

RESEARCH REPORT

Influence of cheaper smart phone technology on brand communities' consumption of media in South Africa.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	2
List of Figures.....	4
1. INTRODUCTION	6
1.1 Academic problem setting.....	6
1.2 Rationale.....	6
1.3 Problem Statement.....	7
1.4 Research Questions.....	8
1.4.1 Primary Research Questions.....	8
1.4.2 Sub-Research Questions.....	8
1.5 Research Objectives.....	8
2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS	8
2.1 Literature Review.....	9
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	15
3.1 Paradigm.....	15
3.2 Research Design.....	16
3.3 Population.....	17
3.3.1 Unit of analysis.....	17
3.3.2 Target and Accessible Population.....	17
3.3.3 Population Parameters.....	18
3.4 Sampling.....	18
3.4.1 Non-Probability Sampling.....	18
3.4.2 Sampling Method.....	18
3.4.3 Sample Size.....	18
3.5 Data Collection Methods.....	18
3.6 Data Analysis Method.....	19
4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	20

4.1 Data Analysis.....	20
4.2 Findings: Survey.....	21
4.3 Findings: Interviews.....	31
4.4 Discussion of Findings.....	35
5 CONCLUSIONS.....	37
5.1 Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness.....	37
5.2 Anticipated Limitations of the Study.....	37
5.3 Anticipated Contributions of the Study.....	38
5.4 Ethical Considerations.....	38
5.5 Implications of Findings and the Final Conclusion.....	39
REFERENCE LIST.....	41
APPENDIX A: ONLINE SURVEY.....	43

List of Figures

Figure 4.1 Age of respondents.....	21
Figure 4.2 Gender of respondents.....	22
Figure 4.3 Brand engagement on social media.....	23
Figure 4.4 Social media engagement times per day.....	24
Figure 4.5 Social media sites brand interaction.....	25
Figure 4.6 Importance of social media pages for brands.....	26
Figure 4.7 Brand trust for traditional mediums.....	27
Figure 4.8 Cheaper smartphones and brand engagement on social media.....	28
Figure 4.9 Consumer perceptions of brand activity on social media.....	29
Figure 4.10 Purchase from brands with social media.....	30

Abstract:

Understanding the influence of cheaper, smartphone technology on the media consumption of the mass market of tomorrow is essential for brands interested in building brand loyalty and trust in South Africa. The study will identify important aspects as to why effective social media engagement is necessary for brands interested in developing and engaging with the consumers of brand communities in South Africa. The study aims to provide brands with information on what consumers are doing with cheaper, smartphone technology, and how this presents an opportunity for brands to build trust and loyalty with the mass market in a meaningful way.

Previous literature on brand communities, loyalty and trust indicates that the mass market is still forgotten by brands, due to a lack of understanding into the opinions and needs of this market. Social media is also highlighted as a keystone area in the building of brand loyalty and trust, as constructive and meaningful engagement by brands in this space strengthens the brand-consumer relationship.

This study utilised a mixed method research methodology. The collection of quantitative data was carried out by using Google Forms, in an online survey, distributed across a Facebook forum for students in the Western Cape. The qualitative data was collect by interviews from the sample.

The most significant insights involve the recommendations that consumers have given to brands. The insights aim to provide brands that intent to communicate with consumers on social media, with areas of concern and opportunities for building brand loyalty and trust. A common feature amongst respondents involved the confirmation that cheaper, smartphone technology will provide increased accessibility to social media. This places increased importance on the opportunities for brands to engage with, build loyalty and trust with the mass market of tomorrow.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on the influence of cheaper smartphone technology on brand communities' media consumption in South Africa. The influence of this in respect to building brand loyalty and trust on social media in South Africa has been an unexplored topic previously.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 ACADEMIC PROBLEM SETTING

The power of the internet and social media has altered the way brands influence and engage with consumers in South Africa. Increasingly large amounts of young South Africans are able to access social media sites every day and are exposed to social media based brand communities' due to cheaper smartphone technology. The influx of cheaper smartphone technology and thus accessibility to brand communities on the social media sphere therefore highlights a crucial need to understand the media consumption of the LSM 3-5 range for consumers in South Africa among the ages of 18-24.

The main problem in the proposed study is to find out how the cheaper smartphone technology has influenced media consumption amongst the lower LSM ranges between 3-5 and how this impacts on a brands brand community. The impact on a brands brand community will also be assessed due to the cheaper smartphone technologies influence on social media based brand communities. A critical aspect of this study involves identifying the influence of the cheaper smartphone technology on the brand trust and loyalty of brands active on the social media sphere amongst consumers aged 18-24. The influence on brand trust and loyalty will attempt to help identify the importance of brands in South Africa maintaining social media based brand communities. In the face of the influence that cheaper smartphone technology could potentially have in keeping brands connected with the less economically wealthy and growing new market of young consumers.

