

# Research Report

The degree to which Cape Town millennial consumers in the Central Business District rely on social media when making purchasing decisions: *A quantitative study*

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***BA Honours Strategic Brand Communications***

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## Abstract

The internet along with social media has over the years progressed and improved the quality of people's lives and that of business operating constructs (Kotler & Keller, 2011: 36). The implications of social media for businesses are more profound than that of civilians, especially within ecommerce. Accordingly the main purpose of this research is to describe and explore the degree in which Cape Town millennial consumers in the Central Business District rely on social media when making purchasing decisions.

The literature conducted generates initial propositions of factors that influence the millennial consumers purchasing decision process. The study takes form of a quantitative study whereby 140 online surveys were distributed to participants who fell between the age brackets of 18 – 37 and were either based or worked in Cape Town's central business district. The results were analysed to filter the main factors of influence and to determine and attempt to explain the relationships between the identified factors.

The results of this analysis show that social media and online user generated content is of high importance to this target audience with Facebook and Instagram taking priority above all social media platforms. Furthermore it emphasises the importance of online and social media referrals during the millennial in Cape Town central business district decision making process.

## **Plagiarism Declaration**

I hereby declare that the Research Report Submitted for the BA Honours Strategic Brand Communication degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

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## **Glossary of terms:**

### **Social Media**

Internet and online based software and interfaces that allow individuals to communicate and share information and content with one another (Investopedia, 2016).

### **User Generated Content**

Media generated content created by online users in order to share information and opinions about a topic or subject with other online users (Tang, T., Fang, E & Wang, F. 2014).

### **Consumer Engagement**

A range of consumer advertising activities and experiences that aim to create a positive experience with the brand (Ad Age Content Strategy Studio, 2015).

### **Millennials**

The technologically savvy generation aged between people between the ages of 18 to 34 (Simon Sinek, 2016).

### **Generation Y**

People born between the early 1980's and 2000's (Also known as millennials according to the mail and guardian (2017)).

### **Electronic word of mouth (eWOM)**

Any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet (Hennig-Thurau, Qwinner, Walsh and Gremler, 2004)

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Orientation:

The arrival of the internet brought about the vast revolution of digital and social media (Kotler & Keller 2011: 25). The internet on its' own has revolutionised almost every aspect of human communication, from real time instant gratification to the delivery of products through user generated orders and requests (Naughton, 2010). Social media along with the internet has unconsciously transformed the quality of people's lives and has further reshuffled the daily schedules of the millennial consumer (Naughton, 2010).

According to (Hendricks, 2013) social media is not a new phenomenon, it has been around for a while, it is with the progression and growth of digital technology that social media has transitioned and earned itself a n indispensable name amongst human and business communication.

The arrival of smartphones and tablets has changed the interface of networking and the way in which people communicate. "What once sat on top of a desk now conveniently fits in the palm of ones hands, allowing people to effortlessly use functionality or multiple purposes at their convenience" states McKinsey (2010).

The term social media refers to internet sites that people use in order to interact, hence the word "social" which is elaborative in describing the actions of sharing and receiving media such as music, video, photos and opinions on the platform (McKinsey, 2010).

According to Didelot (2013) social media dates back to the 1970's with the first email ever having being sent in 1971. Although email has progressively lost its relevance with the takeover of instant communications such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter it remains the standard form of business communication (Didelot, 2013). In 1985 American Online, better known as AOL was founded and became the most popular internet connection during that time, this paved the way for online communication. Following this, AOL Messenger then made its debut in 1997, around the same time that blogging was brought about. Blogging is the act of traditionally updating a website containing a writer's or group of writers' own experiences, observations, opinions, etc., and often having images and links to other websites

(Dictionary, 2017). Blogging became increasingly popular and inspired what is now known as Instagram.

It is also around this time that two American authors created the term millennials in order to separate generational personalities which form in opposition to their immediate predecessors but share significant traits with groups they may never meet (Sharf, 2015). According to Sharf (2015) the term was discovered during the time that children were born and entering preschool; the media were identifying their prospective link to the new millennium as the high school graduating class of 2000 who make up twenty five percent of the world's population. Today this percentage has increased. The pair had further discovered and elaborated in a book they had written, that this millennial generation (born in the late 90's and early 2000's) would be the generation to shape the future (Naughton, 2010). In correlation to the millennial term an advertising fundi then coined the term generation Y, which also made reference to the millennial generation. In shaping the future this generation unnoticeably defined the realms of global marketing communication through their behaviour when using technology and on social media platforms for activities beyond what they were intended for (Kotler & Keller, 2011: 26).

Today, this generation, along with many consumers have found convenient ways of fulfilling their monetary needs, whether it is online or in store. These consumers are no longer going shopping, but are shopping (Sharf, 2015). Meaning they can now access the products they purchase from the comfort of their own homes, which is online or at a dial. They can easily buy from manufacturers and retailers located in shops all around the world or from those with no physical retail address.

Social media comes into play as millennial consumers are said to spend majority of their time, looking at the screens on their phones and communicating, sharing and interacting on various social media platforms (Simon Sinek, 2016). The opinion and influence of their social media peers then comes into question. In that with the amount of time spent on social media, could it perhaps have an effect on the purchasing decision that the consumer makes and in doing so does the millennial consumer first look at reviews online or on social media before making a purchasing decision whether in store or online.

In an interview that went viral on social media, Simon Sinek (2016) a marketing consultant highlights that the link between social media and millennials lies in the generations need for instant gratification; always wanting things to be done now. Millennials as discussed above are a technologically savvy generation that has paved the way for brands to access consumers on a digital platform ( Naughton, 2010). According to Simon this is where their purchasing behaviour comes into play as brands no longer have a choice but to conform to the rapid shifts and changes brought about by the digital evolution.

Taylor (2017) highlights that the average millennial spends 18 hours a day consuming media – often multiple forms at once. These forms are completely different from those favoured by prior generation (Taylor, 2017). She elaborates this by making an example of that of a study done depicting that the average millennial checks his or her smartphone 43 times and spends 5.4 hours on social media per day.

It is therefore within this study that the power of social media will be discussed and the degree to which the social media channels have a contribution in the millennials decision making process will be investigated.

## **1.2 Rationale**

The key focus of this study is on social media being used primarily as an internet source or smartphone based application tool to share information among millennials with similar or the same interests. The research further elaborates on the extent to which this interaction between the relevant counterparts has an influence on the purchasing decisions they make both online and offline. Social media includes popular networking websites such as Facebook, twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, tinder and many more. Brands have now found it of high importance to ensure that they have a strong social media presence with content that is of great interest to their target audience in order to stay afloat (Simon Sinek, 2016). Consumers have also used these sites as platforms to share and receive information with their peers, thus having an effect and level of influence in the decisions they make regarding brands. Studies have shown that ratings and referrals play a huge role in the way that a brand is positioned in the mind of a potential consumer and as

a result dissatisfaction could have a negative effect on the image of a brand (Bhimrao & Ghodeswar, 2008).

This study investigates the main factors that are associated with a brand that has social media presence and how this influences the consumers' decision making process, whether on or offline.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

According to The Nielsen Company (2014) generation Y who are born into the era of technological development founded the social media movement. In doing so millennials have also successfully dictated the improvements of this space based on what their interests and digital tendencies are (The Nielsen Company, 2014). In addition to that Isaac III (2016) reveals that millennials account for twenty one percent of consumer discretionary purchases, amounting to over a trillion dollars in direct buying power, and amongst many other things they are significant influencers among older generations in both the United States of America and South Africa.

Marketers and brands are now placed in a position where they have to pull their socks up in order to accurately and actively engage with these consumers (Aslop, 2012). "Hard selling and promotional enticements no longer work with this audience", states Isaac III (2016), it is only conversation based on their interests and getting to know them layer by layer that will.

According to Castells (2014) if marketers want this market to realise their brand presence they have to target them where they are. Furthermore with current social pressures and the need for friend validation and affirmation, millennials are not quick to purchase products or services without reviewing them on user generated content sites such as Facebook, Hello Peter or asking a family member or friend for advice (Castells 2014).

According to Mangolds and Faulds (2009; p. 360) brands need to do more than have a social media presence as this has now become more mandatory for brands than it is a unique selling point that is consistent throughout all brand mediums. With social media being the second most important form of communication after verbal communication, brands need to make sure that what is being said about them online is consistent and aligned with what the brand stands for so as to positively influence

consumers to engage with the brand and ultimately become brand advocates on their personal respective platforms and to their communities (Mangolds & Fauld 2009, p. 361).

#### **1.4 Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this research is to discover the degree and level to which South African millennial consumers are not only influenced but are reliant on user generated content such as social media platforms when making purchasing decisions. To what degree these platforms play a role in their daily decision making processes when opting or opting not to support a particular brand. The importance of this research lies within description as the study will be used to describe the phenomena of predicting and explaining what drives such human behavioural choices.

Quantitative research will be the priority of this study as the study will be looked at from a positivist perspective and take on a scientific approach. According to (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 3: 2005) the positivist approach opposes that of an anti – scientific method as it believes that when researching one cannot only look at the strict natural methods of collecting data in order to discover natural human behaviour, which is what the positivist and scientific approach looks at. This methodology is adequate in that it provides findings of a large sampling size thus producing objective results.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

##### **1.5.1 Primary Research Question**

- To what extent do social media platforms influence the CPT CBD millennial consumers purchasing decision?

