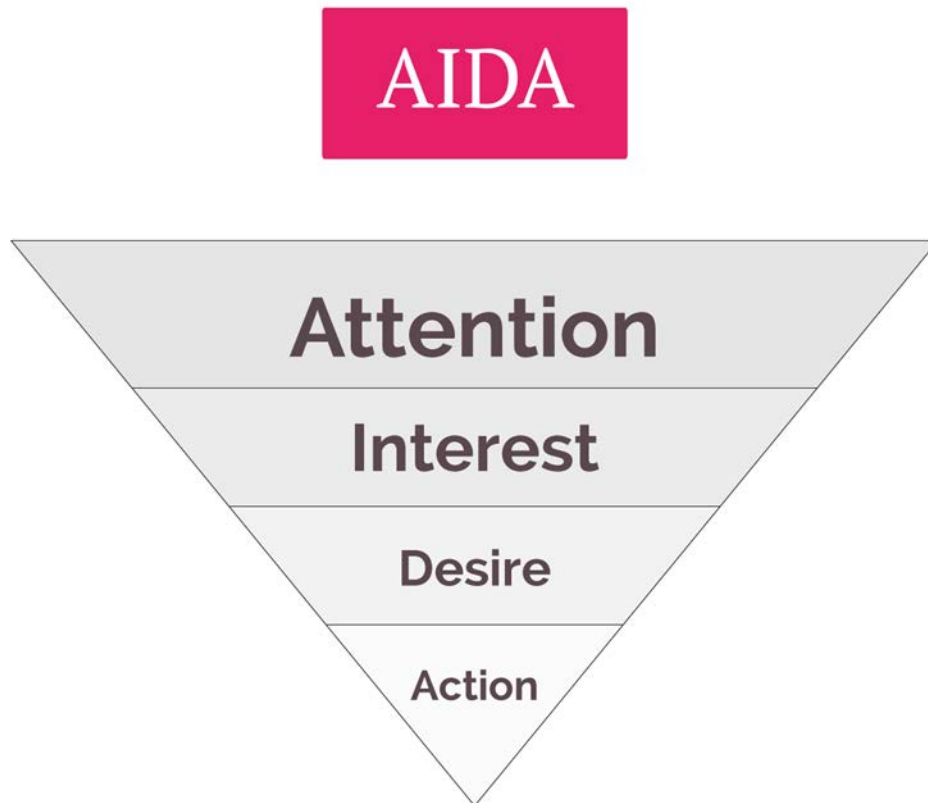


Figure 2.3 AIDA

Source: Innovation nest, Kapturkiewicz (2014)

AIDA model

Ghose (2016) discusses the AIDA chain in the following manner:

➤ **Attention**

AIDA process is essential its goal is to place the potential customer into a perfect mind set up to carry on with the sales talk. The salesclerk should persuade a potential customer to partake in a direct interview. The salesclerk need use psychological and social expertise to induce the responsiveness of a potential customer to his sales pitch.

➤ **Interest**

The second step is to increase a customer's responsiveness in order to create great interest. To succeed, the salesclerk should be passionate about the product. Another way is to give the product to a potential customer and allow them to hold it. Flyers and

other optical utilities fulfil one purpose. Anticipation of the entire interest phase is to seek the selling point that will be operative.

➤ **Desire**

Subsequent to obtaining attention and generating interest, a customer should be sparked to grow a resilient desire for the merchandise. This is when a customer is ready to make a purchase. Disapproval from the client should be handled cautiously in this phase.

➤ **Action**

If the pitch was perfect, the customer is prepared to make purchase. Usually a customer may be reluctant in this phase. The salesclerk must be precisely cautious when handling a customer in this phase and seal the transaction successfully.

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed the literature on how social media channels are utilised by both consumers and brands in marketing and how social media marketing influences consumers' choice of brands. Although the use of social media has significantly intensified, it is essential for marketers and brand managers to determine the best strategies of using social media in order to realise its full potential. In an attempt to influence consumers', purchase decision social media must not be used alone but as a part of a brand's marketing strategy in order to effectively capture Durban shoppers. The next chapter presents research methodology that was adopted when gathering primary data for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Smith and Scott (2010:1) research is a systematic and unbiased exploration of a substance or problem so as to determine significant facts or philosophies. It is mainly seen as applied or fundamental in nature. This chapter concentrates on the research methodology and design that was utilised in this study. It talks about the rationale of the research methodology applied, which is driven by the objectives of the study. The research objectives and research design are outlined in this chapter as well as the sequence of events employed to gather the primary data.

3.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The method of research chosen for this study is subsequent to the research objectives. For this reason, the objectives are stated below:

- To identify current marketing strategies used to communicate brands in social media networks.
- To determine the effectiveness of those strategies to arouse consumers' willingness to purchase the brands.
- To investigate whether consumers are willing to engage with brands on social media platforms to gain more information on brands specifications, performance, prices, promotions and brand reputation.
- To ascertain if consumers prefer brand recommendations made by other consumers on social media networks through like and share buttons.
- To determine the degree to which social media marketing influence consumers' decision making when selecting a brand.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Kothari (2004:31) a research design is an organisation of situations that will be gathered and analysed as data in a way that intends to amalgam applicability to purpose of the research with the economy underway. It establishes the blueprint to gather, measure and analyse data. Malhotra (2010:10) adds that a research design is a structure used to execute a research project and it has a process that needs to be followed in order to gain the required information reach the set research objectives. Kothari (2004: 32) further articulates that research design promotes advance development of the systems that will be used to gather applicable data and the methods that will be utilised in when analysing data, with research objective, money, time and staff availability in mind. Precaution should be taken when planning research design as it holds the reliability of research outcomes and any fault in the process may distraught the whole project. (Kent 2007:16) claims that research designs may be causal, exploratory in nature or descriptive.

Chawla and Sonhdi (2011:8) state that causal research determines the effect of one subject over another. They are exceedingly organised and need a solid chronological approach to sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Wrenn, Stevens and Loudon (2007: 67) agree that causal research is carried out in a meticulous setting to identify if there is a relation between cautiously defined objects.

According to William, Zikmund and Babin (2010: 52) exploratory research is carried out to elucidate confusing situations or identify possible opportunities in business. Exploratory research is not envisioned to deliver evidence that can be used to make a decision, but it is a type of research carried out with the aim that supplementary research will be required to deliver more decisive evidence.

Collins and Hussey (2014: 4) mention that descriptive research is conducted to further assess a situation than exploratory research as it is carried out to determine and define traits of the relevant subject. A descriptive research gives emphasis to define the degree to which two or more variables are correlated or the regularity with which a something comes about (Churchill, Brown and Suter 2010: 79). Parasuraman, Grewal and Krishnan (2007:67) argue that a descriptive research designs engage statistical

methods to examine and infer data, with the purpose of allocating connotations to the qualities of the population. Kothari (2004:37) clarifies that descriptive research designs the ones which focus on unfolding the qualities of a specific person, or of a collective, while diagnostic research designs define the regularity with which something happens or its connection with something else. This study adopted a descriptive research design with the intention of achieving the set aim in identifying the influence of social media marketing on Durban consumers' choice of brands.

The two popular approaches used in research are quantitative and qualitative research approaches (Rhodes 2014). Curwin and Slater (2008:7) state that quantitative research is about utilising numbers to outline, give details, and solve variety of problems. However, these numbers have to make sense inside the context which will make more sense and provide reasonable significance for non-numerical and numerical information. Kumar (2011:16) agrees that quantitative research produces data by means of extensive survey research, exhausting devices like structured interviews or questionnaires. This method of research extends to a lot of people, however interaction with those individuals is far quicker than that of a qualitative research approach.

Qualitative research is different in that it involves gathering, analysing and interpreting data through discernment of what is done or stated by people. Making statements or observing is not structured as observations and questions are open ended. Also, qualitative data can only be enumerated after being translated (Burns and Bush 2014: 146). Yin (2011:6) highlights that qualitative research is more appealing because it allows researchers to carry out detailed research about a wide-ranging selection of subjects areas, including a researcher's preferences, in ordinary and daily terminology. Additionally, qualitative research provides better opportunity to select areas of interest as other research approaches could be limited by the incapacity to form the essential research situations; inaccessibility of adequate data or lack of exposure of satisfactory variables; the struggle in drawing a sufficient sample of participants and gaining a proficiently greater response rate; or other constraints like being keen to study history but not the present. The characteristics of qualitative and quantitative approaches were compared by Sognuro (2002: 4) as follows:

Table 3.1: Differing Characteristics of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Approaches.

FACTOR	QUALITATIVE	QUANTITATIVE
Data Collected	Soft Data	Hard Data
Data collection techniques	Active interaction with sample population	Passive interaction through questionnaire and/or experiment design
Sample population	Small population	Large population
Research variables	Large number	Small number
Data collection	On-going observation and interview	Before and after training or experiment
Relationship	Intense and long term with Subjects	Distance and short term
Research context	Uncontrolled	Controlled
Data analysis	Context/ interpretive	Statistical analysis
Research findings	Inductive through creativity and criteria reflection	Deductive through inferences from data
Research instruments	Researcher as an instrument	Questionnaires
Tools	Interview guide, tape recorder, transcriber, computer, type writer, etc	Computer, calculator

Interpretation Information/Results	of	Subjective Nature of enquiry	Objective Interpretivism Positivism
Research Tradition		Ethnography, hermeneutics Phenomenography Case studies, etc	Descriptive, correlational, experimental, casual comparative, etc

Source: Educational Research Quarterly, Sognuro (2002: 5)

This study needed to generalise findings of an outsized population therefore it employed a quantitative approach as suggested by Sekaran and Bougie (2013:147).

3.3 TARGET POPULATION

According to Curwin and Slater (2008:36) population is outlined as the persons, objects, or organisations of interest. Based on restricted resources together with time, it is important to recognise the appropriate population. Zikmund and Babin (201:415) add that the population has to be well-defined in order to yield good outcomes. For this study, the population comprised of social media consumers who reside in Durban. According to Writer (2015) a demographic study conducted by Effective Measure shows that Durban makes up 8.96% of 197000 South African internet consumers.

3.4 SAMPLING METHOD

Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2014:174) state that the elementary notion of sampling is to make conclusions about the whole population by picking some of the elements of the population. Furthermore, they add that only qualitative methods embedded in a positivist research style are concerned about illustrative samples. Mazzocchi (2008:125) adds that sampling lets researchers to approximate data on outsized target populations by conduction a survey on a lesser division of elements. Quinlan (2011:208) maintains that in social science research, the whole population of the study is immense and subsequently outside the capacity of the researcher, hence

the planned study usually is conducted on a sample rather than the whole population in such events. A sample may well be more truthful than the whole population (Zikmund and Babin 2010:413). Bless and Smith (2008: 159) argue that information from the entire population is more reliable, therefore it is beneficial to conduct a study on the entire population instead of the sample. However, due to budget limitations and time this study utilised a sample of the population.

This study adopted a non-probability sampling technique. Non-probability sampling depends on the researcher's subjective judgment instead of the chance to choose sample units (Maholtra 2010:376). The type of non-probability sampling that was employed by the researcher is convenience sampling, which refers to a sample that merely presented to a researcher by benefit of its accessibility (Bryman and Bell 2011:190). Zikmund and Babin (2010:423) maintain that convenience sampling denotes sampling through attaining people or elements that are expediently available. Accordingly, participants in this study were chosen at the convenience of the researcher.

Purposive sampling is another method of non-probability sampling that was utilized in this study. Blumberg et al. (2014: 193) mention that there are two main kinds of purposive sampling which are quota sampling and judgment sampling. They further say quota sampling is utilised in improving representation while judgement sampling is used when a researcher chooses a sample to follow a certain standard. Judgement sampling which was specifically adopted in this study is supported by Mazzocchi (2008:124) in that its selection relies on the judgement of researchers who take advantage of the experience to attain a sample that they deem to be representative of the target population. In this study only social media consumers who are above the age of 18 and reside in Durban could participate.