The problem of Building a strong and meaningful brand community lies at the core of a modern brand, thus identifying how the cheaper smartphone technology is influencing this is vital for a 21st century South African brand looking to foster a strong brand community on social media, that increases brand loyalty and trust.

1.2 RATIONALE

The research topic was selected in order to highlight the growing importance of brand communities on the social media spheres due to the increasing accessibility of cheaper smartphone technology for young and previously disadvantaged South Africans. Disadvantaged youth between the ages of 18-24 comprise a significant market of roughly 20% of South Africa's population (UNFPA.org, 2011).

The study is relevant because it allows brands in South Africa a distinct insight into the effects of cheaper smartphone technologies and the impacts on the poorer youth who are now able to engage with brands and their brand communities online. Traditionally brands appealed to the lower LSM markets via traditional communication channels, however this cheaper smartphone technology opens up opportunities for brands to interact with lower LSM markets. The research was selected to examine ways in which brands can leverage this cheaper smartphone technology to increase trust and build loyalty. New knowledge will be generated that highlights the influence of cheaper

smartphone technologies on brand communities and therefore brand trust and loyalty amongst the LSM 3-5 range and between the ages of 18-24.

Cheaper smartphone technology at its core has paved the way for the ownership of smartphones, enabling access to social media at a lower initial cost than before when smartphones would only be associated with the rich and as a luxury product. According to Wired.com (2014) “there were only about 1.9 billion smartphone subscribers at the end of last year. It expects that number to reach 5.9 billion in another five years, fuelled by growth in the developing world”. The influence of this technology is a massive opportunity, especially for consumers in which this could be the first and only screen that allows for interaction on the social media sphere, in instances where there is no electricity, telephone lines or previous experience with internet connections (Wired.com, 2014).

Social media has been gaining increased brand influence in South Africa. Yellowwood (2014), found that there are nearly ten million Facebook users in South Africa, in which 87% access social media through their smartphones. The cheaper smartphone technology means that smartphones are “more widely available across all income levels” and thus marketing to this shift in social media access will be a growing trend in marketing and branding spheres (Yellowwood, 2014).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Research is required to identify the influence of cheaper smartphone technologies on the brand communities in South Africa, in respect to the changing media consumption that cheaper smartphones allow. The influence of this technology therefore needs to be assessed so that brands can make use of and utilize the growing social media based brand communities in terms of gaining brand loyalty and trust amongst the LSM range of 3-5 and between the ages of 18-24.

Cheaper smartphone technology means cheaper smartphones and this means that more young South Africans, previously unable to afford smartphones, can now engage and interact with brands on social media. This new opportunity afforded by technology ultimately offers brands in South Africa with potential access to millions of new, young and socially driven consumers. These consumers are different to their parents and thus provide for a 21st century target audience for brands to engage with on social media, and potentially build brand loyalty and trust amongst consumers who for the first time are finding their online voice.

The purpose of this study is the identification of the influence this new cheaper smartphone technology will have on brand communities in South Africa, in respect to the media consumption and social media based brand communities impact on brand loyalty and trust.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 Primary research question:

Influence of cheaper smart phone technology on brand communities' consumption of media in South Africa?

1.4.2 Sub research questions:

What is the impact of cheaper smart phone technology on brand communities' media consumption within the LSM 3-5 group between the ages of 18-24?

What are people in the LSM 3-5 group between the ages of 18-24 doing with cheaper smartphone alternatives that presents an opportunity to increase brand loyalty and trust?

How can brands adjust their brand message to build brand loyalty and trust with the mass market of the future?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary research objective of this research is:

- To explore how a brands loyalty and trust are influenced by cheaper smartphone technology, as more South African consumers engage with brands on social media, using their alternative smartphones.

The secondary research objectives are:

- To gain an understanding of how brands in general, can use changes in media consumption, to potentially change their brand message, and leverage brand loyalty and trust with the 18-24 year olds, LSM 3-5 mass market consumers.
- To explore what people are doing with their smartphone alternatives, in order to identify any opportunities for brands to increase brand trust and loyalty amongst those who were previously unable to afford smartphones.

2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The theoretical framework I will be utilizing as a lens through which I study the effect of cheaper smartphone technology influence on brand communities' media consumption and the impact on brand trust and brand loyalty will incorporate five theories. The theories involved in my study are social media, brand communities, social media based brand communities, brand trust and brand loyalty.

Social media, according to Safko and Brake (2010:6), "refers to activities, practices, and behaviour among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions

using conversation media". Social media theory takes the idea of a brand only communicating in a top-down fashion away, as it suggests that by involving the online social media consumers in business ideas, promotions and an online community (Arief *et al.*, 2014).

A brand community is defined as a "specialized, non-geographically bound community, and based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand" (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001:412). In a brand community, the point of focus becomes the brand (Rutkauskaite, 2013). According to McAlexander *et al.*, (2002:38), the most significant element of a brand community is the "creation and negotiation of meaning". Thus, brand communities can receive the direct impact of cheaper technology when it comes to becoming a bigger and more conversational brand in 21st century South Africa.