##### **1.5.2 Secondary Research Questions**

- Are online user generated reviews important in the CPT CBD millennial consumers' decision making process?
- How valuable is an online community to the CPT CBD millennial consumer?
- What role does a brands online presence play in its level of product credibility to the CPT CBD millennial consumer?

## **1.6 Research Aims and Objectives**

### **1.6.1 Primary Research Objective**

The primary research objective of the study is to gain knowledge on the level to which social media platforms have an influence on the Cape Town CBD millennial consumers' purchasing decision making process.

### **1.6.2 Secondary research objectives**

- To develop a concise understanding of the Cape Town CBD millennial consumer.
- To establish the level of importance of social media channels to the Cape Town CBD millennial consumer.
- To compare the level of importance of user generated content to the millennial consumer in respect to other generations.
- To establish whether targeting this consumer on social media platforms is effective or ineffective.
- To identify both online and offline factors that contribute to the Cape Town CBD millennial consumers decision making process.
- To establish the level in which the online community of the Cape Town CBD millennials consumer influences their decision making.

## **1.7 Significance of the study**

The importance of this study in a South African context is to assist organisations in aiding the problem of effectively targeting the millennial generation. According to (McGee, 2017) the millennial generation is the fastest growing generation on a global scale. As this generation reaches its prime working and spending years, their impact on the economy is significantly growing. McGee (2017) elaborates that millennials have come of age during a time of technological change, globalization and economic disruption. These factors have given them a distinctly different set of behaviours and experiences to that of generations before them with them being savvier and more educated. . The study will also aid South African organisations with research as most studies of the same or a similar topic have been done on the international market and not in a local South African context. In essence the study

should help South African organisations in determining the value of having an online presence.

The study should effectively assist brands in using the social media landscape effectively and efficiently in order to enhance online brand advocacy that will ultimately lead to more referrals and larger profit margins.

### **1.8 Delimitation/ Demarcation of the field of study**

This study will cover the relationship between Cape Town CBD millennial consumers and online platforms such as social media, it will also cover the audience's activity on these platforms and determine the extent to which the activity spent on the online platforms has an effect on the purchasing decisions they make both on and offline. The study will also cover the reaction consumers have towards brands online, online brand advocacy and brands with a strong social media presence.

The study will not entail internal decisions made by social media marketing agencies as internal agency would worry that by sharing private business information, the agency could be subject to scrutiny. Furthermore the study has a customer centric approach, thus looking at the research from the perspective of the consumer, making social media agencies a mere secondary resource. The data collected from the study will have both an age and geographical limit. The age limit is subject to the fact that millennials fall in between the ages of eighteen and thirty four and have different buying and consumer habits to other generations. The geographical limit is solely based on accessibility in order to ensure that a pool of the relevant target audience is reached.

Possible limitations to the study are that, although the study is done looking at the South African audience, international frameworks and references can only be accessed online as secondary sources. In addition to that a nationwide study cannot be done as a result of limited resources and limitations of accessibility. The study will only comprise of respondents based in the Cape Town central business district.

Brands can also not be guaranteed success on social media platforms or success at trying to target the millennial consumer through following the guidelines stipulated in this study, but they can only hope to see a positive difference should they follow the guidelines. The surveys will not under any circumstances be manipulated to acquire

a specific response from the respondents, so the assumption is that the participants will remain one hundred percent honest with their responses in order to acquire useful and meaningful data.

### **1.9 Assumptions**

This research study assumes that millennial consumers can be accessed on social media platforms as they spend most of their time online (Tayla, 2017). The study also assumes that a brand with a high social media presence will perform better at targeting millennial consumers than one that has a low social media presence. It further assumes that millennial consumers actively share their views and opinions, whether positive or negative with their peers on social media platforms. The study also assumes that millennials are to some level influenced by their social media peers when it comes to making purchasing decisions. Furthermore it assumes that customer satisfaction could lead to referrals and brand loyalty.

The collected and analysed data will not be reflective of the opinion of the entire South African millennial population – it will only be that of those in the Cape Town Central Business District.

### **1.10 Overview of Research Methodology**

The research will take a quantitative approach in the form of non-experimental designs when looking into the behavioural patterns of the object/ unit of analysis – millennial consumers in Cape Town CBD. According to (Maree et al., 2016:165) non experimental designs are used when doing descriptive research of this nature. Participants that have been selected to take part in the research are measured on all relevant variables of the study. In comparison to the experimental designs where manipulation takes place, no manipulation takes place with non-experimental designs. The method that will be used in this research is that of surveys, both on and offline in order to obtain quantitative information that can be used to describe and explore the study.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research study will explore the relationship between social media and Cape Town CBD millennial consumers. The study will focus on brands social

media engagement with this consumer, millennials social media use and the level of influence social media platforms have on this type of consumer's decision making process.

## **1.12 Outline of Chapters**

Chapter 1 comprises of an in depth introduction, background and orientation of the research study. Mainly contextualisation, the rationale, problem and purpose statements, the primary research question and secondary research questions, primary and secondary research objectives and the significance of the research study coupled with limitations and demarcations that pertain to conducting this research. Chapter 2 comprises of the literature review, namely: the influence of user generated content to millennials, social media marketing, online millennial consumer behaviour, the rise of online shopping and the importance of sharing feedback and reviews online to millennials. Chapter 3 will include the research methodology, which is the specific research approach and designs detailed within this study. Chapter 4 will display these results, analysis of the data and present the research findings. Chapter 5 will then conclude the study and provide recommendations. The research study will end off with references as well as any addenda used.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

The research study will investigate to what degree the activity and opinions of those on social media affect the consumer buying habits of the Cape Town CBD millennial. In doing so a framework needs to be developed in order to obtain a better understanding of the topic under investigation. Key variables that will be explored within this study are the link between instant gratification and online shopping, the importance of social affirmation and social media prior to purchasing a product or service to millennials, online consumer trends, the rapid growth of technology and social media as a platform for brands to create brand loyalty and retain customer advocacy amongst millennial consumers.

## **2.2 Focus of literature review**

The rise in popularity and use of social media tools, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have led to an increase in regularity and frequency of interactions between individuals, businesses, groups and communities. Online platforms and social media networks directly influence the consumer-brand relationship and have become a product, brand and self-expression. A social identity is formed through these interactions with people and brands, and therefore brands offer the opportunity for consumers to extend their identity and add values that they can relate with (Enginkaya & Yilmaz, 2014). In doing so these relationships become significant and influential to the point where it involves their purchasing decisions. According to McKinsey (2010) these online forums have elevated online communication far beyond just a space to discuss mutual topics of interest, meeting, and renewing relationships with others It is now also a hub that has greatly influenced the buying habits of many consumers (Hendricks, 2013).

The content of this literature review is aimed at exploring the millennial consumer-brand relationship on a social media aspect, and related topics such as; the link between instant gratification and online shopping, the importance of social affirmation and social media prior to purchasing a product or service to millennials, online consumer trends, the rapid growth of technology and social media as a platform for brands to create brand loyalty and retain customer advocacy amongst millennial consumers.

## **2.3 The rise of social media marketing**

According to Zarella (2010) social media marketing has created innovative ways for brands to market themselves without having to stretch their marketing budgets with billboard or press release prices. Social media marketing is defined as the use of social media platforms in order to drive sales through advertising and marketing (Schroeder, 2017). New web technologies have made it easier for anyone to create and distribute personalised content online. Schroeder (2017) also states that whether you are a big or small company, the probability is high that most, if not all of your customers make use of social media so it is of high importance that the brand does the same. Evans (2009: 7) states that social media provides for a general raising of the bar when it comes to establishing a brand identity. He mentions that

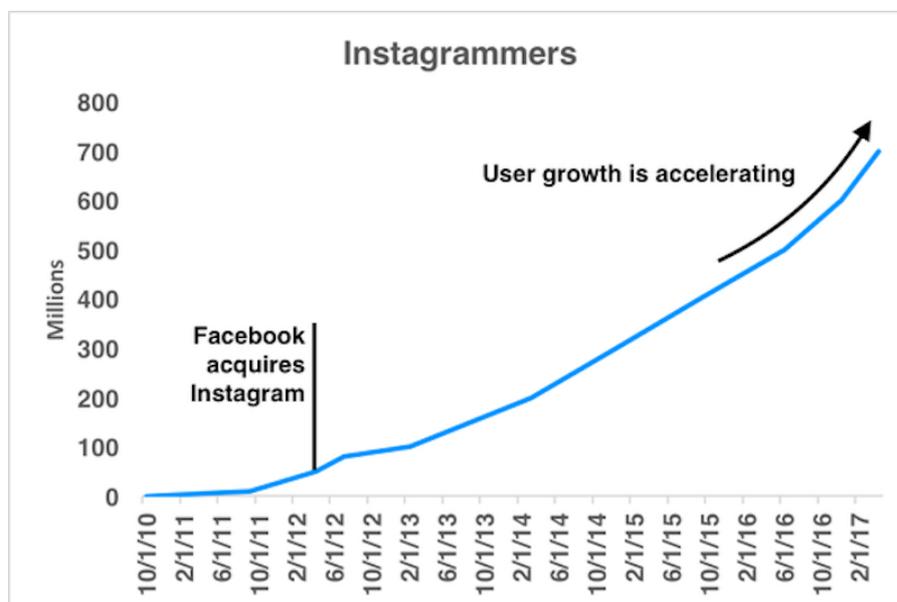
brands need to turn to using social web analytical tools in order to seek through brand identity issues on a social media perspective. Once this is done a brand can look into honing a unique social media brand identity. Similarly (Kietzman, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silverste, 2011: 245 ) state that the social media phenomena can significantly impact a firm's reputation, sales, and even survival, yet many executives ignore this form of media because they don't understand what it is, the various forms it can take, and how to engage with it and learn. They then substitute it with traditional media tactics while competitors are up to date with the change that social media has taken on a business context.