3.5 SAMPLE SIZE

Sample size speaks of the number of units to be comprised in the study. Defining the sample size is difficult and needs a number of quantitative and qualitative deliberations. As the sample size upsurges, every element of information is gained at a higher cost. The nature of the research similarly has an effect on the sample size (Maholtra 2010:374). Kumar (2011:49) points out that it is a common rule in quantitative research method that the greater the sample size the greater the accuracy

of the results. Nevertheless, a researcher has to create a sample size that will be controllable because of the possible time and financial constraints. Kumar (2011:49) further mentions that it could be necessary to select a greater population size as non-response should also be accounted for. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010:296) a suitable sample size should be between 30 and 500 participants. A total of 450 social media consumers in Durban was the sample size for this research.

3.6 RESEARCH MEASUREMENT

Johnson and Christensen (2012:132) state that measurement is the act of determining the capability, magnitudes, quantity, or level of something. According to Bryman and Bell (2011: 154) measurement sanctions are used by researchers to identify differences between individuals based on the questioned characteristics. Also, a measuring instrument gives a reliable tool for evaluating dissimilarities. They further say that it is essential to have indicators or an indicator that will represent a notion by means of either of the following ways: self-completion questionnaire or structured interview schedule; observation schedule; assessment of mass media content or official statistics. For the purpose of this study, a self-completion questionnaire was employed. A questionnaire is a self-completion data collection tool that every research respondent completes as part of a study. Questionnaires are used to collect information about feelings, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, values, personally and interactive aims of research respondents (Johnson and Christensen 2012:163).

3.6.1 Questionnaire Development

The coherent practice of questionnaire design similar to other mechanisms of survey design and application, encompasses a prearranged sequence of phases, each of which needs specific skills, time, resources and decisions making (Blair, Czjar and Blair 2014:177). Questionnaires are usually ordered into segments that follow the rationality of the sampling strategy, procedures used in collecting data, and administration of questions. Majority of questionnaires comprise of introduction to the interview, practical questions, participant-selection process, demographic or background questions and a few post-interview matters (Blair et. al 2014:210).

3.6.2 Advantages of a Questionnaire

Kumar (2011:140) says questionnaires are less costly and convenient because by not interviewing respondents the researcher gets to save time, economic and human capital. A questionnaire also affords great anonymity as there is no personal interaction between the researcher and the participants. Chances of collecting accurate data when sensitive questions are asked are better with this instrument.

According to Blair, Czajar and Blair (2014:57) the two biggest benefits of online surveys are their speediness when collecting data and low expenses. Blair, Czajar and Blair (2014: 58) further mention that self-administered internet questionnaires have many abilities. Online questionnaires may comprise composite skip configurations because the skips are preset into the questionnaire and applied inevitably.

3.6.3 Disadvantages of a Questionnaire

Kothari (2004:100) mentions that properly completed questionnaires have a low level of return and prejudice owing to non -reply is usually unknown. There is also inherent rigidity because of the struggle to modify the method as soon as questionnaires have been distributed and the likelihood of vague replies or completely no responses to some questions. Lastly, it is challenging to identify accurately illustrative participants when using this method.

3.7 PRE-TESTING

It is essential to examine a research instrument before utilising it in data collection. Pre-examining a research tool involves an acute assessment of each question's comprehension and its connotation as assumed by participants. The core determination of a pre-test is to authenticate that the population sample comprehends the planned answer choices and the questions as envisioned by the investigator, and is certainly capable to respond expressively. Normally, when pre-testing is a self-report tool, the pre-test contestant will complete the questionnaire first, and then examine and give feedback on each point in order (Perneger, Courvoisier, Hudelson and Gayet-Ageron 2014:147)

As suggested by Dawson (2002:95) a questionnaire was pre-tested when the researcher finished constructing questions. The pre-test was carried out using 10 questionnaires with the aim of evaluating the arrangement of the questionnaire, the

length of the questionnaire, transparency of questions, simplicity of instructions and grammar. The method of dispersing questionnaires and gathering of completed questionnaires were also assessed through this pre-test. The outcomes revealed that respondents did not have any difficulties comprehending the questions; however, they valued time and financial resources spent on internet data therefore the questions had to be short and direct. Two spelling errors which were corrected were also hinted by the results of the pre-test.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION

According to Burns and Bush (2014:122) primary data is the information that is established or collected precisely for an ongoing project by the researcher while secondary is data that was formerly collected by someone for a determination other than that of the researcher and their current research project. Data can be gathered by means of pencil-and-paper surveys, personal or telephonic interviews and electronic approaches like web-based surveys (Muijis 2004:41).

The survey was conducted on various social media platforms comprising Twitter, Facebook, and Emails to the researcher's online contacts. The participants had a representative profile of students and professionals from all over Durban excluding minors (people under the age of 18) each one of them being computer literate and comfortable with social media platforms. The questionnaire was put together primarily with the use of closed-ended questions and a Likert scale in order to implore insight judgment of the participants and to allow the use of statistical analytical tools.

The questionnaires were dispersed together with a letter of information and consent and there were clear guidelines in the questionnaire that eased participation and answering of questions without the researcher getting excessively involved even though there were times when the researcher had to clarify what respondents did not clearly understand. Partaking in this study was without any form of coercion, and the entire process was conducted with great discretion. The completed questionnaires were sent back to the researcher via the same social media platforms they were received by respondents and a folder was created on the researcher's computer where they were immediately downloaded to and stored upon receiving to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Bhattacharjee (2012:119) states that descriptive analysis speaks of statistically defining, combining, and presenting the concepts of interest or relations amid these concepts. On the other hand, inferential statistics are the arithmetical measures that are utilised to make conclusions about links between variables. They are different from descriptive statistics because they are unambiguously created to examine hypotheses. Many statistical measures that contemporary statistical software like SPSS and SAS support fit into this classification. Statistical Packaging for Social Sciences (SPSS version 24.0) and Microsoft excel version 2010 were used to analyse the collected data sets. Both inferential and descriptive statistics were employed in this study. Generality and conclusions about the population built on the outcomes were reached by means of inferential statistics while the descriptive statistics took the form of frequency tables, means, standard deviations and presentation of data.

3.10 VALIDITY

The idea of validity in research is an enquiry of the degree to which the study is logic, honest, solid, sound, practical, meaningful, and beneficial. To ensure validity a study should contribute to knowledge. The evidence collected for the purpose of the study must be valid (Quinlan 2011:75). Similarly, Sekaran and Bougie (2010: 156) define validity as an extent of how sound a specific notion was evaluated with the research instrument. Questions in the questionnaire were constructed in line with the objectives of this research, literature and findings obtained by other scholars of social media marketing and its influence in brand selection whose results are conceptually sound, grounded in the literature, and empirically validated.

3.11 RELIABILITY

Blumberg et al. (2014:405) state that reliability is focused on estimates of the level to which evaluations are not unplanned and do not have unbalanced inaccuracy. Reliable tools can be utilised with confidence that temporary and situational dynamics are not inquisitive. They further maintain that reliable devices are concrete and work well under dissimilar situation in different times. Reliability as discussed by Maholtra (2010:318) refers to the degree to which a measurement yields steady outcomes when repetitive assessments are made. Internal consistency then comes about when all

substances tried are correlated or amount to equal things. It is commonly acknowledged that the consequent measuring device should be both reliable and valid once a concept is defined operational and its measure has been proposed (Bryman and Cramer 2009:76). Reliability is a crucial notion when making measurements (Muijis 2011:61). Internal consistency reliability is the point to which substances in a sole test are constant amid themselves and the entire test. It is measured by the use of three dissimilar methods: Cronbach's alpha, Kuder-Richardson, and split-half. Every single one of them makes available information about substances in one test that is carried out only on one occasion. Andrew, Pedersen and McEvoy (2011:202) define Cronbach Alpha as an explicit degree of internal constancy reliability of a set of items. Gravatter and Forzano (2012:443) add that Cronbach alpha was developed to be utilised when test substances exceed two choices, for instance a Likert scale which may have five answers to choose from. Cronbach alpha estimates internal consistency dependability by defining how all substances in a test are common to all other tests substances and to the whole test (Gay, Mills, and Airasian 2011:167). Gay et al. (2011:166) support that Cronbach's alpha approximate internal consistency reliability by defining the relation of substances on the test to other tests substances and to the overall test. Cronbach's alpha was employed to measure the degree of consistency in this study.

A reliability coefficient of 0.60 or higher is considered as "acceptable" for a newly developed construct. The table below reflects the Cronbach's alpha score for all the items that constituted the questionnaire.

Question	Title	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
2	Consumer's brand preferences	15 of 15	0.725
3	Effectiveness of social media	3 of 6	0.512
4	Social media network usage	5 of 7	0.564

5	Social media and consumer decision making	4 of 6	0.529
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The reliability scores for all sections approximate or exceed the recommended Cronbach alpha's value. This indicates a degree of acceptable, consistent scoring for these sections of the research.

To ascertain both validity and reliability of the questionnaire the successive actions were engaged:

A pre-test of the measuring instrument was carried out and it delivered learning points in refining the reliability and validity of the instrument.

A superior sample of this research project has greater chances of providing precise outcomes than if a lesser sample was utilised.

Survey questions of this study resulted wholly from the objectives and the literature reviewed in this study.

To accommodate all ranks of intellectual aptitudes amongst the respondents, all questions were straightforward and to the point.

3.12 ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Gay et.al (2011:21) state that utilisation of anonymity to ascertain confidentiality and elude privacy incursion and possible maltreatment is customary. Research respondents have full anonymity when their identities are unknown by the researcher. They further mention that researchers can keep identities of participants confidential and keep their information anonymous. According to Zikmund and Babin (2010:99) the researcher should stand by any confidentiality pact made with respondents. As suggested by Gay et al (2011:21) the researcher assured participants of confidentiality in writing and they were also informed that data collected will be used for the purposes of the study only.

3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics is the honest difference concerning right and wrong, and unethical issues are not essentially illegal. Ethical standards possibly differ with societies (Bhattacharjee 2012:137). Ethical matters in research order improved attention presently. The ethical concerns that require expectation are broad and are replicated by the research procedures. These concerns apply to any method and at all the phases of research (Creswell 2014:92). In this study the researcher conformed to ethical standards by ensuring that only the population of 18 years and older took part in the study. Participants were not coerced in anyway and they were informed in writing of their right to take part to withdraw from participating in the study.

3.13 LIMITATIONS

According to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2011:115) a limitation is a characteristic of a research project that cannot be controlled by the researcher and have a negative impact on the outcomes of the study. The sample size, time and financial constraints were factors limiting this study given that only there were only 400 consumers who took part in the study. Representativeness of gathered data was also condensed as time and financial resource were only available to conduct research in Durban and in a restricted timeframe.

3.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented an overview of the research methodology adopted by this study. The research design, sampling techniques and population size utilised in the study were outlined. This chapter further presented measuring instrument design, data collection methods, data analysis methods and validity and reliability. The study employed an online survey strategy that was conducted by means of self-administered questionnaire with prearranged response choices. The findings and analysis of results will be discussed in the next chapter.

The following chapter provides a presentation of the research findings and the analysis of the results

CHAPTER 4

STATEMENT OF FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE PRIMARY DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

A research methodology employed in this study was presented in the preceding chapter together with the methods that were utilised to collect data for this study. This chapter provides the results and discusses the findings acquired from the responses to the questionnaire in this study. The questionnaire was the primary measuring instrument that was utilised to gather data and was dispersed to Durban consumers through various social media platforms and emails. The data gathered from responses was analysed with SPSS version 24.0. The findings will be reported in the form of graphs, cross-tabulations and other figures for the quantitative data that was gathered. Inferential approaches used comprise of correlations and chi square test values; which are interpreted by means of the p-values.