The more recent social media based brand communities, according to Arief *et al.*, (2014:34) refer to how "Brands are now viewed as ongoing social process and brand value is also co-created through network relationships and social interactions". Social media based brand communities are a mixture of both brand communities and the social media aspect. The differentiation in respect to social media based brand communities lies in the fact that a different platform is utilized, according to Laroche *et al.*, (2012:9), the "core platform of social media is Web 2.00 plus User Generated Content". Social media based brand communities carry out the important role of creating relationships, identities and connections between the brands and consumers (Fournier and Avery, 2011).

Brand trust theory is utilized to understand how social media presence can result in a deeper relationship between customers and a brand. The combination of social media use and multiple contact points between daily social media users and brands results in trust (Arief *et al.*, 2014). Trust is an important aspect in regards to building and growing as a brand. Increased trust between a brand and its consumers is vital in bringing about synergy in coherently delivered and received messages that stay true to a meaningful brand identity. Brand trust is important in reducing uncertainty and provides a stable platform for brand growth (Smith, 2014).

The brand loyalty theory is also relevant because it underlies the positive features of engaging with customers. Social media gives a brand the chance to make experiences for the consumer, and be rewarded with customer loyalty (Arief *et al.*, 2014). Brand loyalty can help negate the problems associated with highly competitive markets by; creating a strong barrier to entry for competitors, allowing brands to respond to new competitive threats easier, generating greater levels of revenue and by helping mitigate the branding efforts of competitors (Delgado and Luis, 2001).

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a large body of important literature on themes related to my research topic. The existing literature on the research theme provides a thorough background and understanding of the keystone

topics involved in discerning the influence of cheaper smartphone technology on brand communities' media consumption in South Africa.

The literature is divided into larger themes that inform the study on their particular area but also in relation to the influence of cheaper smartphone technology as a whole. The literature aims to show that the main concepts have been assessed and the main aspects of the study have been covered. The literature review aims to be a synthesis of the relevant literature that can be used as the background to my research that will involve South African consumer perceptions of brand trust and loyalty stemming from the influence of cheaper smartphone technology and its impact on the media consumption of brand communities. Facebook is the primary platform with which social media based brand communities will be assessed as the surveys will be carried out on it.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The advantages of using social network sites such as Facebook are numerous for brands in the 21st century (Laroche *et al.*, 2012). Facebook allows for the ability to foster the growth and expansion of stronger brand communities, brand awareness and brand loyalty by ultimately giving brands a new platform to engage with consumers (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). In respect to building a strong brand, elements that involve strong brand associations, positively reinforced responses and energetic loyalty are crucial (Keller, 2001). In the modern sense, these elements are very important for brands on Facebook, as they help create positive associations and brand awareness on a new personal platform.

According to Yellowwood (2014), society has changed, in respect to South African consumers behaving and thinking differently to the consumers of the past. The important aspect here regards the question of if brands are keeping up with change. The fact that South Africa is a more urbanised country at 63%, is a big indication of the changes involved in the channels of connecting and relating to the consumers (Yellowwood, 2014). The South African consumer is changing, due to increased connections to social media resulting in the democratisation of power and information (Yellowwood, 2014).

The use of traditional channels in the promotion of brands is limited, Facebook allows for the exploration of new, diverse and socio-economically different markets, tying in the 18-24 year olds within the LSM range of 3-5 (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). There are over a billion Facebook users, making it the most popular social networking site (Smith, 2014). The growth of Facebook in South Africa is second to none, with its use by over a quarter of the population at around 13 million people in 2016 (Worldwideworx, 2016). The fundamental change in access to Facebook in South Africa can be accredited to the increase in smartphone use, "smartphones are used by 7,9-million South Africans to access Facebook, while 1,6-million are using basic feature phones to do so" (Worldwideworx.com, 2016). In South Africa over seven million people log into Facebook per day, making it a highly concentrated market of potential consumers (premiumtimesng, 2015). The ability

of Facebook to connect brands with the consumer, ultimately creating virtual communities, of similar minded people, is vital in the growth of a brand in modern South Africa. It is important for brands to make use of the new personal reach and scope given by Facebook, which allows them to talk to consumers directly, in an ever more competitive market (Laroche *et al*, 2012).

Social media and thus Facebook, is made up of three important and interrelated elements; tools, content and communities or networks (Alquist *et al*, 2008). Tools encompass the actual platforms that the communities use to share content and communicate, such as Facebook. The content on Facebook is “user – centric, and focuses on user-generated content” (Rutkauskaite, 2013:12). This helps brands as they can interact with many Facebook users at one time, provoking discussions and brand exposure. Thirdly, there are communities or networks, these refer to the social aspects of social media. The social ties created by social media can be increased due to the fact that brands on Facebook can come into contact with consumers more regularly and in increasingly clever and relatable ways (Rutkauskaite, 2013).