Traditional marketing such as billboards, TV commercials and print advertising, as recently mentioned, although still prevalent has gradually lost its taste as every organisation wants to gain value through spending the least amount of money as possible (Zarella, 2010). Reaching the millennial consumer has thus resulted in looking at an inexpensive approach of social media marketing. Bennett (2012) states that “social media marketing has numerous advantages for a brand in comparison to traditional marketing”. A few advantages being;

- It is the cheaper option but with a wider target audience reach. An organisation can reach 1000 people for a fraction of the cost using social media than you can through television, billboards or even email,
- Social media is the only marketing platform that allows you to engage and interact with your consumers – it's a two-way relationship, which can be very lucrative for brands &
- The results are measurable, and marketers can take immediate action to spot trends and re-align campaigns

Although Bennett (2010) states that making use of social media marketing will not always be the best idea because social media campaigns can be time consuming and the social media pool is so large with a saturated amount of competition, a social media campaign may easily go unnoticed by the relevant target audience if not implemented correctly. Furthermore, the impact can disseminate very quickly, whereas traditional marketing campaigns, like in television, can produce short-term results that have greater tangibility and thus make for great long-term content. A prime example of the relevance of social media marketing traction is that of a study

done by business insider (2016) , the statistics demonstrate that YouTube has currently reached a 100million viewers and Facebook has grown from 100 million to 200 million users in less than 8 months and Instagram alone is heading towards 1 billion users (Niu, 2017). The graph below depicts the rate in which Instagram user growth is accelerating since Instagram begun and at the point that Facebook bought Instagram. The graph shows that the acquiring of the business lead to Instagram user acceleration growth. According to Luckerson (2016), Instagram had just 30 million users when it was bought by Facebook two years after its 2010 launch. Today the photo-sharing app has more than 400 million users and has been used as a platform to advertise businesses who want to gain the attention of a target market such as the millennials through Instagram advertisement.



**2.3.1 Figure A: Instagram User Acceleration Growth ( Niu, 2017)**

## 2.4 Online millennial consumer behaviour

In elaboration of the Instagram growth chart above, Bennett (2010) mentions that millennials spend about eighteen hours a day online. The amount of online content consumed within that duration is huge. It was also found that within the time spent online, millennials are not bothered about their online privacy or government surveillance as they continuously make use of the location sharing application in order to attempt their audience of their whereabouts (Bennet, 2010). Other than entertainment purposes, a study conducted by American Press Institute discovered

that the minority of millennial consumers spend their time online updating and educating themselves on current news, contrary to this static there has been much of concern from various sources of data that suggest adults age 18-34 spend a lot of time on social networks, often on mobile devices and that news is only one of many random elements on social media. According to Young (2015) this then limits their understanding of what is going on around the world. This could be argued since different studies show that social media has played an informative role for their audiences as they share and receive news on their smartphones. When it comes to the broader scale of online activity, studies have shown that the main reason that consumers create online shopping accounts in addition to their social media accounts is for the convenience of shopping at any hour of any day (Moore, 2012). This is followed by having the ability to compare prices or to find better deals. Furthermore, Moore (2012) states that millennial consumers indicate a significantly higher usage of interactive media compared to other generations, but models indicate that millennials use interactive technologies for utilitarian/information gathering purposes as well as for entertainment. However, they are less likely to purchase online compared to their older counterparts as many do not have credit cards yet (Moore, 2012).

When comparing the impact of online versus offline touch-points that create the first trigger moment, it is found that at least one offline channel is effective to consumers as a source of initial awareness, but the rest are online channels (Forest, 2017). Retail websites or online shops are the most common source of initial awareness. Although millennials were not only more likely than the older generations to be influenced by online sources, such as social media or peer reviews; they were also more likely to be influenced by offline channels. Millennials were more likely than Baby Boomers to have seen their most recent online purchase in a shop, nearly 50% more likely to have talked to a friend about it and more than twice as likely to have seen someone with it (Forest, 2017). Thus proving reviews and references are of great importance to millennials.

According Forest (2017) and Moore (2015) e-commerce as a whole is not an online-only affair. Both online and offline channels are effective in creating consumer awareness and demand, especially when used together. Furthermore, despite the rise of online shopping, e-commerce still makes up a relatively small percentage of

total retail spending. *“Retailers’ strategies need to continue to evolve to attract customers into their stores and to compete with online retailers opening their own physical outlets”*, she states. Increasingly, there are innovative marketing strategies being implemented, as well as new technologies such as smart shelves, robots, self-checkout and interactive and virtual reality being deployed in stores, as retailers strive to compete on all fronts to entice the online millennial consumer to purchase at the store (Forest, 2017). With that said increased competition, combined with consumer demand for richer experiences, means that retailers need to rethink their online strategy. For many retailers, creating an online shopping experience, enhanced by the fast adapted to technology such as augmented and virtual reality or 3D, is becoming at least as important as providing convenient and personalised ordering, payment and delivery options.

## **2.5 Millennials and shopping online**

In support of the retailers having had to enhance their online shopping experience as a result of technology development, Krasniak (2017) states that millennials are the truly the first digital generation and as a result can be referred to as digital natives. A digital native is someone who has grown up in a digital, media-saturated world (Bennett, Matton, Kervin, 2008: 778). Benett, et al. 2008: 782) disagrees with Krasniak and states that studies show that not all millennials are digital natives, as some that have grown up in poverty-stricken areas with little to no digital innovation cannot be labelled with this term (American Press Institute, 2015). Born in 1980, this first generation of digital natives entered high school as the web became a public space. Half of this group, those age 26 and under, entered high school with social media, first My Space and soon enough MXIT and Facebook (Bennett, Matton, Kervin, 2008: 779). They mention that for most of this generatio, the digital revolution does not represent disruption, but rather represents the norm and, to a significant degree, their generation’s opportunity.

According to the Total Retail 2016 report by PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers), digital means everything to the millennial consumer; they can always be found online (Sinek, 2016). It is stated that even when they are shopping in the store, in order to pass time by during a time consuming yet tedious situation such as standing in a line, they connect to their online spaces. While they have the capacity to be online all

the time, many Millennials are not (American Press Institute, 2017). A smaller but still significant number of millennials in a research study conducted by American Press Institute say their lives are a mix of online and offline. Just 10 percent are almost always online or offline. Brenna, age 25 from Chicago, noted that, “I think that it’s life-consuming, because when I travel abroad I like not having it. And I like turning off my data, leaving my phone, not even being on Twitter because it’s kind of refreshing not to have all of this information thrown at you.” So as much as being online is a cognitive and instinctive action for millennials, they still would like to embark their energy on other activities offline (American Press Institute, 2017).

## **2.6 The rise of sharing feedback online**

According to Young (2015) the one concept that some critics have wondered about in the age of almost complete consumer choice is whether people are insulated from opinions and ideas that are different than their own, offline and online. Referred to as the “filter bubble”, there is a question about millennials who grew with such choices rather than the agenda-setting of more traditional media are more prone to this risk.

In a study conducted by Erick Young, it was found that the filter bubble is often understated. The term 'filter bubble' is used to describe the potential for online personalization to effectively isolate people from a diversity of viewpoints or content. Online recommender systems - built on algorithms that attempt to predict which items users will most enjoy consuming – social media users fall victim of this type of personalization (Falder & Hosanger, 2009: 700). It found limitless choices in that people only follow a few subjects in which they are interested and only from sources in which they agree, similarly to the notion of (Falder & Hoanger, 2009: 690) that states that millennials follow those off interest to them on social media. Furthermore social media is a hub that encompasses friends and acquaintances with shared and/or similar interests. This then narrows the objectivity of their opinions and in essence reviews to only what they are exposed to or what they know (Sinek, 2016).

According to Young (2015) his study depicts that millennials perceive themselves to be exposed to a variety of opinions and say they are willing to investigate those opinions. In all, the majority of Millennials state that their social media feeds are composed of a relatively even mix of similar and different opinions to their own. Just twelve percent say the opinions they see in social media are mostly similar to their

own. A slightly larger number, sixteen percent, say, interestingly, that the opinions and viewpoints they see are mostly different than their own (Young, 2015). Consumers responding to the survey said with regards to reviews and feedback, they were most likely to post feedback directly to sellers' websites (forty seven percent) followed by posts on Facebook (thirty one percent) then on a manufacturers or the brands websites (eighteen percent) This was consistent across all age groups, with Millennials also frequently posting on WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter (Young, 2015).

In reference to the importance of reviews, it is found in a survey compiled by KPMG that of all generations, generation y are the generation that is more likely to post about product and service reviews online (KPMG, 2017). This then highlights that reviews are of great importance to this group and have a high possibility of influencing their purchasing decisions or lack thereof.