4.2 RESPONSE RATE

Overall, 450 questionnaires were send out to social media consumers in Durban and 400 were returned which gave 88% response rate.

4.5 FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor analysis is a statistical technique that defines how variables cluster together depending on their shared attributes. It is usually utilised to decrease a large number of questions or answers to a limited, but more reminiscent groups identified as factors. For instance, subjects could be given a 100 question character inquiry form. To decrease these 100 answers to a wieldy quantity, a factor analysis will be performed to detect a number of significant factors that the answers share (Gay et al. 2011:368). According to Flick (2015: 176) identifying relations among variables in the data is usually insufficient for responding to a research question. Instead, it comes to be essential to examine if relations in question occur by coincidence and how strong those relations are. Allen, Titsworth, and Hunts (2009:176), add that factor analysis is vital to measurement as the analysis helps determine structure or coherence between substances that are perceived to measure a shared variable.

The matrix table is led by a brief table that reveals the outcomes of KMO and Bartlett's Test. The condition is that Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy ought to be more than 0.50 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity a lesser than 0.05. In all cases, the conditions are gratified which consents for the procedure of factor analysis. Factor analysis is only performed for the Likert scale items. Specific elements divided into finer elements. This is described in the rotated component matrix below.

Table 4.2 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Question	Sections	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
			Approx. Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
2	Consumer's brand preferences	0.740	1014.063	105	0.000
3	Effectiveness of social media	0.583	98.193	6	0.000
4	Social media network usage	0.603	192.953	15	0.000
5	Social media and consumer decision making	0.645	117.176	10	0.000

Every condition is gratified for factor analysis. This explains that the variables that the instrument was found on were perfect measures of the constituent. Thus, it can be established that the units in the instrument measured specifically what they were projected to measure.

Table 4.3: Section 2 (Consumer brand preference)**Rotated Component Matrix**

		Rotated Component Matrix ^a					
		Component					
		1	2	3	4	5	
The brand's products are of good quality		0.173	0.038	-	0.045	0.778	
The brand provides the best customer service		0.133	0.151	0.087	0.045	0.726	
The Brand's online purchases are secure		-	0.389	0.181	0.142	0.501	
I like the cost effectiveness of the brand		0.101	0.851	0.009	-	0.122	
The price of the brand is reasonable		0.152	0.818	0.016	0.138	0.124	
I like the quality and reliability of the information provided on the brand page		0.598	0.314	-	0.171	0.164	
The brand's social media page provides real time customer feedback		0.757	0.100	0.142	0.147	0.046	
The brand's social media page content is exciting		0.702	0.035	0.301	-	-	
The brand is used by my favourite celebrity		0.174	-	0.728	-	0.084	
The brand has a lot of promotional activities		0.082	0.127	0.637	0.235	-	
Most of my online friends buy the same brand		0.147	0.007	0.693	0.131	0.068	
I am loyal to the brand		0.219	0.065	-	0.664	-	
The brand seem to be involved in corporate social responsibilities that I relate to		0.009	0.135	0.064	0.806	0.069	
Communication with the brand on this platform is less formal and I relate to it		0.584	-	0.160	0.099	0.254	
The brand satisfies all my needs		-	-	0.239	0.596	0.307	
Extraction	Method:	Principal			Component		Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.							
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.							

Table 4.4 Effectiveness of social media

		Rotated Component Matrix ^a	
		Component	
		1	2
I do not rely on information acquired on social media than the one acquired from commercial adverts		0.751	-
I never go on a brand's social media page to obtain information on its specifications, performance, prices and promotions		0.767	0.006
I monitor what other people post on brands		-	0.978
I do not like interacting with other consumers on social media platforms		0.633	0.118
Extraction	Method:	Principal	
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.		Component	
a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.		Analysis.	

Table 4.5 Social media network usage

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component	
	1	2
I only visit my social media account when I receive an alert	-0.120	0.766
I visit brand pages that post new pictures and information the most	0.391	-0.299
I only visit a brand page when I see its post on my news feed	0.083	0.813
I share social media posts that I relate to and support	0.704	-0.054
I like social media posts that appeal to me	0.800	-0.094
I follow posts that are shared by people I like	0.630	0.103

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
 a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Table 4.6 Social media and consumer decision making

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component	
	1	2
My purchase decisions are influenced by other consumers' reviews	0.753	0.102
I do not regard social media to be reliable for information.	0.049	0.821
Interactions with online friends cannot sway my purchase behaviour	-0.203	0.697
I obtain endorsements and advices from other consumers before making a purchase decision	0.725	-0.115
My personal decisions are always improved or transformed after going through brand page content on social media networks	0.593	-0.320

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
 a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Factor analysis is a statistical procedure whose foremost goal is data reduction. A distinctive practice of factor analysis is in survey research, where a researcher needs to represent a number of questions with a minor number of hypothetical factors. With reference to the table above:

- The Varimax with Kaiser Normalization was used as the rotation method. This is an orthogonal rotation method that reduces the number of variables that have high loadings on each factor. It simplifies the interpretation of the factors. While the extraction method that was used was the principle component analysis.
- Factor analysis/loading show inter-correlations between variables.

- Items of questions that loaded in the same way indicate measurement along a comparable factor. An examination of the content of items loading at or above 0.5 (and using the higher or highest loading in cases where items cross-loaded at greater than this value) excellently measured alongside a number of components.

It is eminent that the variables that composed Consumer brand preference (Table 4.3) loaded along 5 components (sub-themes) and Effectiveness of social media (Table 4.4), Social media network usage (Table 4.5) and Social media and consumer decision making (Table 4.6) loaded along 2 components. This explains that participants identified dissimilar trends in the section. Within the section, the splits are colour coded.

4.6 SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

This section reviews the biographical characteristics of the participants.

The table below describes the overall gender distribution by age.

Table 4.7 Gender Distribution by Age

		Gender		Total	
		Male	Female		
Age group (years)	18 – 19	Count	38	39	77
		% within Age group	49.4%	50.6%	100.0%
		% within Gender	17.5%	21.3%	19.3%
		% of Total	9.5%	9.8%	19.3%
	20 – 29	Count	150	111	261
		% within Age group	57.5%	42.5%	100.0%
		% within Gender	69.1%	60.7%	65.3%
		% of Total	37.5%	27.8%	65.3%
	30 – 39	Count	22	22	44
		% within Age group	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
		% within Gender	10.1%	12.0%	11.0%
		% of Total	5.5%	5.5%	11.0%
	40 – 49	Count	4	6	10
		% within Age group	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
		% within Gender	1.8%	3.3%	2.5%
		% of Total	1.0%	1.5%	2.5%
50 – 59	Count	3	5	8	
	% within Age group	37.5%	62.5%	100.0%	
	% within Gender	1.4%	2.7%	2.0%	

	% of Total	0.8%	1.3%	2.0%
Total	Count	217	183	400
	% within Age group	54.3%	45.8%	100.0%
	% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	54.3%	45.8%	100.0%

4.6.1 Age and gender

Overall, the ratio of males to females is approximately 1:1 (54.3%: 45.8%).

Within the category of 20 to 29 years, 69.1% were male. Within the category of males (only), 57.5% were between the ages of 20 to 29 years. This category of males between the ages of 20 to 29 years formed 37.5% of the total sample. Within the category of females, 42.5% were between the ages of 20 to 29 years. This is the category of females between the ages of 20 to 29 years formed 27.8% of the total sample.

Within the age category of 30 to 39 years, 50.0% were male. Within the category of males (only), 10.1% were between the ages of 30 to 39 years. This category of males between the ages of 30 to 39 years formed 5.5% of the total sample. Within the category of females, 12.0% were between the ages of 30 to 39 years. This category of females between the ages of 30 to 39 years formed 5.5% of the total sample.

The category of both male and female among the ages of 20 to 29 was the highest category; it formed 65.3% of the total sample. This category was followed by the age category of 18 to 19 years with 19.3% of the total sample and gender distribution was 49.4% males and 50.6% females.

The smallest category comprised of respondents between the ages of 50 to 59 with 2.0% of the total sample. Males were 1.4% while females made up 2.7% of the total sample. This was followed by the 40 to 49 years' age group which constituted 2.5% of the entire sample. Males and females were 1.8% and 3.3% of the total sample respectively.

4.6.2 Race

The figure below indicates the racial composition of the sample.

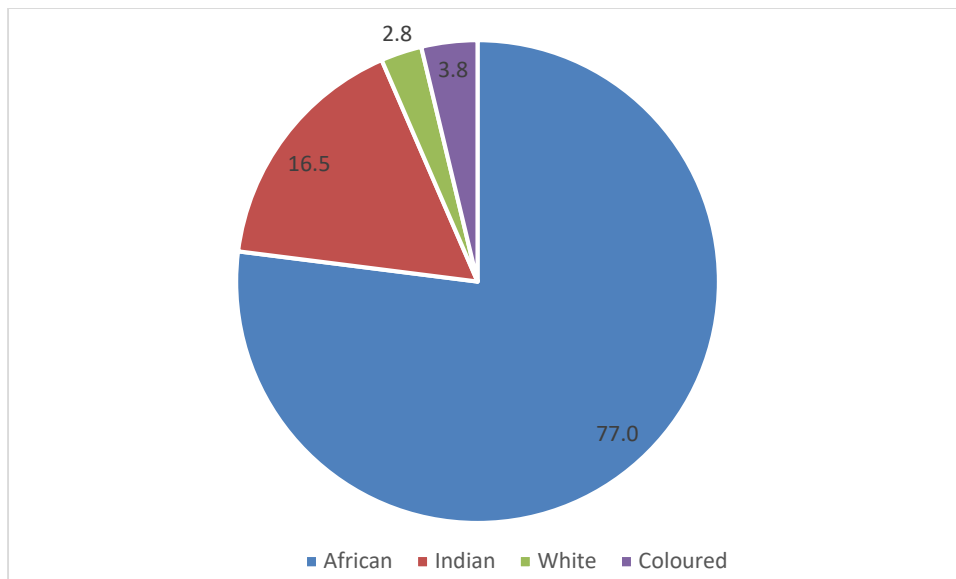


Figure 4.1 Race

The majority of respondents were African 77.0% whilst the smallest grouping was White 2.8%. The Indian and the coloured respondents were 16.5% and 3.8% of the entire sample in that order.

4.6.3 Marital status

The figure below indicates the marital status of the respondents.

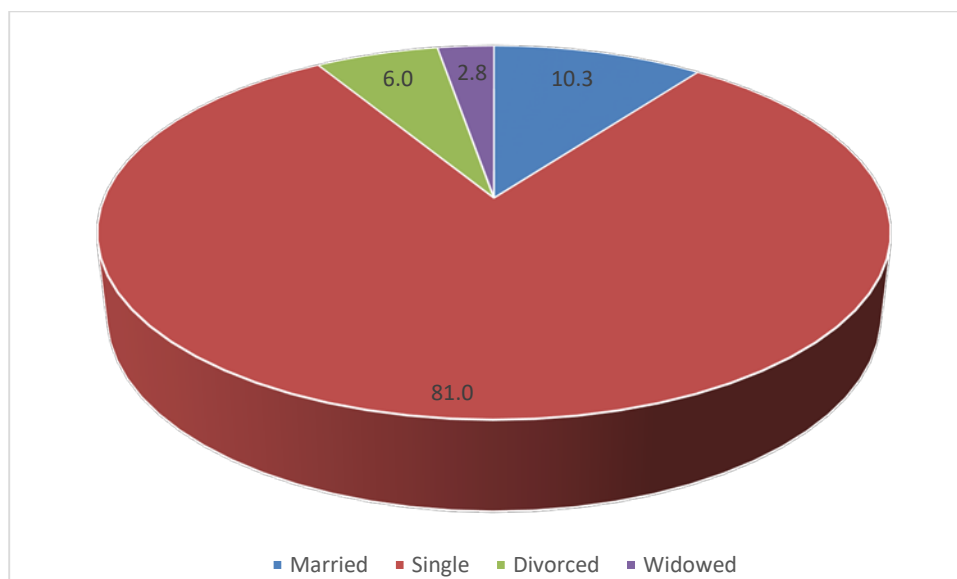


Figure 4.2: Marital Status

The number of single respondents was the highest with 81.0% of the total sample, followed by 10.3% of single respondents. The number of divorced and widowed respondents was 6.0% and 2.8% respectively.