There are some initial goals related to branding and social media networks. In this respect, the initial point of departure involves an assessment of the goals involved in the strategy on social media, in order to bolster the brand in an external and internal sense (Bacik and Nastisin, 2016). Firstly, a membership with the brand must be created. Secondly, the values of the brand must be communicated. Thirdly, encouraging the consumers to engage and promote the brand. Fourthly, the brand can use consumer insight to differentiate the brand to that of competitors. Fifthly, build brand quality perception and use this to increase brand awareness (Yan, 2011). Ultimately, building a connection with brands consumers and encouraging a sense of brand membership is highly necessary in maintaining a strong and meaningful brand relationship on social media.

There are also disadvantages to utilizing social media for brands. Firstly, due to the different personalities of brands that often encompass human attributes, social media use can result in a change of the perception that consumers have regarding that brand (Solis, 2010). In this respect, a synergy is required both online and offline to ensure that the personality of the brand is not malleable. Secondly, the idea of Social Network Fatigue is highlighted as a potential disadvantage to brands utilizing social media (Solis, 2010). The idea of being constantly inundated with brands in all new online spaces takes away from the initial point of creating a relationship with the consumer, and thus can become overwhelming and potentially annoying to consumers. Brands must utilize social media with caution, instead of bombarding consumers with information they do not necessarily need, they must learn to focus on healthy contact points that are engaging and relatable (Solis, 2010). Finally, social media is limiting to brands in respect to the visual confines of the platforms interface (Yan, 2001). Visually, brands are weakened on social media such as Facebook, as they cannot utilise the full transfer of meaningful brand communication that is available offline.

BRAND COMMUNITIES

Facebook acts as a platform that helps facilitate the growth and development of Brand communities. Typical Brand communities exhibit three similar traits; shared consciousness, shared traditions and rituals and a sense of moral responsibility for the group (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Shared consciousness regards the high level of connection felt towards a certain brand and the other members in that brand community (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). This is often reflected in brand loyalty. The shared traditions and rituals basically highlight processes, which socially create the communities meaning and extends past the community in respect to shared experiences and stories (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Finally, the sense of moral responsibility found in a brand community highlights the responsibility of members towards one another, this fosters group cohesion and creates community spirit (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

There are numerous reasons why consumers join certain brand communities. A consumer's belief that a brand resonates with themselves or their belief structure is important, as well as the perception of the type of person one is according to the brands they use or identify with (Laroche *et al.*, 2012). Brand communities also have the ability to gather information about the brand, due to a large customer following that can result in conversations from multiple sources (Szmigin & Reppel, 2001). Brand communities are important for the brands involved as they not only provide information about the brand and help conversation, they can also help with linking the brand to devoted customers who in turn feel more loyalty to the brand and act as brand ambassadors for the company (Laroche *et al.*, 2012; Rutkauskaite, 2013). Innovation is also a potential by product of a strong brand community, as customers who are emotionally or materialistically invested in a brand can help develop new and more consumer related products (Rutkauskaite, 2013). Word of mouth is highly important in driving a brands growth and loyalty, with influential people and voices acting as keystone brand supporters (Rutkauskaite, 2013). Brands, however must be weary of building brand communities that could potentially damage a brands image, as online content is easily accessible and shareable (Maclaran and Catterall, 2002).

The initial brand communities faced a geographic constraint in respect to needing physically present consumers, however brand communities have now adapted to the use of media, which negates this constraint (Rutkauskaite, 2013). Technology has abled brand communities to thrive. The mainstream use of cell-phones and the ease of internet accessibility has allowed brand communities to flourish as brands can easily get information on multiple platforms to more people than ever before (Rutkauskaite, 2013). Social media is therefore crucial in building more powerful and meaningful brand communities, known as social media based brand communities (Rutkauskaite, 2013).

The majority market is still forgotten according to Yellowwood (2014), because the focus is still on "the top end of the consumer pyramid, and is often blind to the needs, cultural markers and preferences of the majority of consumers". Thus, if cheaper smartphone technology influences the

brand communities of brands targeting the previously disadvantaged youth there is a possibility of brands capturing the loyalty and trust of millions of people in South Africa.

SOCIAL MEDIA BASED BRAND COMMUNITIES

The rise of social media has inadvertently lead to the use of social media sites in the building of brand communities online (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Laroche *et al.*, 2012). This new online platform is in its very essence a useful tool in creating these modern brand communities, linking the consumers to the brands and vice versa. The social media based brand communities are important in the modern world of branding as they allow for information to flow from brand consumers of all different language types, nationalities and issues and thus create an environment for brand growth, loyalty and trust (Laroche *et al.*, 2012). Pictures, stories and videos are often overlooked features in the success of social media based brand communities as the different types of media available to the brand consumers help brand engagements become memorable, funny or interesting.