According to KPMG (2017) the growing trend for consumers to post reviews is driven by factors including the rise of social media, where consumers compete with their peers by publicly sharing their latest purchases and experiences; the rise of bloggers, whose business models are based on providing product reviews that drive affiliate clicks; and sellers, who proactively solicit ratings from happy customers. This peer-to-peer mechanism is explained by Thierer (2015) and Koopman (2015) to build trust between the two transacting parties directly. In addition to ratings and reviews Hobson (2015) reiterates that technological developments such as blogs, social networking, smartphones, and mobile apps, including geolocation, have made it even easier for all people to have a voice in e-commerce. As a result, companies have become more responsive to consumer demand, establishing their own presence on social media and quickly responding to customer complaints in order to effectively protect their reputation (Kuiper, 2015). There are many examples of peer-to-peer interactions in the sharing economy today, where buyers and sellers can rate and review each other and share that information with other parties. One of these interactive platforms is a site called Hello Peter. Hello Peter is South Africa's top reviews company and allows for anybody with retail complaints to expose the company online. This act could easily tarnish the reputation and credibility of a brand. Companies need to thus make sure they are always providing good services to their customers, both on and offline (Kuiper, 2015). The implication for companies

is that user-generated reviews are being posted on sites that are increasingly out of their sphere of control or influence. Companies need to integrate these social media sites into their marketing and customer strategy (Wallace, 2015).

### **2.7 Connecting the real world with the virtual world**

According to The Nielsen Company (2014) Millennials can connect their two worlds: one real and one virtual. They are the biggest social media users in comparison to other generations and as a result find that they are very open to disclosing their lives on these platforms (The Nielsen Company, 2014). In elaboration of that it is found in a study conducted by The Nielsen Company that Facebook is the platform of choice for 72 percent of this generation, thus depicting how significant this platform is to them. In the same study it was found that thirty-two percent of the younger half (age 18-24) use social media from the bathroom and 51 percent of the older half (age 25-34) take time out of their work day to check on their social media pages at the office— this was in comparison to any other age group.

### **2.8 The connect or disconnect of social media**

According to Gastells (2014) the internet is the decisive communication of the information age. He further states that we are all technologically connected in one way or the other, people, companies, and institutions feel the shift of the digital transition, but the speed and scope of the transformation has brought about inaccurate perceptions of the effects of the change. It is found that in many instances that the relationship that millennials share with social media and the digital age is attached to negative connotations such as alienation and isolation when in reality the change has done more good than it has bad (Gastells, 2014).

He further states that our current “network society” is a product of the digital revolution and some major sociocultural changes. He goes into explaining the rise of a society that is based on a “me-centre”, one that promotes individualism more than it does inclusivity. “But individuation does not mean isolation, or the end of community” states Gastells (2014). Instead he states that through these platforms, social relationships are being built on the basis of individual interests, values, and projects. A social media community is formed through individuals’ quests for like-minded people in a process that combines online interaction with offline interaction, cyberspace, and the local space much like the evolution of pen and paper to

computers (Gastell, 2014). Similarly Kumar (2016) highlights that social media is a way of keeping us updated and informed and has contrary to popular belief had more of a positive impact on education than it has had on morale. He thus explains that time spent online is not necessarily time wasted or disconnected (Kumar, 2012).

## **2.9 Conclusion of Literature Review**

In conclusion it can be observed that there are a significant number of millennial consumers who actively engage with both peers and brands on social media. The literature states that social media in a South African context has caused a digital divide between the millennial consumer that has access to internet and a smartphone and the poverty stricken one. Majority of the studied conducted state that the average millennial consumer is technologically savvy and always on their “smartphone”, this statement could be flawed if looked at in a South African context because poverty plays a huge role in SA. According to Stats SA (2017) the South African economy in the last five years, notably between 2011 and 2015, has been driven by a combination of international and domestic factors such as low and weak economic growth, continuing high unemployment levels, lower commodity prices, higher consumer prices (especially for energy and food), lower investment levels, greater household dependency on credit, and policy uncertainty. This period has seen the financial health of South African households decline under the weight of these economic pressures and, in turn, has pulled more households and individuals down into poverty, thus not enabling them to enjoy luxuries such as smartphones, wifi etc.

Contrary to the poor economy, many South African millennials can be found online and actively engage with friends and brands through their sharing of their opinions, feedback, reviews, posts and photo and video content. The literature states that this generation has recreated the digital trend and have also adhered to the digital age revolution through actively sharing feedback online, allowing their social media peers into private moments of their lives, shopping online (although they still enjoy the traditional in store shopping experience) and spending most of their time online. The literature further states that this “addiction” could be to the millennials detriment as it is creating a generation of self-centred and narcissistic people (Gastells, 2014).

In an increasingly competitive and technologically advanced environment as a result of instant gratification demands, consumers are now more confident, more aware and spoilt for choice with regards to what brands to support and for what reasons. This study will analyse the extent to which brands can influence millennial consumers' in Cape Town CBD (as that is the most populated area in Cape Town with young professionals) decisions and retain loyal online brand advocates that will lead to referrals.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

The research will take a quantitative approach in the form of non-experimental designs when looking into the behavioural patterns of the object/ unit of analysis – millennial consumers in Cape Town CBD. According to (Maree et al., 2016:165) non experimental designs are used when doing descriptive research of this nature. Participants that have been selected to take part in the research are measured on all relevant variables of the study. In comparison to the experimental designs where manipulation takes place, no manipulation takes place with non-experimental designs. The method that will be used in this research is that of surveys, both on and offline in order to obtain quantitative information that can be used to describe and explore the study.

### **3.1 Research Design**

The research will take on a non-experimental design method from a positivist approach that makes use of nominal and ordinal scales. Quantitative research will be the priority of this study as the study will be looked at from a scientific approach. According to Wieman, Kruger & Mitchell (7: 2005) the positivist approach opposes that of the an anti – scientific method as it believes that when researching one cannot only look at the strict natural methods of collecting data in order to discover natural human behaviour, which is what the positivist and scientific approach looks at.

According to (Creswell et al., 2017; 86 ) The study will involve a non-experimental research processes known as survey research design methodology, observations and secondary research in order to interpret and describe the response of a selected population of the South African millennial market to the level in which user generated

content has an influence on their decision making process as a consumer. This group will be actively engaged on social media and will fall under generation Y.

The data will be collected from the respondents once, thus making it a cross sectional study. This will be done in order to receive an objective and generalised outcome in which the results will be represented in numerical data, expressed and articulated in the form of graphs and charts. A nominal measurement theory will be used as each respondent will be placed in a category within which distinguishes them based on the attribute being measured (Wieman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005).

### **3.2 Sampling**

The research population will comprise of people between the ages of 18 - 34 years olds (Millennials) who have used and currently use social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.). The study will survey a large pool of mixed, employed and unemployed individuals of different races and genders. A multi-stage sampling method will be used in that the sample size has been narrowed to that of the Western Cape, Cape Town, CBD in order to ensure accessibility thus also using a convenience sampling method.

Cluster sampling will also be a priority in this study in order to segment the Western Cape into one accessible geographical area, which is the central business district within Cape Town. A variety of social media marketing agencies will also be randomly contacted via a telephone and in the final stage, once telephonic approval has been obtained; systematic sampling will be used, whereby every third millennial respondent is invited to participate voluntarily in the survey within the aforementioned organizations.

### **3.3 Validity and reliability**

According to Marree et al (2016: 165) validity is defined as the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in a quantitative study. The measurement ensures that the questions in the survey provide for a basis that ensures that the answer given is relevant to the study being done. Reliability is thus the second measure of quality within a quantitative study (Twycross & Heale, 2015). This measures the effectiveness of the instrument, basically the extent to which the instrument produces the same results.

This study will make use of predictive validity as it is appropriate for a quantitative study that will make use of non-experimental methods using online and offline survey questionnaires to be answered by millennials and social media agencies in the CBD of Cape Town in order to dissect whether or not the social media activity of their peers, friends and family has an effect on their purchasing decisions. According to (Tycross & Heale, 2015) this method of validity shows high correlations with future criterions. For example, a respondent that states that positive online referrals play a huge role in her deciding to support a brand would predict that the likelihood of her supporting a particular brand. A pilot study will also be done in order to enhance the validity and reliability of the study.

### **3.4 Research instrument and data collection**

One standardized survey will be used to collect the data; in the survey there will be a question that answers one of each of the three attitudinal responses (cognitive, affective and behavioural). The surveys will be used to collect and accumulate the data and responses on a face-to-face basis as well as online. The purpose of the research will be to explain to the respondents by administering the surveys face-to-face as well as online, while obtaining the necessary consent. The surveys will not only be limited to self-administration as it can be completed without the aid of the researcher, and all of the questions will be standardized. This administration method allows for more accurate answers, since respondents are able to request assistance if they do not understand any of the questions, as well as completeness, since the fieldworker is able to immediately scan the questionnaire once it has been returned (Birn, 2004; De Vos et al., 2011).

### **3.5 Pilot Study**

A pilot study will be conducted on the surveys that will be distributed to millennials in the Cape Town CBD in order to ensure validity and reliability. The questions will be run past an independent source in order to ensure to measure the feasibility of the survey. It is only once approved that they will be distributed. Furthermore the study will ensure that the questions are not manipulated and that the questions are easily understandable and are measuring what needs to be measured.

### 3.6 Data Analysis Method

The quantitative data collected from the Cape Town CBD millennials that use social media will be analysed via descriptive statistics, where data will be described and summarised in a meaningful way in order to identify patterns that might emerge from the data, but do not allow the researcher to make conclusions beyond the data that has been analysed. This is done with both measures of central tendency and measures of spread in order to ensure the interpretations are unbiased and untampered (Lund & Lund, 2013).