The results indicate that the single respondents utilise social media networks the most compared to the married, divorced and the widowed.

4.6.4 Educational Level

The figure below indicates the education levels of the respondents.

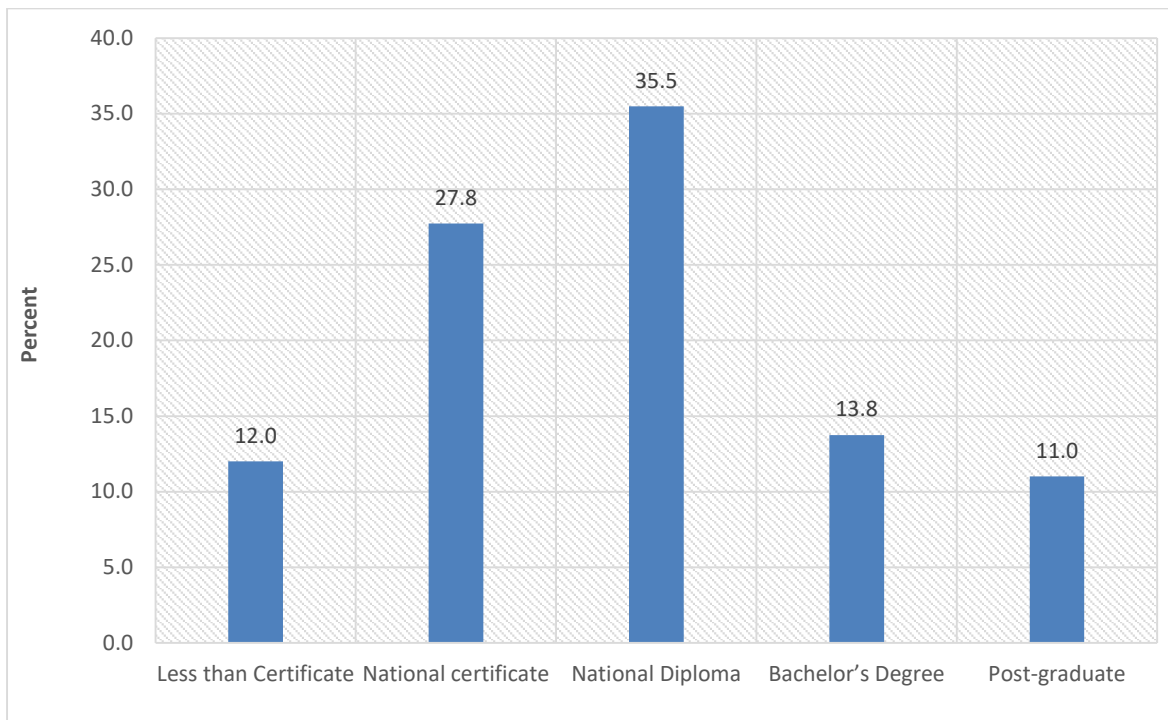


Figure 4.3: Qualifications

Approximately 60% of the respondents had a post school qualification. One-tenth of the respondents (11%) had a post-graduate degree. The highest educational level category was made up of people with a National Diploma and this formed 35.5% of the total sample, followed by a National Certificate level with 27.8% and a bachelor's degree at 13.8%. The two lowest categories were Post-graduate level and less than Certificate which constituted 11.0% and 12.0% respectively.

This points out that a fair fraction of the respondents have a higher qualification. Therefore, it designates that the responses collected would have been from informed sources.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

This section analyses the scoring patterns of the respondents per variable per section. The outcomes are first presented utilising summarised percentages for the variables that form each section. The results are then further analysed according to the significance of the statements.

4.7.1 Value of social media

Table 4.9 consumers' computer generated communities' involvement

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	400	100,0	100,0	100,0

All of the respondents pointed out that they were active on computer-generated communities. This indicates the relevance of social media in marketing. This is consistent with Meyerson (2010:98) who states that social media has made the internet more social than ever before. Systems like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn gave societies ways to connect with each other in really significant conducts. Social media allows users to vigorously interact with friends, colleagues, and other users while yielding quick and easy passive sharing of information.

The most commonly used platforms were:

Social media networks popular with consumers

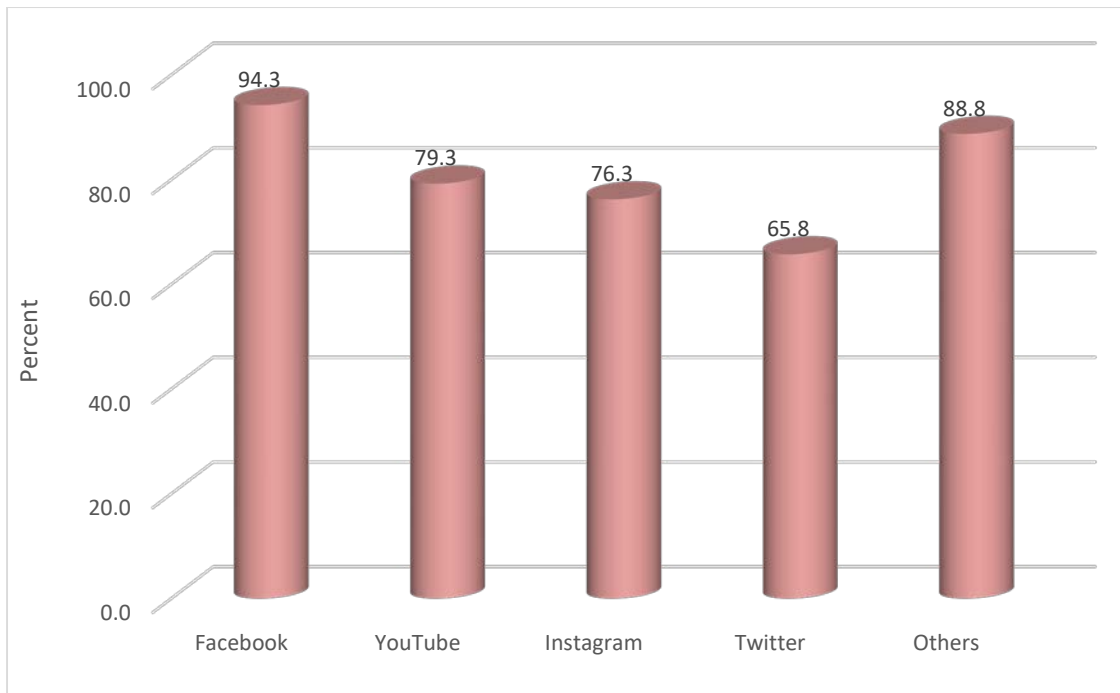


Figure 4.4: Social media networks popular with consumers

There was fairly high usage of all platforms with Facebook being the highest used of all the platforms at 94.3% and Twitter being the least used at 65.8%. This indicates that Facebook is the most influential social media platform among Durban consumers. This is consistent with Baker, Baker, Bormann and Neher (2013:332) statement that Facebook is the utmost widespread platform with over 750 million users while Twitter is presently the fourth most widespread social media network with more than 200 million distinctive monthly users. Meyerson (2010: 104) agrees that Facebook's power lies in its popularity as the great number of consumers build a substantial opening to participate in conversations.

Social media importance

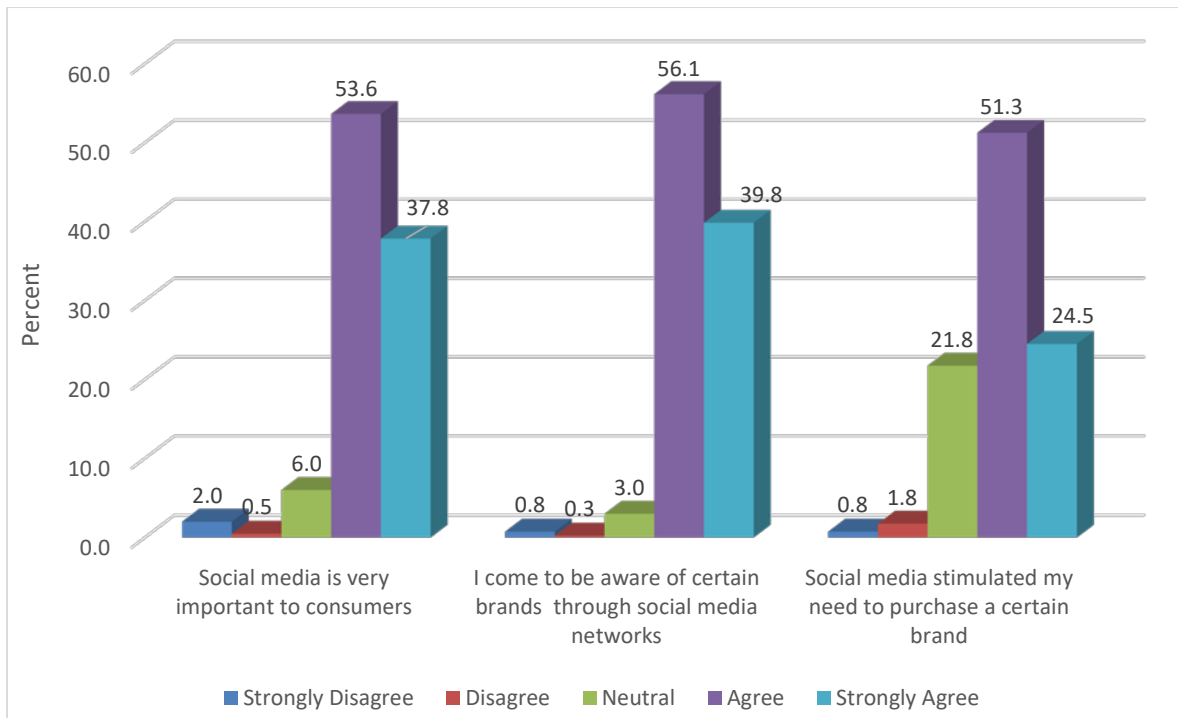


Figure 4.5: Social media importance

In all instances, there is a strong level of agreement (Agree + Strongly Agree). 53.6% and 37.8% of the total sample agreed and strongly agreed that social media is very important to them respectively, while 56.9% agreed and 39.8% strongly agreed that they become aware of brands through social media networks. Lastly 51.3% agreed and 24.5% of the total population strongly agreed that social media stimulated their needs to purchase certain brands. The level of agreement is significantly higher than the other options ($p < 0.001$).

This indicates the significance of social media in marketing brands. The main task of social media marketing is to build a business's brand. Typically the leading priority is to establish overall awareness of a service or a product, which is true for a new service or product, big brands and individuals. Making use of social media to improve a business's brand perception is one of the most proficient means to upsurge sales over a lengthy period of time Baker et al (2013:32).

4.7.2 Brand preference

Table 4.10 summarises the scoring patterns of the respondents' online communication on their personal brand preferences.