Online communities that engage in the sharing of media as the primary purpose of the community are highly influential on consumers, due to the fact that there is not a commercial undertone (Laroche *et al.*, 2012). The reason for this stems from the original use of traditional media as a one-way relationship between the brand and consumer, creating passive consumption compared to the active contribution of consumers on social media based brand communities (Laroche *et al.*, 2012). Social media based brand communities are thus shaped by the very nature of content generation by users of social media, that influences and reinforces the power of social media based brand communities on consumer perceptions of brands (Laroche *et al.*, 2012). These social media based brand communities form an integral part of where South African brand relationships are going, as technology influences who can connect, and inevitable will change the conversation towards the previously disadvantaged youths apart of the LSM ranging from 3-5 and between the ages of 18-24.

Value is thus created and increased by embracing a large body of information that ordinarily would not be available for brands in respect to cheaper smartphone technology, creating insights and trends that are essentially made up of a brands consumer's perceptions and feelings towards what the influence of cheaper smartphone technology will be. The importance of increased social media based brand communities stemming from cheaper smartphone technologies influence on brand trust and brand loyalty will be discussed next.

BRAND TRUST

Social media based brand communities can increase trust and also benefit from trust by disseminating information that is honest and shareable (Laroche *et al.*, 2012). Social media enables the sharing of information that is considered to be more trustworthy than alternate sources due to the large online communities that interrogate and interact with the shared information (Smith, 2014). Brands with social media brand based communities are required to be transparent, as brands are

subject to higher degrees of scrutiny by consumers, increasing consumer trust (Smith, 2014). These benefits are associated to brands that understand the potential increase in brand social media based brand communities' due to cheaper smartphone technology and its influence on accessing brands communities' due to changes in media consumption.

Social media based brand communities are also necessary for a brands trust due to the information exchanged between consumers on social media that have knowledge about the brand (Smith, 2014). This communication allows for brand feedback that is based on what a brand does and not what it only says it does (Rutkauskaite, 2013). Facebook has fan pages that allow for customer reviews and opinions, decreasing the gap between a brand and its consumer as well as increasing customer satisfaction (Smith, 2014). The trust between networks of friends is another advantage for having a strong social media based brand community, as friends will trust a brand that their peers engage and trust (Rutkauskaite, 2013). Social media based brand communities also elevate trust for brands as they result in open conversations with the brand community, fostering inclusive growth and cooperation with consumers and their perception of the brand (Rutkauskaite, 2013).

Social media based brand communities are thus highly positive for brands. The ability to create participation and conversation with a large variety and number of people is easier with social media based brand communities. This then allows for trust to be developed and maintained. Once trust is gained the brand community can gain an advantage over competition and potentially increase product sales (Rutkauskaite, 2013). Social media based brand communities are therefore essential in building trust in the modern branding environment, in the next section brand loyalty is assessed as a positive implication to the cheaper smartphone technologies influence in the South African branding environment.

BRAND LOYALTY

Brand loyalty has been an important part of brand growth in the past and continues to be in the 21st century social media based brand communities (Delgado and Luis, 2001). The highly competitive nature of branding in the modern social media led environment has pushed brand loyalty into the forefront of brand strategy in terms of the value it can derive.

The influence of cheaper smartphone technology on social media based brand communities is highlighted by the positive effect these have on a brands loyalty amongst consumers. Social media based brand communities are a powerful tool in terms of getting consumers invested emotionally in a brand (Smith, 2014). Fostering an emotional connection with a brand via social media is vital in increasing consumer commitment to the brand. The constant brand exposure online results in a strong identity with the brand if the values of the brand are aligned with the consumer's values and perception of the brand (Smith, 2014). Increasing brand commitment and emotional investment ultimately increases a brands loyalty base, and therefore it's potential to make more revenue. This

can then be included in the idea of accessing millions of new consumers, who for the first time could access social media based brand communities with the help of cheaper smartphone technology.

Social media based brand communities also aid in strengthening the brand consumer relationship. Brands benefit by constantly engaging in the lives of consumers, resulting in higher intentions to purchase (Smith, 2014). Social media based brand communities also offer the ability to provide quick feedback to brands, by which consumers are directly involved in the brand and thus are more engaged and involved in the brands success.

FURTHER RESEARCH

The relevant literature researched above supports a coherent argument that social media based brand communities have an impact on brands as well as affecting brand trust and brand loyalty. The literature places the influence on brands regarding cheaper smartphone technology as crucial for a 21st century. The literature places a foundation onto which it is clear that further research is required in order to understand and identify the influence that cheaper smartphone technology is having on brand communities' media consumption, as well as the potential effects on brand trust and brand loyalty in South Africa.