### 3.7 Ethical Issues

According to The research Ethics Guidebook (2017) there are six fundamental principles the researcher needs to adhere to and practice before amidst conducting the study;

- Transparency: The researcher needs to make aware all of the respondents the intent and purpose of the research, the procedures to be followed as well as the risk in participating with the study.
- Confidentiality: The researcher needs to respect the anonymity and confidentiality of each respondent.
- Consent: This makes reference to the researcher attaining informed consent to conduct the study and ensuring that each participant is a voluntary one and not one that is forced to participate against their own will.
- No harm: the researcher must avoid harming the participants in any manner
- Quality: The researcher needs to maintain the quality and integrity of the research
- The researcher can show that the research is independent and impartial

Mc Millan and Schumacher (2001) also highlight the importance of adhering to the ethical guidelines in the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria and the Professional Board for Psychology.

With that said the ethical issues that could be expected during the course of this study is customer sensitivity towards brands that are used as an example in the study as a result of personal experiences and/ or religious purposes. The consumers could also be sensitive to sharing information around their personal

online activity and as a result will have those requests respected. Social media agencies may also be apprehensive in sharing their views and opinions as they may not want to divulge too much information to potential competition.

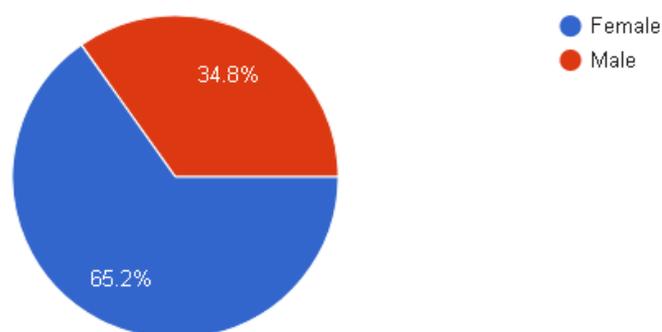
Consent will be obtained from all participants prior to having them engage in the study and consent forms will be given to respective managers at social media agencies should those be required to assess the legitimacy and privacy of their information. Participation will be voluntary and all questionnaires will be anonymous.

## Chapter 4: Research Findings & Interpretation of findings

This chapter entails the findings extracted from the primary data captured. The research conducted took a quantitative approach in the form of non-experimental designs when looking into the behavioural patterns of millennial consumers in Cape Town CBD. No manipulation took place within this non experimental design. 140 surveys were distributed both online and via self-administration around the Cape Town CBD area. Of the 140 respondents, 1 respondent did not have any social media accounts, thus making his responses null and void. The findings are described and illustrated in graphical graph, pie chart and histogram format in order to effectively present the research findings.

### 1. Please indicate your gender

138 responses



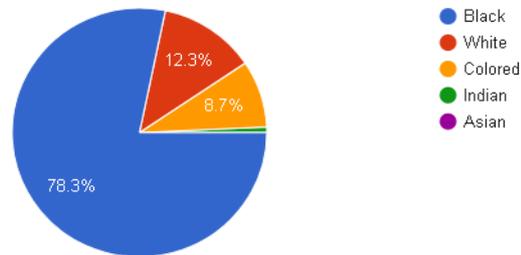
#### 4.1 Figure A: Gender Indication

Millennial respondents were asked to indicate their gender between two options, male or female. Out of a sample of 140 respondents 65, 2% indicated that they were females, whereas the remaining 34, 8% were males. This statistic indicates that the majority of the study will be that of the opinion of female millennial consumers based in Cape Town CBD.

Female	90	<b>65.2%</b>
Male	48	<b>34.8%</b>

#### 2. Please indicate your race

138 responses



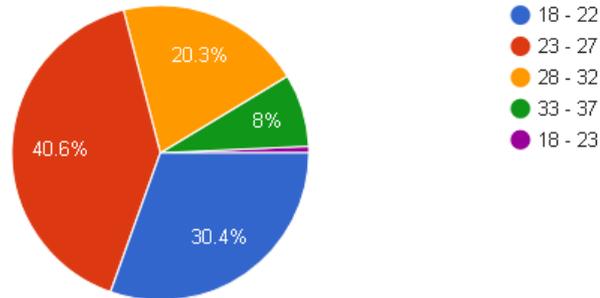
#### 4.2 Figure B: Race Indication

After having been asked to indicate their race. The majority of the respondents indicated that they were black, comprising of 78, 3%, 12, 3 % of the respondents stated that they were white, 8, 7% were coloured and the minority were Indians at 0, 7%. This was necessary in order to understand and dissect the differences in behavioural choices amongst different racial groups.

Black	108	<b>78.3%</b>
White	17	<b>12.3%</b>
Colored	12	<b>8.7%</b>
Indian	1	<b>0.7%</b>
Asian	0	<b>0%</b>

### 3. How old are you?

138 responses



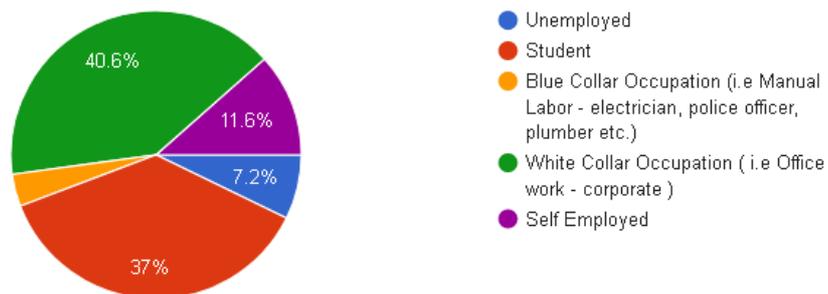
#### 4.3 Figure C: Age Indication

Figure C indicates the age of all the respondents in order to ensure that they lie within the age bracket of millennials (18 – 35). The majority of the respondents lie between the ages 23 - 27 and this bracket comprised of 40, 6 %of the respondents. This indicates that the highest percentage of respondents comprises of the youngest bracket of millennials.

18 – 22	43	<b>31.2%</b>
23 – 27	56	<b>40.6%</b>
28 – 32	28	<b>20.3%</b>
33 – 37	11	<b>8%</b>

### 4. What do you do for a living?

138 responses



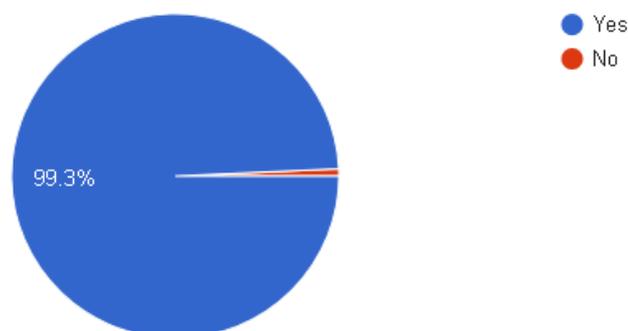
#### Figure 4.4 Figure D: Employment Description

Figure D indicates what the millennial respondents do for a living. 40, 6% of the respondents indicated that they had white collar occupations (i.e corporate jobs), whereas a minimum of 3,5% stated that they had blue collar occupations. This question is important to establish millennial consumers LSM position as well as their lifestyle and consumption habits.

Unemployed	10	<b>7.2%</b>
Student	51	<b>37%</b>
Blue Collar Job	5	<b>3.6%</b>
White Collar Job	56	<b>40.6%</b>
Self-employed	16	<b>11.6%</b>

#### 5. Do you have social media accounts?

138 responses



#### 4.5 Figure E: Social Media Presence

In order to understand whether social media is influential in the millennial consumers' decision making process. Respondents were asked whether or not they have a social media presence/ social media accounts. Of the 138 respondents, 137 respondents said that they have social media accounts and only one respondent said that they do not have social media accounts. This indicates that these

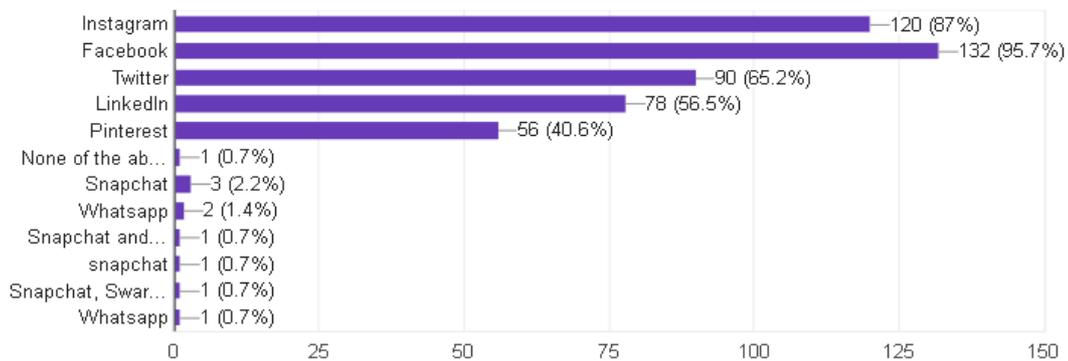
consumers can be accessed and reached on social media as 99,3% of them can be found online.