Table 4.10 Consumer's brand preference

		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Chi Square
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	p-value
The brand's products are of good quality	Q2.6.1	2	0.5 %	6	1.5 %	66	16.5%	218	54.5%	108	27.0%	0.000
The brand provides the best customer service	Q2.6.2	4	1.0 %	9	2.3 %	75	18.8%	228	57.0%	84	21.0%	0.000
The Brand's online purchases are secure	Q2.6.3	8	2.0 %	33	8.3 %	127	31.8%	162	40.5%	70	17.5%	0.000
I like the cost effectiveness of the brand	Q2.6.4	6	1.5 %	16	4.0 %	103	25.8%	215	53.8%	60	15.0%	0.000
The price of the brand is reasonable	Q2.6.5	4	1.0 %	25	6.3 %	91	22.8%	204	51.1%	75	18.8%	0.000
I like the quality and reliability of the information provided on the brand page	Q2.6.6	0	0.0 %	5	1.3 %	55	13.8%	241	60.3%	99	24.8%	0.000
The brand's social media page provides real time customer feedback	Q2.6.7	2	0.5 %	0	0.0 %	36	9.0%	237	59.3%	125	31.3%	0.000
The brand's social media page content is exciting	Q2.6.8	3	0.8 %	7	1.8 %	69	17.3%	198	49.6%	122	30.6%	0.000
The brand is used by my favourite celebrity	Q2.6.9	19	4.8 %	42	10.5 %	103	25.8%	143	35.8%	93	23.3%	0.000
The brand has a lot of promotional activities	Q2.6.10	5	1.3 %	19	4.8 %	72	18.0%	236	59.0%	68	17.0%	0.000
Most of my online friends buy the same brand	Q2.6.11	11	2.8 %	39	9.8 %	116	29.0%	172	43.0%	62	15.5%	0.000
I am loyal to the brand	Q2.6.12	6	1.5 %	13	3.3 %	117	29.3%	184	46.0%	80	20.0%	0.000
The brand seem to be involved in corporate social responsibilities that I relate to	Q2.6.13	2	0.5 %	21	5.3 %	133	33.3%	180	45.0%	64	16.0%	0.000
Communication with the brand on this platform is less formal and I relate to it	Q2.6.14	0	0.0 %	3	0.8 %	24	6.0%	224	56.0%	149	37.3%	0.000
The brand satisfies all my needs	Q2.6.15	1	0.3 %	12	3.0 %	94	23.5%	195	48.8%	98	24.5%	0.000

Similar information is provided graphically in Figure 4.6 for easier comparison and analysis.

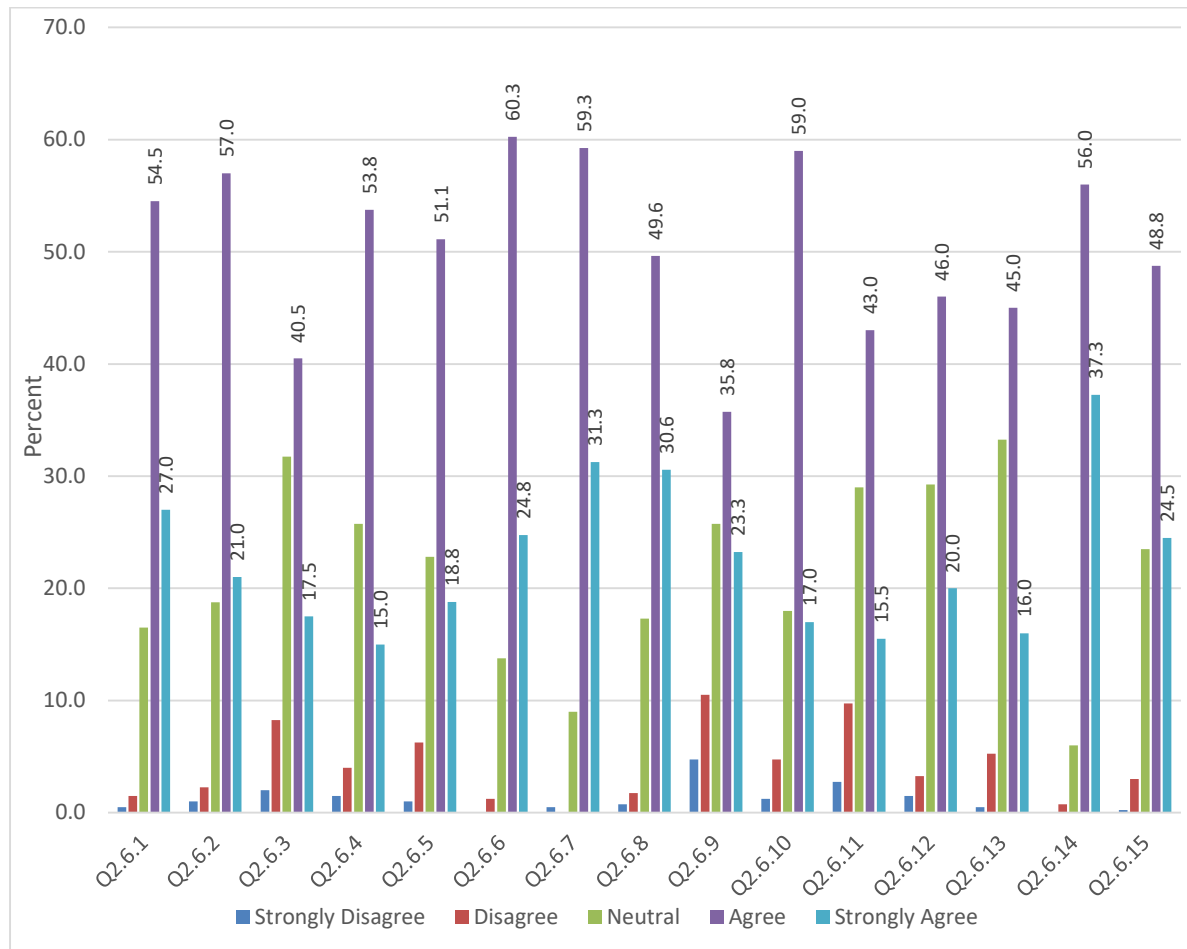


Figure 4.6 Consumer brand preferences

The three highest levels of agreement were 93.3% , 90.6%, and 85.1% for “ communication with the brand on this platform is less formal and I relate to it”, “the brand’s social media page provides real time feedback” and “I like the quality and reliability of the information provided on the brand page” respectively. This level of scoring on all three statements emphasise how much consumers value a brand that prioritises their needs and values. The three second highest level of agreement were 81.5% for “the brand’s products are of good quality”, 80.2% for “the brand’s social media page content is exciting” and 78.0% for “the brand provides the best customer service”. This is relevant to Baker et al. (2013: 36) assertion that brands that recognise and respond to consumers on a network by not promoting but contributing to the

conversations can build customers' trust. Generating and issuing appropriate content is a fundamental approach to guarantee consumers that the brand is reliable. Similarly open and honest information sharing in a conversational and human voice makes the brand further alluring to users. Thus the resulting trust can eventually produce sales. Levinson and Gibson (2010:56) add that consumers possibly will criticise the brands' services or products to their friends ahead of communicating with brand. This comprises any form of interaction and contact with the consumer concerning the distribution of services or products. There are no statements indicating strong levels of disagreement as the highest levels of disagreement were 15.3%, 12.6% and 10.3% were from the following statements: "the brand is used by my favourite celebrity", "most of my online friends buy the same brand" and "the brand's online purchases are secure". None of the above mentioned statements exceeded any level of agreement. Of all the 15 statements, there were higher levels of indecision compared to disagreement with the two highest levels of indecision slightly above 30.0%, however no level of indecision exceeded any level of agreement.

The following patterns are observed:

- All statements show significantly higher levels of agreement whilst other levels of agreement are lower but still greater than levels of disagreement.
- There are no statements indicating higher levels of disagreement
- The significance of the differences is tested and shown in the table.

To identify whether the scoring designs for every statement were substantially unlike for each choice, a chi square test was performed. The null hypothesis asserts that comparable figures of participants scored through each choice for each statement at a time. The alternate affirms that there is a notable dissimilarity amid the levels of agreement and disagreement.

The results are shown in table 4.11 below.

Table 4.11 Chi square test

	Chi-square	Df	Asymp. Sig.

The brand's products are of good quality	394,8	4	0,000
The brand provides the best customer service	409,52 5	4	0,000
The Brand's online purchases are secure	205,32 5	4	0,000
I like the cost effectiveness of the brand	359,07 5	4	0,000
The price of the brand is reasonable	304,79 7	4	0,000
I like the quality and reliability of the information provided on the brand page	309,32	3	0,000
The brand's social media page provides real time customer feedback	330,94	3	0,000
The brand's social media page content is exciting	339,18 3	4	0,000
The brand is used by my favourite celebrity	122,9	4	0,000
The brand has a lot of promotional activities	423,62 5	4	0,000
Most of my online friends buy the same brand	206,57 5	4	0,000
I am loyal to the brand	276,87 5	4	0,000
The brand seem to be involved in corporate social responsibilities that I relate to	282,87 5	4	0,000
Communication with the brand on this platform is less formal and I relate to it	329,62	3	0,000
The brand satisfies all my needs	307,62 5	4	0,000

The highlighted sig. values (p -values) are less than 0.05 (the level of significance), it implies that the distributions were not similar. That is, the differences between the way respondents scored (agree, neutral, disagree) were significant. This is noted from the scoring patterns, but it was also shown statistically in table 4.10.

4.7.3 Effectiveness of social media

This section discusses the usage of social media in circulating marketing messages. One of the objectives of this research was to determine the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies to arouse consumers' willingness to purchase the brands.

Table 4.12 elucidates the scoring pattern of the results attained.

Table 4.12 Effectiveness of social media

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	p-value
Social media is the best communication channel for interacting with brands	0,8	1,3	2,0	50,3	45,5	0,000
I do not rely on information acquired on social media than the one acquired from commercial adverts	22,5	57,3	17,0	2,8	0,5	0,000
I never go on a brand's social media page to obtain information on its specifications, performance, prices and promotions	26,8	53,8	15,5	3,0	1,0	0,000
I monitor what other people post on brands	0,5	1,8	4,0	48,8	45,0	0,000
I am loyal to brands that communicate effectively and provides prompt responses to my inquiries	0,5	1,8	4,0	48,8	45,0	0,000
I do not like interacting with other	17,5	41,0	28,0	9,8	3,8	0,000

consumers on social media platforms



Similar information will be presented in a graph below.