Having read the literature on the importance of social media, in terms of its ability to aid in transparent dialogue creation between brands and new consumers. The contribution of brand communities to information generation is clear, social media based brand communities are the future in building a coherent modern brand and thus are the positive spin off of cheaper smartphone technology. Linking consumers and brands on social media is considered important in the literature and needs to be studied in South Africa to assess the consumer's perceptions of brand trust and brand loyalty.

My particular topic needs to be researched so that the impacts on brand loyalty and brand trust can be understood from a consumer's perspective, this can be utilized by brands by gaining insights into the consumers perceptions of brands with social media based brand communities in South Africa. The idea of creating a strong brand community on social media for brands as an avenue to increase brand trust and loyalty is particularly interesting for any modern South African brand, interested in utilizing social media based brand communities. The influence of cheaper smartphone technology on brand communities' media consumption and thus, brand trust and brand loyalty requires further research, as brands interested in creating social media based brand communities in South Africa need to understand the trust they could gain and they loyalty they could potentially receive due to the cheaper smartphone technology.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 PARADIGM

This study will make use of the interpretivist as well as the positivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm is important because it aims to describe the influence of cheaper smartphone technology

on brand communities' media consumption from a consumer's perspective. The positivist paradigm will be used to discover meaningful relationships between the cheaper smartphone technologies and will help to control and predict the technologies influence on South African brand communities. The interpretations of the consumers perceptions of the brands trustworthiness and their respective loyalty is assessed in relation to the experiences and engagement with brands on social media based brand communities in South Africa.

The research approach is of a qualitative and quantitative nature and thus involves mixed methods. The influence of cheaper smartphone technology and its implications on brand communities in respect to media consumption changes, underpins the possible changes in brand trust and loyalty, and will be assessed by use of triangulation. This approach will allow for subjective opinions of people to be aligned with the quantitative data collected from consumers between the ages of 18-24 and thus allows for a rich data base when information is integrated in a coherent manner. Due to the exploratory nature of the research question qualitative data will complement the quantitative data to provide a deeper understanding of the influence that new cheaper smartphone technology is having on the South African branding and media consumption environment in both a descriptive and beneficial way in terms of prediction and control for brands.

Once the influences of the cheaper smartphone technology are established there is a useful aspect to brands that becomes identifiable. Ultimately brands will potentially understand how technology in respect to smartphones is rapidly changing and influencing who brands should communicate with, as accessibility to social media based brand communities is growing. This communication should not only be done to the existing members of the brand community by in a wider way, that aims to include and speak to the previously disadvantage, youthful audiences who are for the first time, thanks to technology able to afford a smartphone and thus enter into social media based brand communities. The growing social media based brand communities will potentially affect their brand trust and loyalty amongst consumers in South Africa. Primary research will include information gathered from an online survey that involves quantitative questions that will be conducted on the social media site Facebook, these will be placed onto groups on Facebook that consist of young adults between the ages of 18-24 and within the LSM range of 3-5. To gather actual qualitative perspectives that may be supported by quantitative data from South African consumers, interviews will be conducted with young adults between the ages of 18-24 and within the LSM range of 3-5.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is critical in answering the research questions and therefore conducting an appropriate research project. The research study aims to follow a triangulation approach. Triangulation incorporates both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The importance of qualitative data is key in accessing a deeper understanding of the cheaper smartphone technologies influence on brand communities' media consumption as peoples' responses will be examined. On

the other hand, quantitative data will allow for the consumers information to be made useful in statistical analysis and in generating comparisons (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

The research design will incorporate a cross-sectional survey design. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., (2014), this survey design is used when the respondents' data is only collected from them at one point in time, allowing a picture of the phenomenon to be gathered. Based on the cross-sectional survey design respondents will complete the online survey once and the interview will be conducted once per respondent.

The research tradition makes use of both positivist and interpretivist lenses, in which an inductive and deductive line of reasoning are both possible. The inductive line contributes to the development of a new theory or development of a previous one, whereas the deductive line regards the construction or use of theories before the study, and tests these (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

In respect to understanding the influence of cheaper smartphone technologies on brand communities' media consumption and therefore brand trust and loyalty there are no prior ideas or assumptions, and thus an inductive approach is the most appropriate. The research aims to gather facts and draw generalisations from the survey and interviews allowing for the researcher to describe and make comparisons from the data. The aim of the study is to understand the influence of cheaper smartphone technology on brand communities' media consumption in South Africa.

Data collected was subjective to the opinions of respondents. The interviews consisted of five participants, who are students in the Western Cape from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. These participants are south African, and willingly discussed their perspectives on cheaper, alternative smartphones, their media consumption and brand loyalty and trust impacts.

3.3 POPULATION

3.3.1 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The units of analysis regard the individuals under investigation in the research study (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Therefore, the unit of analysis for this research study comprises of South African individuals within the LSM ranges of 3-5 and between the ages of 18-24.