Yes 137 **99.3%**

No 1 **0.07%**

#### 6. Please indicate which social media accounts you are on

138 responses

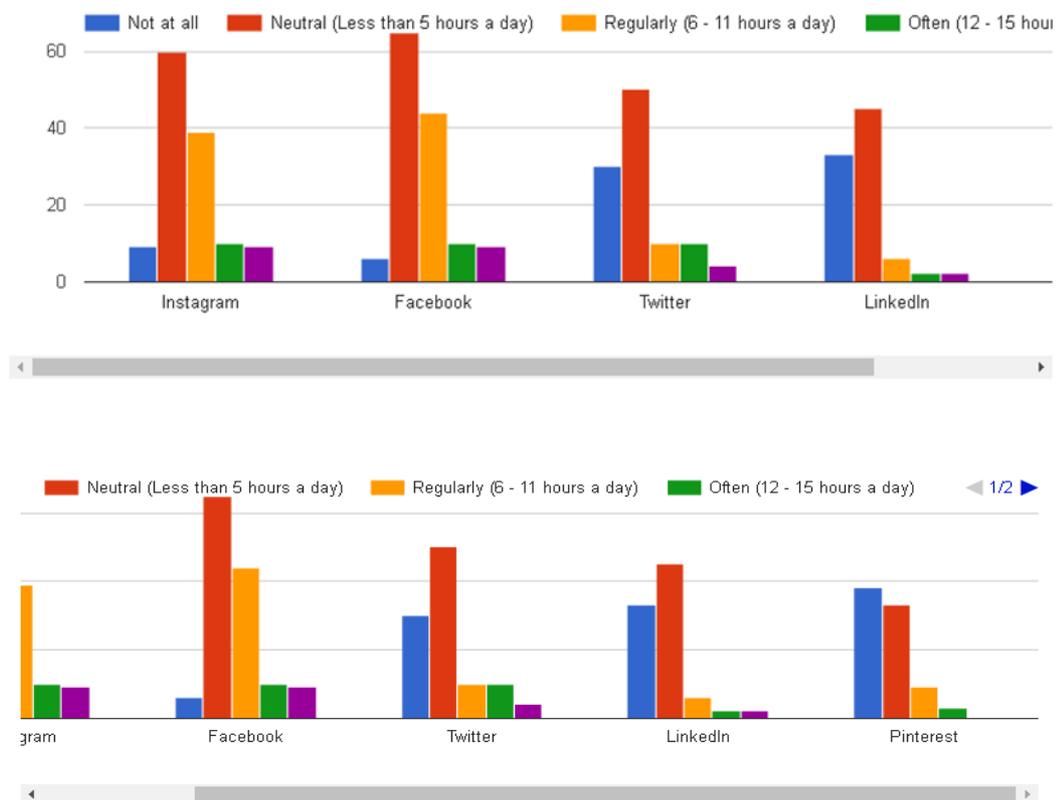


#### 4.6 Figure F: Social media accounts CBD Millennials are on

Figure F illustrates precisely the social media accounts the CBD millennials can be found on. After having been asked which social media accounts they have, majority of the respondents stated that they have Facebook with the application comprising of 96.7% of the millennial respondents, second to Facebook was Instagram taking up 87% and twitter came third on the ranks at 65.2%. This indicates that the most popular and influential social media application used by this generation is Facebook.

Instagram	120	<b>87%</b>
Facebook	132	<b>95.7%</b>
Twitter	90	<b>65.2%</b>
LinkedIn	78	<b>56.5%</b>
Pinterest	56	<b>40.6%</b>
Other (i.e WhatsApp, Snapchat etc. )	9	<b>6.5%</b>

## 7. How often do you use these social media platforms



### 4.7 Figures G: Social Media Usage

Figure G illustrates the social media usage of the respondents. The bar graph states that majority of the respondents use Instagram on a neutral basis, meaning they are on the application for less than 5 hours a day. Facebook and Instagram are at an equal percentage as the most used applications by these millennials.

#### 4.7.1 Instagram

- Not at all 9 respondents
- Neutral (>5hrs) 60 respondents
- Regularly (6 - 11hrs) 39 respondents
- Often (12 – 15hrs) 10 respondents

- Quite Often (<16hrs) 9 respondents

#### 4.7.2 Facebook

- Not at all 6 respondents
- Neutral (>5hrs) 65 respondents
- Regularly (6 - 11hrs) 44 respondents
- Often (12 – 15hrs) 10 respondents
- Quite Often (<16hrs) 9 respondents

#### 4.7.3 Twitter

- Not at all 30 respondents
- Neutral (>5hrs) 50 respondents
- Regularly (6 - 11hrs) 10 respondents
- Often (12 – 15hrs) 10 respondents
- Quite Often (<16hrs) 4 respondents

#### 4.7.4 LinkedIn

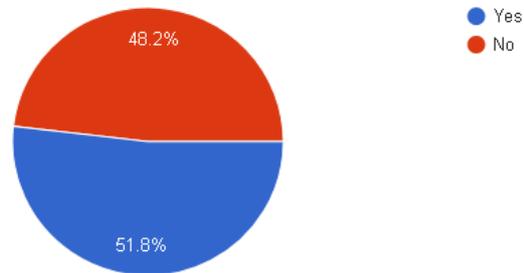
- Not at all 33 respondents
- Neutral (>5hrs) 45 respondents
- Regularly (6 - 11hrs) 6 respondents
- Often (12 – 15hrs) 2 respondents
- Quite Often (<16hrs) 2 respondents

#### 4.7.5 Pinterest

- Not at all 38 respondents
- Neutral (>5hrs) 33 respondents
- Regularly (6 - 11hrs) 9 respondents
- Often (12 – 15hrs) 3 respondents
- Quite Often (<16hrs) 0 respondents

8. Do social media advertisements effectively entice you to purchase products or services?

137 responses



**4.8 Figure H: Social media advertisement enticement**

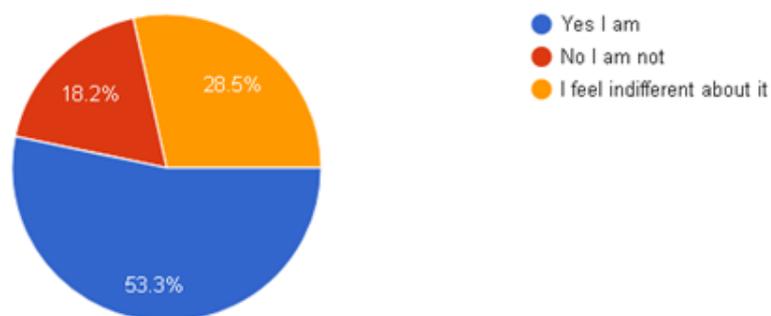
The next question was whether or not social media advertisements effectively do their job and entice the millennial consumer to purchase a product or service. Majority of the respondents (51.6%) stated that social media advertisements do effectively entice them to purchase products or services. The remaining 48.2% stated that these advertisements do not effectively entice them to buy a product or service.

Yes 66 **47.8%**

No 72 **52.17%**

9. Are you more inclined to trust brands with a higher social media presence than those without one?

137 responses



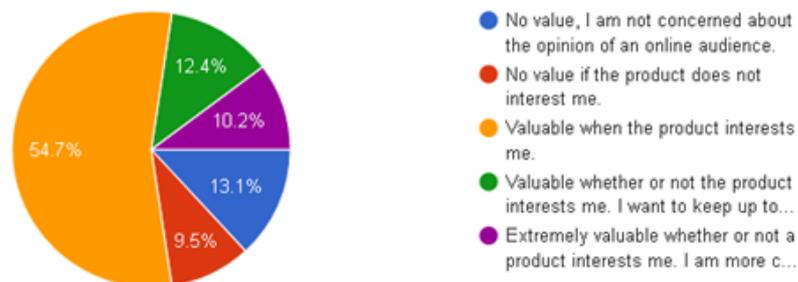
#### 4.9 Figure I: Supporting brands with a social media presence

Figure I illustrate the question posed to the respondents of whether they are more inclined to support a brand with a higher social media presence. The majority of the respondents said yes they would at 53.3%, the minority sat at 18.2% saying they are not inclined to support a brand with a higher social media presence and the rest of the 28.5% stated that they felt indifferent about this. This question was important as it assisted in stating whether or not it is relevant for brands to have a significant social media presence in order to gain traction and support from this target audience.

Yes I am	73	<b>53.3%</b>
No I am not	39	<b>28.5%</b>
I feel indifferent about it	25	<b>18.2%</b>

#### 10. What role does social media affirmation play when it comes to making a purchasing decision?

137 responses



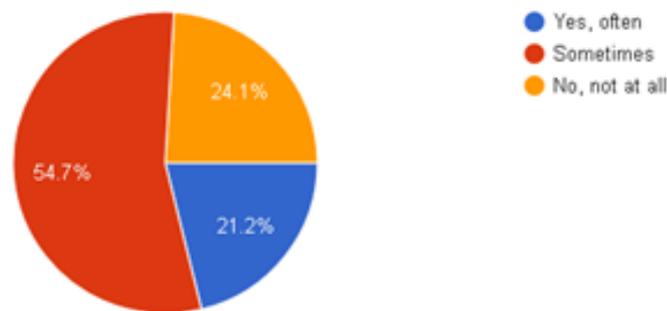
#### 4.10 Figure J: The role of social media affirmation to the purchasing decision of a CBD millennial

Figure J demonstrates the results of the question of whether social media affirmation is important to the respondents when it comes to making a purchasing decision. Majority of the respondents found social media affirmation valuable only when the product is of interest to them. These respondents comprised of 54.7% of the respondents. Second to this response at 13.1% millennial consumers found social media affirmation useless as they are not concerned with the opinion of an online audience. This illustrates that social media plays a big role in influencing the purchasing decision of a millennial consumer based in the CBD area of Cape Town.