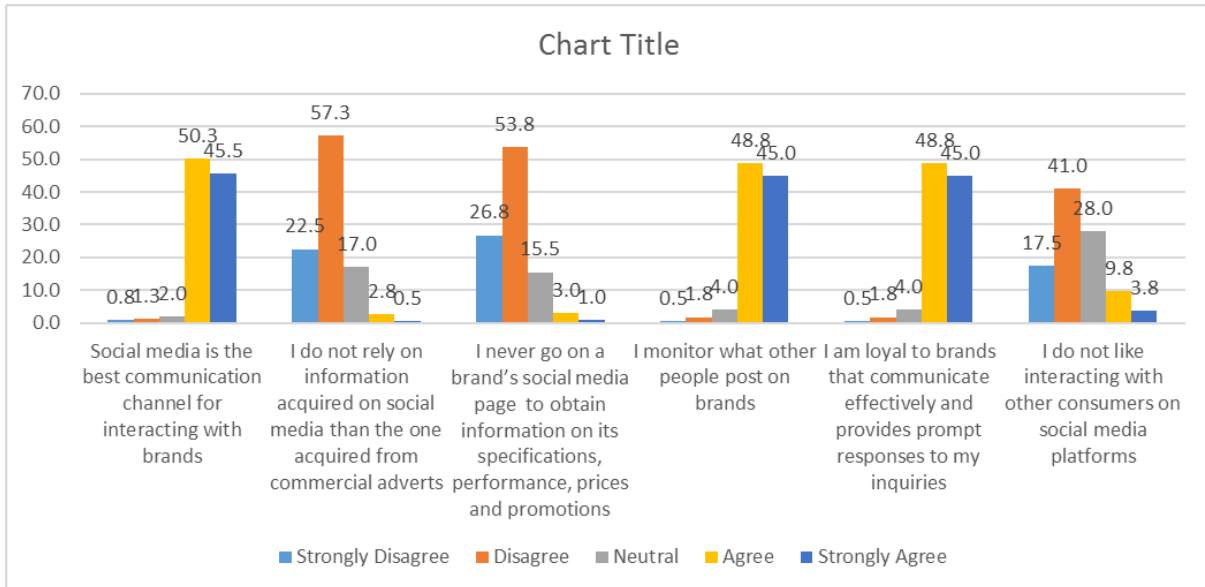


Figure 4: Social media effectiveness

The results show different scoring patterns with high scores for both agreement and disagreement to the statements concerning social media effectiveness. The level of indecisiveness is lower than all other scores. There is also a significant difference between the level of agreement and disagreement. The highest level of agreement is 95.8% of the statement “social media is the best communication channel for interacting with brands”. This was followed by “I monitor what other people post on brands” and “I am loyal to brands that communicate effectively and provides prompt responses to my inquiries”, the two statements have equal level of agreement at 93.8%. One the study objectives was to determine the effectiveness of the

In the present day, consumers want to interact with brands on social media platforms in a way that is not different from the one they use to communicate with their peers. As a result, brands have to find out how consumers develop value as social media has become an important communication medium between consumers and brands (Dootson, Beatson and Drenan 2016). The internet and social media have profoundly

transformed brands' relationship with consumers which have turn out to be bi-directional, and in some instances, wholly consumer-to-consumer (Campbell, Ferraro and Sean 2014). The following table will present the Chi square tests.

Table 4.12 Chi- square

Social media is the best communication channel for interacting with brands	523,594	4	0,000
I do not rely on information acquired on social media than the one acquired from commercial adverts	416,125	4	0,000
I never go on a brand's social media page to obtain information on its specifications, performance, prices and promotions	370,975	4	0,000
I monitor what other people post on brands	363,25	4	0,000
I am loyal to brands that communicate effectively and provides prompt responses to my inquiries	484,175	4	0,000
I do not like interacting with other consumers on social media platforms	176,075	4	0,000

Sig. values (p-values) are less than 0.05. That means the differences between the way respondents scored were significant.

4.7.4 Social media network Usage

This section studies how social media is used by consumers. Therefore this section was more interested in the respondents' behavioural pattern than their personal judgement. One of the objectives of this study was to ascertain if consumers prefer brand recommendations made by other consumers on social media networks through like and share buttons.

Table 4.13 portrays the outcomes found in this section.

Table 4.13 Social media network usage

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	p-value
I carry my smart phone at all times to access social media	0,8	2,0	3,3	28,8	65,3	0,000
I only visit my social media account when I receive an alert	21,3	35,3	20,8	17,8	5,0	0,000

I visit brand pages that post new pictures and information the most	1,3	3,8	13,0	52,8	29,3	0,00 0
I only visit a brand page when I see its post on my news feed	7,3	20,0	27,5	33,0	12,3	0,00 0
I share social media posts that I relate to and support	0,8	3,0	7,8	45,0	43,5	0,00 0
I like social media posts that appeal to me	0,5	0,8	7,8	47,8	43,3	0,00 0
I follow posts that are shared by people I like	4,0	6,8	23,3	38,5	27,3	0,00 0

Similar information is shown in figure 4.8 below

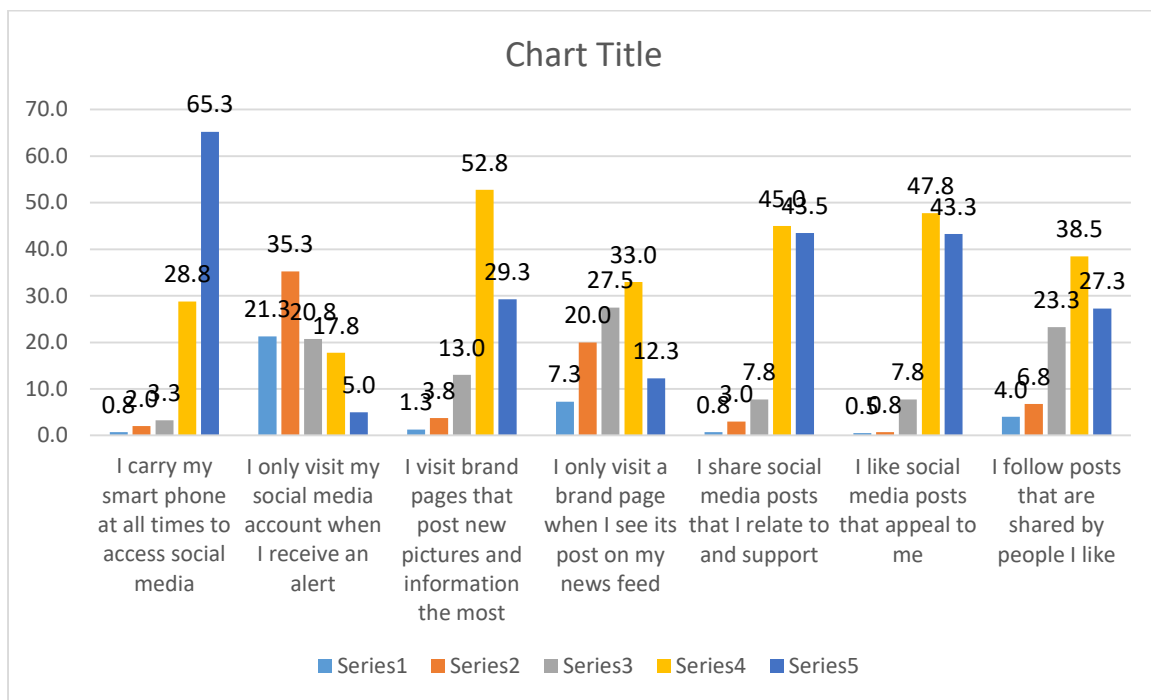


Figure 4.8 Consumers’ social media network usage

One statement had the highest level of disagreement at 56.6% was “I only visit my social media account when I receive an alert”. However, more people indicated that they still visit their social media accounts without any alert of notifications. The highest level of agreement came from the statement, “I carry my phone at all times to access social media”. 82.1% of the respondents visit brand pages that post new pictures and information the most. Of all the consumers surveyed in this study, 88.5% of them share social media posts that they relate to and support, while 91.1% of them like social

media posts that appeal to them and only 65.8% of them agreed to follow social media posts shared by people they like.

The Chi square tests are as follows:

Table 4.14 Chi- Square

	Chi-square	Df	Asym p. Sig.
I carry my smart phone at all times to access social media	619.85	4	0.000
I only visit my social media account when I receive an alert	92.95	4	0.000
I visit brand pages that post new pictures and information the most	364.55	4	0.000
I only visit a brand page when I see its post on my news feed	89.575	4	0.000
I share social media posts that I relate to and support	397.375	4	0.000
I like social media posts that appeal to me	442.3	4	0.000
I follow posts that are shared by people I like	167.805	4	0.000

4.7.5 Social media and consumer decision making

This section examines the level to which social media influences decision making process of a consumer. The last objective of the study was to determine the degree to which social media marketing influence consumers' decision making when selecting a brand. Table 4.15 exemplifies the findings acquired from the empirical study.

Table 4.15 Social media and consumer decision making

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	p-value
My purchase decisions are influenced by	1,5	6,3	28,3	49,3	14,8	0,000

other consumers' reviews						
I do not regard social media to be reliable for information.	27,5	59,3	9,3	3,3	0,8	0,000
I always depict alternative brands to purchase on social media networks	1,0	3,5	42,0	48,3	5,3	0,000
Interactions with online friends cannot sway my purchase behaviour	9,3	41,0	37,5	10,0	2,3	0,000
I obtain endorsements and advices from other consumers before making a purchase decision	1,0	3,3	20,3	62,8	12,8	0,000
My personal decisions are always improved or transformed after going through a brand page content on social media networks	0,5	0,5	6,0	60,3	32,8	0,000

Similar information is illustrated graphically in the table below.

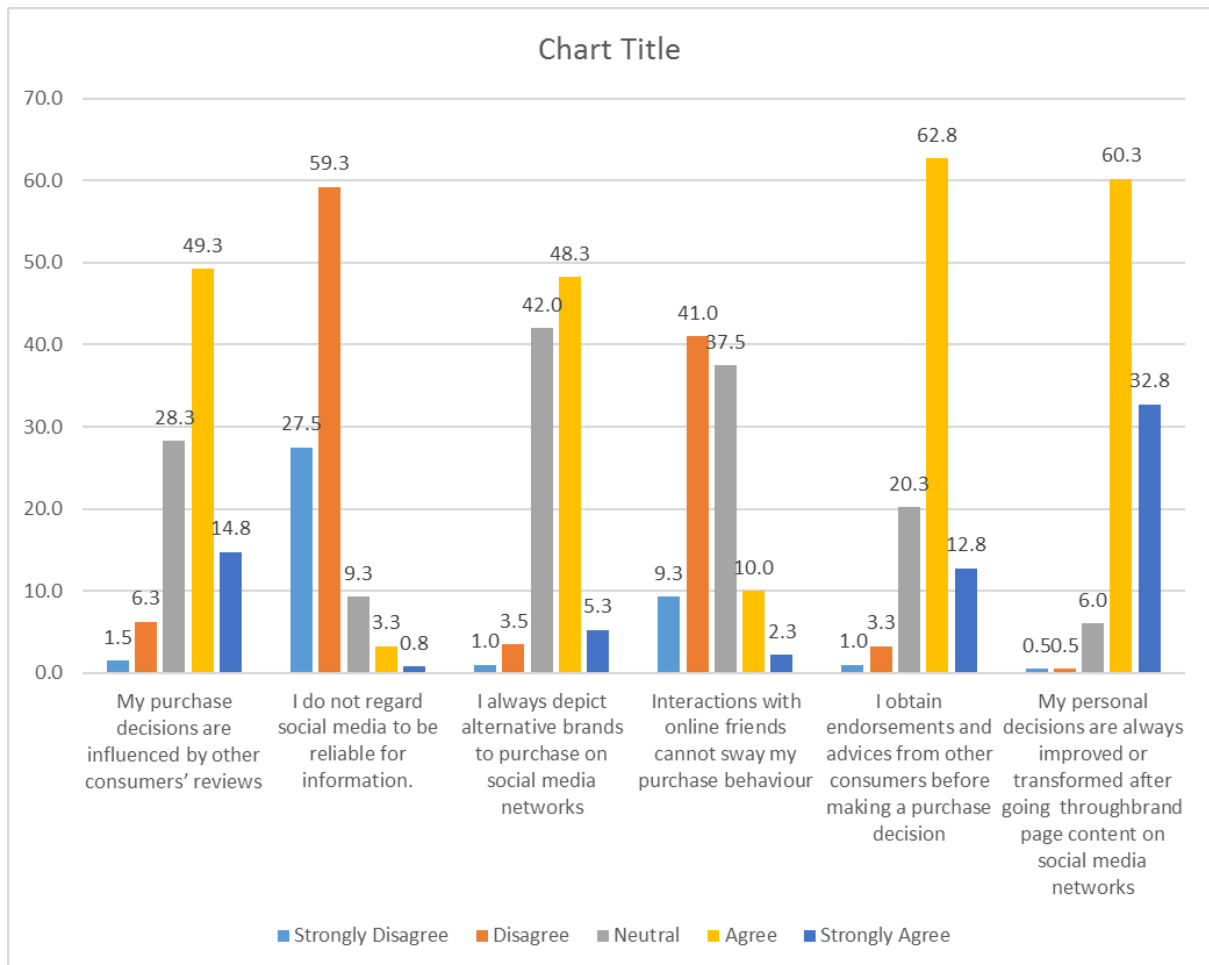


Figure 4.9 Social media and consumer decision making

The data presented in figure 4.9 illustrates different scores with higher levels of indecisiveness (neutral). Three of the variables had measures above 25%. The highest level of disagreement at 86.5% came from the statement, "I do not regard social media to be reliable for information" which explains that consumers trust information provided on social media to some considerable extent. Two of the highest agreement scores were 93.1% and 75.6% of the following statements; "my personal decisions are always improved or transformed after going through a brand content on social media networks" and "I obtain endorsements and advices from other consumers before making a purchase decision" respectively. This indicates that social media has a substantial point of influence on consumers' decision making when selecting a brand. The chi square tests are presented below.