3.3.2 TARGET AND ACCESSIBLE POPULATION

The research study aims to gather data from the target population comprising men and women between the ages of 18-24 and within the LSM range of 3-5. In order to understand cheaper smartphone technologies influence on brand communities' media consumption in South Africa, university students will be interviewed. The reachable individuals are all the individuals of the required age and LSM range that live in Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa.

3.3.3 POPULATION PARAMETERS

The population parameters for this study involve individuals between the ages of 18-24 and within the LSM ranges of 3-5 and live in Cape Town, South Africa. Despite the common factors the population to be studied varies in respect to race and gender. In order to access this specific population, the online survey will be administered on a Facebook forum for students in the Western Cape and the interviews will be conducted on students in the Western Cape.

3.4 SAMPLING

3.4.1 NON-PROBABILITY SAMPLING

This research study utilizes non-probability sampling. The use of non-probability sampling is vital in research that does not allow for the elements of the chosen population to have an equal opportunity in being included in the study. The use of non-probability sampling in this research is important because there are difficulties in gaining access to the population in its entirety (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

3.4.2 SAMPLING METHOD

This research study will make use of convenience sampling. The reason for convenience sampling in this research regards the inclusion of elements of the population sample that the researcher can effortlessly gain accessibility to (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

3.4.3 SAMPLE SIZE

According to Indexmundi (2017), there are roughly 8 million young people between the ages of 18 to 24 and this combined with the fact that roughly two thirds of the population ranges between LSM 1-5 means that it is an important age and LSM group to understand the influence of cheaper smartphone technology (tvsa, 2005). The researcher will use a confidence interval of 90% to determine a sample size. Utilizing a sample size calculator an estimate of 65 people are recommended as the sample size for this research.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This research study will be comprised of a mixed research method. There will be an online survey attempting to gain quantitative data as well as interviews with the aim of extracting qualitative data. The online survey will be made up of quantitative closed ended question whilst the interviews will primarily involve open ended question. The survey is made up of direct, multiple choice and close ended questions. The interviews will make use of direct, more opened ended questions. The interview and survey will both initially involve a few warm up questions in order to give understand to the respondent and will then slowly dive into the questions that attempt to find out the research problem. In respect to both the online survey and the interview will be made up of more fact based and close ended questions for the online survey and then more opened ended questions for the

interview. Importantly, only the most relevant questions will be included in both the online survey and interviews. Instructions will be given in full and with a high degree of detail, in so far as to reduce any elements of confusion as well as the inclusion of an assurance of confidentiality.

The online survey will take the form of a self-administered survey, which benefits respondents with the ability to answer in their own respective time. The interview will be guided by the researcher and aims to gather the respondent's feelings on the aforesaid topic at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town, Western Cape. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., (2014), highlights how only using a survey can result in the inability to ask for follow up questions as well as the possibility of a low response rate. The online survey will be administered by the Google Docs survey feature, and will require respondents to fill out the survey. The interviews will be conducted around the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town, Western Cape and will primarily involve youth between the ages of 18-24 and in the areas where the LSM ranges between 3-5. Both research tactics may be disadvantaged due to lack of literacy or a lack of fluency in English as this will be the researcher's language of communication. However, the online survey will provide quantitative data combined with the qualitative data to be extracted from the interviews.

In order for the research to be accurate and not misleading the researcher will ensure that the following areas are understood and applied. Firstly, opened ended questions are unbiased, not influenced and do not require a respondent to answer in a specific manner. Secondly, in order to gain truth in the responses of the respondent's leading questions will be avoided. Thirdly, no double-barrelled questions will be asked, ensuring the answer for each specific question at a time. In addition, questions will be clear and concise in order to gain some exact answers. Finally, the survey and interviews structure will encompass a broad set of initial questions and gradually move towards more narrow questions, thus promoting accurate information.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD(S)

The fact that this research is triangular by nature, implies both a quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Firstly, the qualitative data gained through the use of the interviews and open-ended questions will be textual by nature. This implies that the data will have to be transcribed, including the grouping of key themes as well as a findings report written in order to analyse the findings. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., (2014), the transcribing of data will be converted into a written format, allowing for further analysis. Themes found in the data will then be recorded and grouped, as this flows with the inductive research that will be carried out. This process ends off with conclusions identified and presented in a written report and is called content analysis.

In respect to the closed ended questions encompassing the quantitative data, the online surveys data will have to be counted up and incorporated into diagrams. The diagrams will allow for predictions and identification of patterns in the data. The quantitative data will result in the formation of categories, as the survey will be comprised of closed ended questions. Tallying up the individual

responses is crucial, and allows for the data to be presented accurately in visual diagrams. The visual diagrams comprise of, amongst others; bar charts, pie charts and scatter plots. The data will then be able to identify; variances, means, averages, medians and frequencies useful in concluding the summation of the data gathered from respondents between the ages of 18-24 and within the LSM range of 3-5, ultimately identifying conclusions that can be generally applied to the influence of cheaper smartphone technology on brand communities' media consumption.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion chapter aims to highlight and discuss the findings and analysis from the online survey and interviews outlined in chapter 3. 65 people were selected as the sample size, however 108 people completed the online survey and 5 people contributed to the interview. 106 of the online surveys were seen to be usable, as they had answered all the questions.