No value I am not interested in the opinion of an online audience	18	<b>13.1%</b>
No value if the product does not interest me	13	<b>9.5%</b>
Valuable when the product interests me	74	<b>54.7%</b>
Valuable whether or not the product interests me I want to be updated with modern trends	17	<b>12.4%</b>
Extremely valuable whether or not the product interests me, I am more concerned about the		
Positive connotations that come with purchasing a popular product	14	<b>10.2%</b>

### 11. Do you purchase goods and services online?

137 responses



#### 4.11 Figure K: Do you purchase goods online

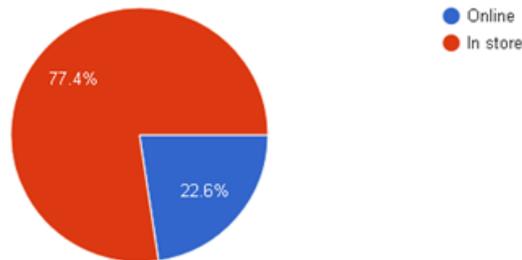
The respondents were asked whether or not they purchase goods and services online. Majority of the respondents state that they shop online occasionally (sometimes – 54.7%). 24.1% of the respondents stated that they do not shop online at all and 21.2% said yes they shop online often. Although a convenient way of shopping, millennials in Cape Town CBD do not value the benefits of online shopping as depicted by the results in figure K.

Yes often	29	<b>21.2%</b>
Sometimes	33	<b>54.7%</b>

No not at all            75        **24.1%**

**12. How do you prefer making your purchases?**

137 responses



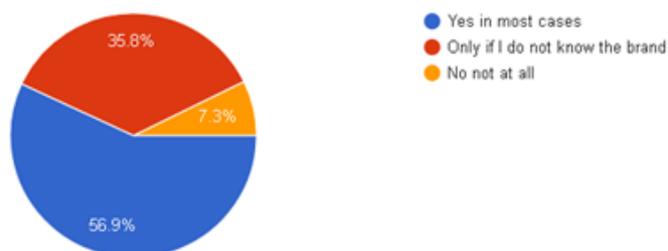
**4.12 Figure L: Purchase preference**

In addition to the previous question the respondents were asked what their preferred choice of purchasing is and majority of the respondents whom were black females and ranged between the ages 23 – 37 stated that they preferred in store shopping (77.4%) as opposed to online shopping (22.6%). This could be as a result of the credit card prerequisite that comes with shopping online. Many black millennial consumers fear credit card debt and would rather not own credit cards (Williams, 2008: 52).

In store	106	<b>77.4%</b>
Online	31	<b>22.6%</b>

**13. Before purchasing an item (whether online or in store) do you find it important to first review the item?**

137 responses



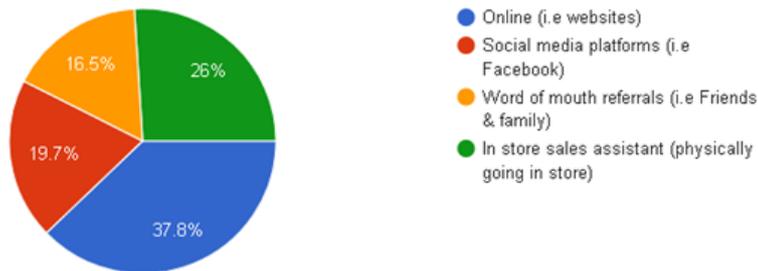
#### 4.13 Figure M: Review Items

Figure M illustrates whether millennials in CBD area find it important to first review products/services before purchasing them. Majority of the respondents said yes in most cases it is important to review items before buying them (56.9%). 35.8% of the respondents said only if they do not know the brand and the remaining 7.3% said no not at all.

Yes in most cases	78	<b>56.9%</b>
Only if I do not know the brand	49	<b>35.8%</b>
No not at all	10	<b>7.3%</b>

#### 14. If yes, how do you prefer to conduct your product review?

127 responses

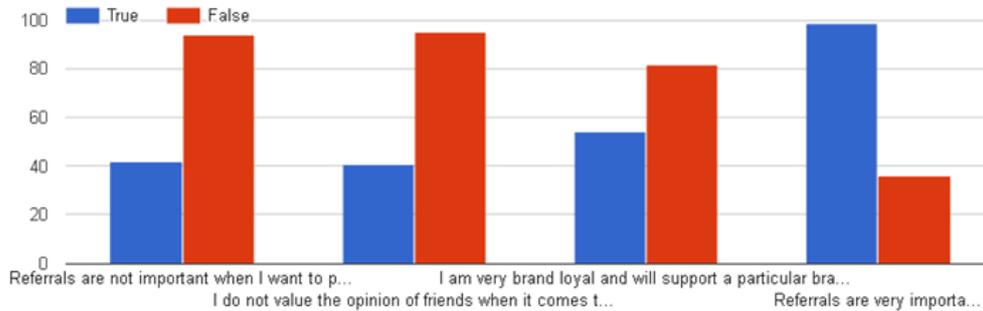


#### 4.14 Figure N: How do you conduct your reviews?

Following the previous question, if the respondents answered yes to question 13, they were asked to proceed to answer question 14 whereby the question of how they preferred to conduct their product/ service reviews. The majority of the respondents stated that they preferred conducting online reviews (37.8%), 26% of the respondents said they preferred to conducted reviews in store with sales assistants, 19.7% of the respondents stated that they go to social media for reviews and 16.5% of the respondents stated that word of mouth reviews are their preference.

Online	48	<b>37.8%</b>
Social Media	25	<b>19.7%</b>
In store	33	<b>26%</b>
WOM	21	<b>16.5%</b>

15. Please respond to the following statements with a mere true or false



**4.15 Figure 0: True/ False Statements**

In closing off the survey, respondents were asked to respond with either a true or false to four statements. In doing so it was found that majority of the respondents (99 respondents) found referrals very important when they want to purchase a product/ service. It was also found that majority of these millennials are brand loyal and would still support a brand in their favour if it had bad referrals (82 respondents). In closing 95 respondents of the 138 stated that they value the opinion of their friends when making a purchasing decision.

Referrals are not important when I want to purchase a product or service.

**True** 44 respondents

**False** 94 respondents

I do not value the opinion of friends when it comes to making purchasing decisions.

**True** 42 respondents

**False** 96 respondents

I am very brand loyal and will support a particular brand whether or not it has negative reviews.

**True** 55 respondents

**False** 83 respondents

Referrals are very important when I want to purchase a product/ service.

**True**            99 respondents

**False**           36 respondents

#### **4.16 Conclusion of research findings**

The results of the online surveys to millennial consumers based in Cape Town CBD shows that Facebook and Instagram are the most valuable social media applications to this generation. As a result brands need to ensure that they have an existing presence on these platforms if they want to adequately target this audience. Brands need allow for fluid interactions and online conversations between the brand and consumer. Furthermore as a brand, the importance of having an online presence allows consumers to easily interact with the brand and subconsciously build brand ambassadors who will without effort elevate the brand equity of the business through positive electronic “word of mouth”.

The online survey that was used to explore consumer behaviour in the context of the web and social media affirmation influence stated that Facebook is simultaneously the most downloaded and highest activity rated social media platform, with Instagram at second place and Twitter at third. This is an indicator of what applications brand should focus their digital content on when speaking to generation Y consumers. The research also shows that over 50% of the respondents indicated that social media advertisements are effective in successfully enticing them to purchase products or services and in correlation with this a high number of respondents stated that they tend to trust brands with a higher social media presence, more than those without one. This is an important finding as it reiterates the importance of brand social media presence. According to (Habibi, Laroch & Richard, 2013) a brands social media presence allows the brand to foster meaningful relationships with its consumers and through taking the perspective of the brand community building plus the brand trust and loyalty literatures it I found that it has a positive on a consumers level of brand loyalty as through social media they have an open and “friendly” relationship with the brand. Through social media brand promotion companies need to be weary of being overly invasive as that could leave a sour taste in the consumers’ mouth post interacting with the brand. User

Generated Content that allows the consumer to communicate with the brand is not widely used within the sample, but is still an effective engagement tool that the brand can use to connect with consumers. In context of social media affirmation, a vast majority of the respondents stated that social media affirmation from their online community is important. The respondents stated that they value the affirmation of this community, especially when a product is of interest to them. This finding highlights the importance of referrals, not only from close family and friends, but from the online community of the millennial consumer. However although this generation is found to be technologically savvy, majority of the respondents stated that they still prefer the in store shopping experience over the online shopping experience. This highlights the necessity or brands to effectively target consumers online with the intent of getting them to walk into their stores. Brands need to establish brand equity and awareness that is strong enough to have the consumer find it a necessity to go in store and purchase their product or service. When it came to product reviews, majority of the respondents found that in most cases it is important to review products online via their websites as opposed to asking family and friends what they think of the product. This finding reinstates the fact that once a consumer has made up their mind, the only way they can be steered away from making the purchase is if the brand is at fault. A brand could be at fault in various ways, one of many is if the navigation process of their online website is difficult to manoeuvre or through bad customer service. Brands need to ensure that they maintain good relationships with potential customers through exceptional customer service and good customer retention processes.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion & Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

In this study, the degree to which CPT millennial consumers in the CBD rely on social media when making purchasing decisions is uncovered and described. Information was gathered on social media platforms, face to face and through email form in order to capture data from a range of millennial consumers in the Cape Town CBD area. The principles of transparency, confidentiality, consent, no harm and quality were adhered to through making sure that all respondents knew the intent and purpose of the research, the anonymity of all respondents was maintained and consent received prior to having respondents participate in the survey fill out. Furthermore no harm was implicated on any of the participants and they were all made aware that the research was independent and impartial (Mc Millan and Schumacher, 2001).