Table 4.16 Chi-square

My purchase decisions are influenced by other consumers' reviews	296,5	4	0,000
I do not regard social media to be reliable for information.	472,7	4	0,000
I always depict alternative brands to purchase on social media networks	426,575	4	0,000
Interactions with online friends cannot sway my purchase behaviour	255,575	4	0,000
I obtain endorsements and advices from other consumers before making a purchase decision	504,35	4	0,000
My personal decisions are always improved or transformed after going through a brand page content on social media networks	547,825	4	0,000

4.8 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The conventional method of reporting results requires a statement of statistical reference. A **p-value** is produced from a **test statistic**. A substantial outcome is specified with " $p < 0.05$ ". These values are identified with a *. A second Chi square test was carried out to identify if a substantial statistical relationship between the variables (rows vs columns) existed. The null hypothesis indicates that there is no relationship between the variables while the alternate hypothesis points out that there is a relationship. Any value that does not have a symbol (*) (or p-values greater than 0.05) do not have a substantial relationship.

The table in Appendix D give an outline of the chi square tests results.

4.8.1 Chi square tests

Results from the chi square tests indicate that there are a number of substantial relations between the respondents' biographical data and the research statements. The p-value between "I come to be aware of certain brands through social media networks" and "Age" is 0.013. This means that there is a significant relationship between the variables these variables. That is, the age of the respondent did play a significant role in terms of how respondents viewed their realisation of the brand

through social media networks. Age also indicated substantial relationships with the statements: "The brand's social media page content is exciting", p value 0.005, "I visit brand pages that post new pictures and information the most", p value 0.014, "I do not regard social media to be reliable for information" p value 0.049, "I always depict alternative brands to purchase on social media networks" p value 0.041, "I only visit my social media account when I receive an alert" p value 0.032. This means that age plays a role on the level of trust and the excitement of social media page content when selecting a brand. The results also pointed out the difference in the frequencies that different age groups go social media

From the table in Appendix D, significant relationship exists between Race and the following statements: "The brand provides the best customer service", p value 0.006, "The Brand's online purchases are secure", p value 0.002, "I like the quality and reliability of the information provided on the brand page", p value 0.046, "The brand satisfies all my needs" p value 0.022, and "My purchase decisions are influenced by other consumers' reviews", p value 0.033. These results indicate that Race plays a role on the perception of the individual on purchase security, trust and reliability of social media information. Race also plays a role in accessing and reviewing of brand experience based of customer service and need satisfaction.

A substantial relationship is evident between Gender and the following statements: "The brand is used by my favourite celebrity" p value 0.038, "Most of my online friends buy the same brand", p value 0.017, "Communication with the brand on this platform is less formal and I relate to it" p value 0.025, "I do not rely on information acquired on social media than the one acquired from commercial adverts", p value 0.030, and "I never go on a brand's social media page to obtain information on its specifications, performance, prices and promotions", 0.021. These results show that Gender plays a role on the degree of influence be it by a celebrity or online friends. Again gender plays a role on respondents' engagement with the brand on social media and reliability of information from this platform was another highlighted factor.

Marital status indicates significant relationships with the following statements: "The brand's social media page content is exciting" p value 0.036, "The brand is used by my favourite celebrity", 0.017, "The brand seems to be involved in corporate social responsibilities that I relate to" p value 0.000, and "The brand satisfies all my needs"

p value 0.006. These results portray the marital status plays a role in terms of the level of excitement with a social media page content and brands endorsements by celebrity respondents' favourite celebrities. The results also show that marital status has a role in consumers view brands which are involved corporate social responsibility and the level of needs satisfaction.

Educational level presents a substantial relationship with the stimulation of the need to purchase a certain brand, promotional activities and brand loyalty. Results revealed that 88% of the sample population had a tertiary qualification and this indicates that there is a greater necessity to make informed purchase decisions among the educated compared to the less educated and that need can be stimulated by means of social media channels.

4.9 CORRELATIONS

Adams and Lawrence (2015:225) define correlation as finding an arrangement or connection between variables in a way that their scores move together in a recognisable arrangement. The scores for both variables can either rise or drop together, or one variable may tend to rise while the other variable drops.

Bivariate correlation was also carried out on the (ordinal) data. The findings are presented in Appendix D. Treiman (2009:6) highlights many social researchers and statisticians maintain that ordinal variable should be analysed by means of ordinal statistics as they only utilise the order property and make do not comprise of any assumptions about the distance between categories.

The results highlight the following patterns: Positive values show a direct connection between the variables and a negative value shows a contrary connection. All substantial connections are specified by a symbol (* or **). Therefore, only those measures showing substantial relations identified by the above specified symbol shall be discussed.

A direct proportional relationship is evident amid the respondents' discernment of social media "Social media is very important to consumers" and the statements that follow. There is a directly comparative relationship between "Social media is very

important to consumers” and the statements: “I became aware of certain brands through social media networks” ($r = 0.369$, $p = 0.000$), “Social media stimulated my need to purchase a certain brand” ($r = 0.323$, $p = 0.000$). Again, there is a direct related proportionality between these statements: “I come to be aware of certain brands through social media networks” and “Social media stimulated my need to purchase a certain brand” ($r = 0.387$, $p = 0.000$). Consumers point out that social media is very important to them as it creates brand awareness which they make use of when making a purchase decision. This also indicates that the more aware consumers became of a brand via social media, the more they would want to buy the brand and vice versa. One of the objectives of the study was to determine the degree to which social media marketing influence consumers’ decision making when selecting a brand. These results show that social media is very important to consumers and to marketers alike as it both creates brand awareness and stimulates a need to buy a certain brand.

Another direct proportionality exists in the relationship between perception of price and communication impression. The following statements are observed: “the price of the brand is reasonable” and “I like the quality and reliability of the information provided on the brand page” ($r = 0.337$, $p = 0.000$), “the price of the brand is reasonable and “brands’ social media page provides real-time customer feedback” ($r = 0.215$, $p = 0.000$), “the price of the brand is reasonable” and “the brand has a lot of promotional activities” ($r = 0.139$, $p = 0.000$), “I like the cost effectiveness of the brand” and “I never go on a brand’s social media page to obtain information on its specifications, performance, prices and promotions” ($r = -0.167$, $p = 0.001$). These results express how valuable brand communication on social media is, since brands’ social media pages are easily accessible platforms for information such as price and promotions. Moreover, the importance of information quality and reliability as well as response time also were highlighted. These results therefore, address the objective of the study to investigate whether consumers are willing to engage with brands on social media platforms to gain more information on brands specifications, performance, prices and promotions.

A correlation value between “Communication with the brand on this platform is less formal and I relate to it” and “Social media is the best communication channel for interacting with brands is 0.227”. This is a directly connected proportionality. Respondents call to attention that the less formal and the more they relate to the brand

on social media, the more they enjoy interacting with the brand and vice versa. This simply means that the manner in which a brand is communicated is of importance.

Another pattern that exists is that there is a directly comparative relationship between “I share social media posts that I relate to and support” and “My personal decisions are always improved or transformed after going through brand page content on social media networks” ($r = 0.180$ $p = 0.000$). “I like social media posts that appeal to me” and “My purchase decisions are influenced by other consumers’ reviews” ($r = 0.240$ $p = 0.000$). “I always depict alternative brands to purchase on social media networks” and “I follow posts that are shared by people I like” ($r = 0.158$ $p = 0.002$). These outcomes indicate the nature of influence different social media posts have on respondents is narrated in their social media their activities.

Another evident trend is the direct proportionality between “I obtain endorsements and advices from other consumers before making a purchase decision” and the following statements: “I always depict alternative brands to purchase on social media networks” ($r = 0.202$ $p = 0.000$). “I follow posts that are shared by people I like” ($r = 0.154$ $p = 0.002$). “Most of my online friends buy the same brand” ($r = 0.208$ $p = 0.000$). “Interactions with online friends cannot sway my purchase behaviour” ($r = 0.122$ $p = 0.000$). These results indicate how respondents’ interactions with other consumers on social media affect their purchase decisions. Thus the results react to the study’s objective to ascertain if consumers prefer brand recommendations made by other consumers on social media networks.

4.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter analysed data collected from the study was presented together with the outcomes of the study. The reliability of the measuring instrument (questionnaire) was tested using Cronbach alpha’s coefficient which produced an acceptable value of 0.70. The findings of the study indicated that 77% of the sample population were Africans with the gender ratio of 1:1 for both male and female. The results also indicated that 60% of the participants had post school qualification. While all the participants were active social media networks users, Facebook was the most used platform and Twitter was the least used.

The study also conducted analysis like factor analysis, chi-square tests of independence, Pearson's correlation, and t-tests on gathered data which showed substantial relationships between demographic variables like age, marital status, gender, educational level, and different statements of the research.

Conclusions and recommendation of this research will be presented in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Whilst the previous chapter discussed the findings of this study, this chapter will provide conclusions of the findings in respect of the study objectives. Further recommendations on how social media can be efficiently utilised as a marketing tool will be provided. This chapter will also highlight limitations of the study and areas that need further research.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL STUDY

The aim of this research was to investigate the influence of social media marketing on Durban consumers' choice of brands. The target population was active social media consumers in Durban. The research design and chapter outline were established based on the research problem. Chapter two reviewed relevant literature on the subject of social media marketing. The literature discussed social media, social marketing strategies, word of mouth, brand equity and other sub topics related social media marketing. It was noted that there are problems associated with communicating brands through social media. Hence the researcher believed that investigating social media marketing's influence on consumers' choice of brands is significant and would yield results that will help marketers and their brands improve their efforts when using social media as part of their marketing strategies.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

An outline of the research methodology adopted by this study was presented in Chapter Three, while chapter 4 has analysed, interpreted and discussed the findings of this study. This study was quantitative and data was drawn from 400 questionnaires. From the findings, it is established that there are significant strategies that brand managers need to implement in order to improve brand equity and customer relationships as well as to keep up their reputation on social media platforms. Arguments supporting the conclusions of this study were done using descriptive and inferential statistics.

5.4 ACHIEVEMENT OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

5.4.1 Aim

The aim of this study was to determine the influence of social media marketing on Durban consumers' choice of brands.

5.4.2 Objectives

The fundamental objectives of this study were:

To identify current marketing strategies used to communicate brands in social media networks.

To determine the effectiveness of those strategies to arouse consumers' willingness to purchase the brands.

To investigate whether consumers are willing to engage with brands on social media platforms to gain more information on brands specifications, performance, prices, promotions and brand reputation.

To ascertain if consumers prefer brand recommendations made by other consumers on social media networks through like and share buttons.

To determine the degree to which social media marketing influence consumers' decision making when selecting a brand.

Objective one

To identify current marketing strategies used to communicate brands in social media networks. Chapter two has explored existing literature and discussed relevant information that gave a considerable insight into social media marketing. Setting goals, determining target audience, selecting social media platforms, creating content, implementation, tracking and measuring progress, and adjustment were highlighted as components of social media marketing strategy. As a result, the first objective has been accomplished.