The study unpacked which social media platform was being used the most by this audience, as well as the relevance of social media as a platform to share and receive information on reviewed products and services. Additional topics unpacked included the rise of social media marketing, online millennial consumer behaviour, on line shopping in the context of millennials, the rise of feedback online which correlates with online reviews and electronic word of mouth, the connect (or lack thereof) of social media and virtual reality verses social media. Further information in the form of secondary research was also collected in order to thoroughly understand the subject.

The online distribution of surveys made for the reach of a target audience that was based in the CBD but were preoccupied with work or other activities during the self-administration phase around the CBD. Accessibility played a huge role within the study. Respondents were asked a variety of questions, and the results were as follows: all respondents, but one had social media accounts, majority of the respondents used Facebook and Instagram often while twitter and LinkedIn were accounts that they looked at on an occasional basis. More than half of the millennial consumers stated that social media advertisements work well at effectively enticing them to purchase a product or service. Consumers' were attracted to social media

platforms for many reasons but majority of the respondents found that they were more trusting of brands with a higher social media presence than those without one or a lower social media presence, this effectively answered the secondary research in question and further highlighted the statement in the literature review made by Forest (2017) that when comparing the impact of online versus offline touch-points that create the first trigger moment, it is found that at least one offline channel is effective to consumers as a source of initial awareness, but the rest are online channels. When it came to social media affirmation from their online community, majority of the respondents mentioned that this becomes a beneficial factor once the product is of interest to them. Similarly to the literature, research studies have found that consumers were most likely to post feedback directly to sellers' websites, followed by posts on Facebook and then lastly on a manufacturers or the brands websites. This emphasises the importance and rise in relevance of sharing feedback and reviews on online platforms. In correlation with giving and receiving reviews, the study and literature found the similarity that consumers value the opinion and minor input of their social media community when making purchasing decisions as it gives them a level of comfort in the purchasing decision that they have made (Forest, 2017). The study further established how important buying goods online verses buying them in store and the research showed that millennial consumers still enjoy purchasing their goods in the physical store as opposed to using the online web platforms which was cohesive with the literature study stating millennials are less likely to purchase goods online compared to their older counterparts as many do not have credit cards yet (Moore, 2012). Contrary to that they still preferred to conduct their reviews online as opposed to physically going in store and having the sales assistant educate them about the product or service in question. Similarly the literature conducted explains that the eCommerce industry is still relatively new and small in a South African context and thus e-commerce takes up a small percentage of total retail spending (Forest 2017). *"Retailers' strategies need to continue to evolve to attract customers into their stores and to compete with online retailers opening their own physical outlets"* (Forest, 2017). This highlights the fact that consumers have become smarter and are now spoilt for choice. They understand the value of the online interweb and thoroughly understand the role that the sales assistant plays in the purchasing process. Brands need to ensure that they have a unique selling point and unique brand identity that stands out within all of the

competitive noise. In a business context, the consumer-brand relationship is an important factor that every business, brand and organisation needs to have in order to retain customer and brand loyalty, both on and off line. By creating a sense of belonging through a community a consumer can engage and connect with the brands that are familiar to them. This can be done through social media networks, as the consumer of today are constantly receiving and giving information digitally

This research paper has described this degree of millennial consumers in Cape Town CBD s that of being heavily reliant on social media when making purchasing decisions as majority of their days are spent on these social media platforms, thus creating a community and online friendship that they trust and are accountable for as per the literature. Millennial consumers who responded to this study stated that social media becomes an important referral and/ or affirmation platform when a product or service of interest is in question. This states that their purchasing decision will be influenced by the outcome of the social media response they receive online. This highlights the amount of pressure placed on business organisations to impress consumers on and offline.

#### **5.1.1 Research limitations/implications**

Only a small percentage of the variance is explained by the constructs due to its intentional simplicity and geographical limitations. This would indicate that there are more actors in motivating information adoption than solely information usefulness. A closer look should be taken at the effectiveness of some of the other motivational factors suggested in previous research studies on similar topics.

#### **5.1.2 Practical implications**

The paper outlines ways to effectively promote one's business or cause through online customer communities, as well as general tips for brands to explore the social media and online route, in addition to that the paper encourages businesses to improve their online content in order to effectively market to the Cape Town CBD millennial target market.

### 5.1.3 Originality/value

This paper is one of the first to develop and empirically test a social media reliance adoption theory in context of the millennial consumer in the CBD area in Cape Town. It uniquely breaks down and tests the components of argument quality to discern the important motivating social media factors that entice a millennial consumer to make or change their mind when making a purchasing decision. Recommendations are thus provided for brands to effectively target the millennial consumer in Cape Town CBD. Further secondary research will have to be conducted to propose a best practice guide or steps to follow for brands to be successful on social media networks.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Information collected from both the literature review and primary data were analysed to spot key points of interest and discussion, to identify what is necessary in enhancing a brands social media presence while simultaneously growing the consumer brand relationship. This will enable recommendations to be made as to how social media can best be used in order to strengthen the consumer-brand relationship, creating value for both the brand and the consumer as well as how brands can effectively reach and target millennial consumers based in Cape Town CBD area.

The key points include the correlation between social media being used as a social hub and a business point of contact. Businesses and consumers have different opinions of the use of user generated content and social media platforms in the context of a brand. Consumers find social media incredibly helpful when making purchasing decisions whereas business look at social media USG as an inexpensive marketing tool. Contrary to that the literature review highlights the importance of both user generated content and social media in marketing and advertising to millennials on an international scale. User generated content is also seen as valuable as it affects perceptions and influences brand communication. This indicates that South African brands may need to critically evaluate the effectiveness of their current UGC and make more use of it, which may influence South African millennial consumers to make use of UGC and create brands that listen and engage with their consumers. This may in turn result in more positive comments and reviews to be created to strengthen the consumer-brand relationship and fewer negatives to be commented on by consumers. Brand experts do not look at other brands as best practices because they feel resources and budgets will not be the same. However, it is recommended that brands can learn and adapt from each other, even if they are not in the same category or industry.

As reflected on the literature review and research, consumers and brands both make use of Facebook the most, as it is the platform with the most frequency and behaviour in terms of usage. This is an essential start when starting to create a presence on social media. The next most used social media platforms to consider are the popular networks Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest. Depending on

the type of brand and the message that is desired to be sent, these additional social media networks can be used.

Use of content marketing, which is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience and to drive customer action (Content Marketing Institute, 2015), needs to be relevant to the brand's audience by looking at customer insights on how consumers react on specific platforms, and reacting appropriately. A thorough social media analysis can be conducted by a brand and monitor the majority of the target markets behaviour, influences and likes.

Brands should make use of social media to address issues should consumers have an issue with the brand. They should avail the consumers with an open and transparent platform for communication, brands need to be quick with their responses and ensure that customers are always satisfied so as to ensure positive reviews on social media platforms as opposed to comments that would hurt the brand.

Brands on social media can also make use of advertisements, whether paid or unpaid, to promote their brand, culture, values, and products. Research collected showed that consumers are effectively enticed by social media advertisements to purchase products or services, however, brands need to be careful they are not bombarding the consumer with too much information or too frequent advertisements, therefore not being overly invasive on their personal social media accounts. This topic can be researched further in order to establish consumer preferences with regards to social media advertisements.

The ultimate goal in the consumer-brand relationship on social media is to create brand ambassadors and storytellers (Sukoco & Wu, 2010). These consumers display a high brand resonance, which will communicate to others on behalf of the brand, in a positive light, creating conversation, engagement and publicity for the brand, which can be used very effectively in developing and carrying the consumer-brand relationship.

The study does not entail internal decisions made by social media marketing agencies as internal agency would worry that by sharing private business

information, the agency could be subject to scrutiny. The research study has a customer centric approach, thus looking at the research from the perspective of the consumer, making social media agencies a mere secondary resource. The data collected from the study will have both an age and geographical limit. Business organisations such as advertising agencies could conduct internal and confidential research in order to better understand the market in which they are operating in and also to effectively keep themselves up to date with what competition is up to. This will not only make for a concise industry analysis but it will also effectively create a situational analysis that assists in placing the brand on a social media perceptual map in relation to competitor social media activity.

The study conducted has a geographical limitation which is based on factors relating to accessibility accessibility and financing. A study of this nature can be conducted in a broader context in order to establish influential social media activity within a South African, Cape Town or Western Cape Context in order to understand regional social media behaviours and attitudes when it comes to millennials consumer reliance. In addition to that a similar study can be conducted for other generations such as the baby boomers, generation x and the older generations in order to effectively understand the relevance that social media has to them as well as dissect their interaction to digital age acceleration.

Brands in South Africa can make use of these recommendations in order to create a strong brand and social media brand presence amongst the millennial Cape Town CBD consumer in their respective markets and industries. However brands cannot be guaranteed success through solely following the guidelines stipulated in this study, they can only hope to see a positive difference should they follow the guideline.

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