Objective two

To determine the effectiveness of those strategies to arouse consumers' willingness to purchase the brands. The results from collected data discussed in chapter four reveal that social media indeed creates awareness of brands and therefore stimulate consumers' needs to purchase those brands. Therefore, this objective has been reached.

Objective three

To investigate whether consumers are willing to engage with brands on social media platforms to gain more information on brands specifications, performance, prices, promotions and brand reputation. Chapter two cited different authors who maintained that consumers often seek and converse information about brands on social media networks be it positive or negative. Research findings in chapter four also indicated that majority of consumers often resort to social media brands pages and their online friends to obtain, discuss, share information about brands. This objective has therefore been achieved.

Objective four:

To ascertain if consumers prefer brand recommendations made by other consumers on social media networks through like and share buttons. Social media network usage was tested and analysed in chapter four, and the results pointed out that the majority of consumers share social media posts that they relate to and support. Consumers also attested to like social media posts that appeal to them. With chapter two having discussed the power of liking and sharing on social media platforms, it is concluded that this objective has been realised.

Objective five

To determine the degree to which social media marketing influence consumers' decision making when selecting a brand. When the relationship between social media and consumer decision making was tested research findings in chapter four established that social media is very important to consumer as it creates brand awareness which they make use of when making a purchase decision. The results

also highlighted that consumer' reviews and interactions with one another on social media platforms have a direct influence on their purchase decisions. This is consistent with the theoretical information discussed in chapter two. It is concluded for this reason that the last objective has been attained.

5.5 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions derived from the findings are:

- ❖ Consumers highly value social media; therefore, it should not be made an elective but it should be made part of a business marketing strategy as brands that do not utilise it will not endure in the long run.
- ❖ Social media marketing's competence surpasses that of traditional marketing practices therefore this study concludes that social media is the utmost brand communication platform
- ❖ Consumers seek information about brands either on a brand's social media page, or from their online friends. Those consumers who have used a brand's products or services often share their brand experiences on social media. This makes social media the most reliable source of information for both consumers and brands as social media networks can not only be used to market brands but also to learn about the brand's target audience.
- ❖ Consumers who have liked or followed a brand page on social media networks tend to share, retweet or repost brand posts that they support and relate to, they also like brand posts that appeal to them. Other consumers in these platforms follow posts share by people they like. This again makes social media the most genuine and reliable source that brings consumers' attention to brands in no time.
- ❖ Consumers' choice of brand is influenced by social media to a substantial degree. The degree of influence social media has on consumer may either

break or make a brand in the marketplace as it has a great effect on consumers' decision making process.

5.7 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Numerous inferences for both literature and practice on social media marketing were produced by this study. This research investigated the influence of social media marketing on consumers' choice of brands. Subsequent to the findings of this study, it is advised that brand managers and marketers should adjust their marketing strategies and increase their online presence by being active in social media platforms to create brand awareness with the aim of influencing consumer decisions in particular. According to Quester, Pettigrew and Hawkins (201: 105) the power of interpersonal and social influence has been recognised in a long time. Buyers are well-known for pursuing and listening to other people's advice, whether it is domain experts, friends and peers or opinion leaders. This practice often takes place in online settings, with certain discussion forums and blogs where all things concerning the brands and experience are reviewed, corrected, or even endorsed by users. For that reason, it becomes necessary for marketers to pursue the influence of a genuine communication like that.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Social media integration:

Social media should not be used alone, but it should be combined with other elements of the marketing mix for it to be fully effective.

Promotions:

A brand should incorporate promotional activities, contests and competitions on its social media brand page posts to increase traffic and excitement among consumers.

Set a social media voice:

Marketers need to identify a personality that will represent a brand well in social media environments. A tone which will be the fundamental vibe that stems from a brand's communication, and a suitable language that will be used by a brand as a basis for

the kind of words, phrases and jargon that will be utilised in social media communications should be established as well (Kim 2016: 59).

Engage with consumers:

Being strongly involved is the greatest advantage to attain an intense and miscellaneous following in social environments (Forrester 2010:96). Evans (2010: 35) supports that being engaged in online discussions and responding to the conversation in a courteous manner, will gain a brand reverence, reliability, and a particular amount of power.

Authenticity and Transparency:

Brands need to be truthful and genuine when engaging conversations with consumers. It is essential to position the brand applicably and participate in social media conversations about subjects of common interest. Being genuine is when balancing organisational needs with those of consumers (Kim 2016:83). The less authentic a brand feels when involved in a conversation with consumers, the more exasperated they get with the brand (Arens, Weigold and Arens 2013:540). Nothing helps close a sale like transparency. When consumers are supplied with all the information they need and are able to communicate with the brand whenever they encounter a problem, it is likely that they will choose to purchase that brand (Forrester 2010:152).

Brand Monitoring:

Brands should be monitored to determine the effectiveness of applied marketing efforts in order to improve performance and to quickly pick up and rectify any irregularities in social media platforms. It is essential to know the number a brand's website visits, the number of pages being seen, as well as knowing the best performing pages. Information that gives comprehension kind of visitors who are attracted to your website and how they find a brand's website (Miller 2011: 107). Brands are able to ration all of the commentary, positive or negative, into a manageable instrumentation with strong analytics and trend examination of how interactions are developing and how sentiment is transforming over time though the metrics. Leavy (2011: 271) affirms that metrics are a wellbeing of a marketing campaign. The analytics indicate areas where a brand is doing well and areas where improvement is needed. Marketers should to outline the metrics that are most significant to their brands.

Integrate posts across multiple social media:

A brand should share a message with all its followers across various social media channels without limitation. However, there are possible space restrictions with different platforms with Twitter being the one with the smallest space. The same message can still be sent across various platforms when carefully planned (Miller 2011: 412).

Promote your videos on other platforms:

Like all other messages, when a video is being uploaded on video sharing sites such as YouTube, it should also be noted in all the social media platforms a brand uses be it by uploading it as a post or by posting its link to direct consumers to a platform where it can

5.8 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

There is a minimum amount of data with regards to social media consumers in Durban as there is a limited number of publications on the subject, however there is plenty of information on South African and global consumers at large. Although the results of this research can be extensively useful, this study focused only on consumers in Durban. Therefore, caution is advised when applying the outcomes of this research. be viewed.

5.9 DIRECTION FOR FURTHER RESEACH

This research established various opportunities for further research. While this study investigated the influence of social media marketing on consumers' choice of brands, it is recommended that the influence of opinion leaders or influencers on consumers' choice of brands be investigated. This will enable marketing practitioners to determine the extent to which paid marketing in social media influence purchase decisions, it can also be compared to organic marketing in the same platforms.

The influence of specific social media channels should also be investigated as it will give marketers an insight into how those channels work, who they attract, and how those people use them. This will greatly help marketers when planning their social

media marketing strategies and it will also help in adjusting those strategies to conform to the ever changing consumer values.

Further research should be targeted towards the influence of social media on specific age groups to identify how different age groups react and communicate with brands on social media platforms.

5.10 CONCLUSION

The empirical findings of this study have shown that social media marketing is of utmost significance. The responsibility lies with marketers and brand managers to employ social media as a component of their marketing strategy. Today's consumers live in social media environments, and so brands should make social media networks their home too. Unlike in traditional marketing, consumer control communication in social media, therefore marketers should refrain from imposing brands to consumer but rather join the conversations. Social media can either make or break a brand for this reason; marketers should be strategic as to when to engage in the conversation, and which tone and language will be used to represent the brand in those conversations, but most importantly brands should listen to those conversations before engaging in them. Brands should also be active and consistent in these platforms with a good understanding of the target audience's specific expectations and values of brands in order to yield a sustainable advantage in these environments.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A

Please tick where appropriate

1. Demographic data

1.1	Gender	Male	Female
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1.2	Race	African	Indian	White	Coloured
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1.3	Age group	18 -19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and above
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1.5	Marital	Married	Single	Divorced	Widowed
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1.6	Educational level	Less than Certificate	National certificate	National Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Post-graduate
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2. Value of social media

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2.1 Are you active on computer-generated communities? Yes/No

2.2 Which social media channel(s) are you active on?

Facebook		Twitter		YouTube		Instagram		Others	
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Please specify your view on the following statements

SD – Strongly Disagree D- Disagree N – Neutral A – Agree SA – Strongly Agree

No.	Test item	SD	D	N	A	SA
2.3	Social media is very important to me					
2.4	I come to be aware of certain brands through social media networks					
2.5	Social media stimulated my need to purchase a certain brand					

2. Consumer's brand preferences

2.6In my communications with online friends, I will point out that I prefer using a certain brand because:

EXPERIENCE/ IMPRESSION	SD	D	N	A	SA
2.6.1 The brand's products are of good quality					
2.6.2 The brand provides the best customer service					
2.6.3 The Brand's online purchases are secure					
2.6.4 I like the cost effectiveness of the brand					
2.6.5 The price of the brand is reasonable					
2.6.6 I like the quality and reliability of the information provided on the brand page					

2.6.7 The brand's social media page provides me with real time customer feedback					
2.6.8 The brand's social media page content is exciting					
2.6.9 The brand is used by my favourite celebrity					
2.6.10 The brand has a lot of promotional activities					
2.6.11 Most of my online friends buy the same brand					
2.6.12 I am loyal to the brand					
2.6.13 The brand seem to be involved in corporate social responsibilities that I relate to					
2.6.14 Communication with the brand on this platform is less formal and I relate to it					
2.6.15 The brand satisfies all my needs					

3 Effectiveness of social media

	Please tick the most appropriate	SD	D	N	A	SA
3.1	Social media is the best communication channel for interacting with brands					
3.2	I do not rely on information acquired on social media than the one acquired from commercial adverts					
3.3	I never go on a brand's social media page to obtain information on its specifications, performance, prices and promotions					

3.4	I monitor what other people post on brands					
3.5	I am loyal to brands that communicate effectively and provides prompt responses to my inquiries					
3.6	I do not like interacting with other consumers on social media platforms					

4

Social medianetwork usage

	Please show the best opinion	SD	D	N	A	SA
4.1	I carry my smart phone at all times to access social media					
4.2	I only visit my social media account when I receive an alert					
4.3	I visit brand pages that post new pictures and information the most					
4.4	I only visit a brand page when I see its post on my news feed					
4.5	I share social media posts that I relate to and support					
4.6	I like social media posts that appeal to me					
4.7	I follow posts that are shared by people I like					

5 Social media and consumer decision making

	<i>Please indicate your opinion</i>	SD	D	N	A	SA
5.1	My purchase decisions are influenced by other consumers' reviews					
5.2	I do not regard social media to be reliable for information.					
5.3	I always depict alternative brands to purchase on social media networks					
5.4	Interactions with online friends cannot sway my purchase behaviour					
5.5	I obtain endorsements and advices from other consumers before making a purchase decision					
5.6	My personal decisions are always improved or transformed after going through brand page content on social media networks					

The end!!!

Your contribution is exceptionally valued

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT



Dear Respondent

I am a currently registered student with the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) in Durban South Africa. As part of my studies and to qualify for the award of a Masters in Management Sciences degree, I have to complete a dissertation. I am therefore conducting a study titled, The influence of social media marketing on Durban consumers' choice of brands.

I have to distribute questionnaires to active social media consumers who reside in Durban so I kindly request you to take part and contribute to this study by completing this questionnaire which will not take more than 15 minutes of your valued time. All the data collected in this study will exclusively be used for the purposes of this research and confidentiality is guaranteed.

Should you not understand any question in this questionnaire, please do not hesitate to ask me or my fieldwork assistant for clarity. My supervisor can also be contacted on 031 373 6870 should you need to make any further enquiry. All your effort to participate in this study is exceedingly valued.

Yours truly,

Paballo P. Ntobaki