The researcher made use of thematic coding to analyse the qualitative data and the quantitative data was analysed by counting the responses. Themes from the qualitative research were identified and illustrative tools will help present the quantitative results. In order to make sense of this research problem, objectives of the research as well as the research questions were accounted for during data collection.

4.1 DATA ANALYSIS

Triangulation integrated into this study, implies that data analysis methods are both quantitative and qualitative by nature.

Firstly, quantitative data has to be tallied, this represents the data gathered from the sample through the closed ended questions. Secondly, findings will be shown in a visually appealing manner, allowing for the identification of patterns and predictions (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). Categorisation of the respondent data will take place as questions are closed ended. The responses will be counted to ensure accuracy.

In respect to the qualitative data being textual, it will need to be transcribed as well as theme clustered to allow for an accurate report on findings. Finally, conclusions will be drawn, allowing for the presentation of findings from the research that are important in regards to the influence of cheaper smartphone technology on consumers in brand communities in South Africa. Thus, allowing for the formation of generalisations that help brands take cognisance of 18-24 year olds media consumption, within the LSM of 3-5.

The reason this study makes use of triangulation is to triangulate the viewpoints, so that brands are able to understand what consumers are doing with cheaper, alternative smartphones in respect to identifying opportunities to react and act on social media.

4.2 FINDINGS: SURVEY

The researcher has identified important themes from the data collection process. The themes identified had to do with the research objectives and questions. The findings from the online survey are presented in diagrams after the quantitative questions were tallied. The online survey findings are comprised of:

Question 1: What is your age?

What is your age?

101 responses

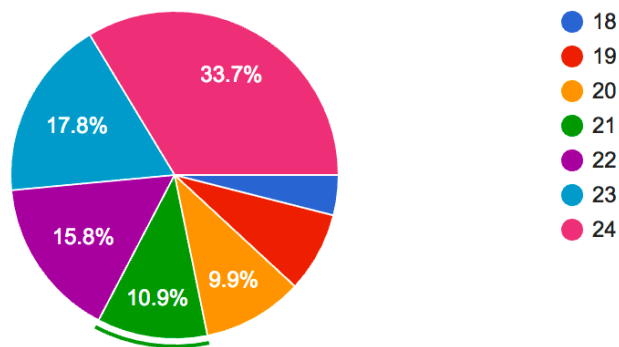


Figure 4.1 Age of respondents

This research involved assessing the media consumption of 18-24 year olds, within the 3-5 LSM range. Therefore, it should be noted that respondents are varied between the ages of 18-24. Due to the fact that convenience, non-probability sampling was used, the researcher cannot state that a specific age identified in the findings is more influenced by cheaper smartphone alternatives or plays a bigger role for brands in the social media space. However, the researcher is aware of the respondents age division amongst the survey respondents. The majority of response was within the 24 year olds segment of respondents at 33.7%. The smallest response age group was made by 18 year olds, at 4%.

Question 2: What is your gender?

What is your gender?

107 responses

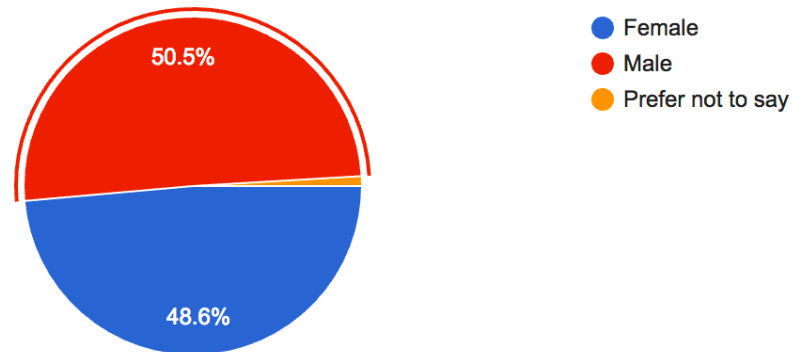


Figure 4.2 Gender of respondents

The higher number of respondents were male at 50.5%. Females made up 48.6% of the respondents, whilst 0.9% of respondents preferred not to say a gender. This would not be an indication that there is a closely balanced number of males and females who would be influenced by the cheaper smartphone technology or that it plays a bigger role for brands in the social media space, due to the use of convenience non-probability sampling. Although, this question does give the researcher an insight into the close gender divide that participated in the online survey.

Question 3: Do you engage with your favourite brands on social media, via your smartphone?

Do you engage with your favorite brands on social media, via your smartphone?

107 responses

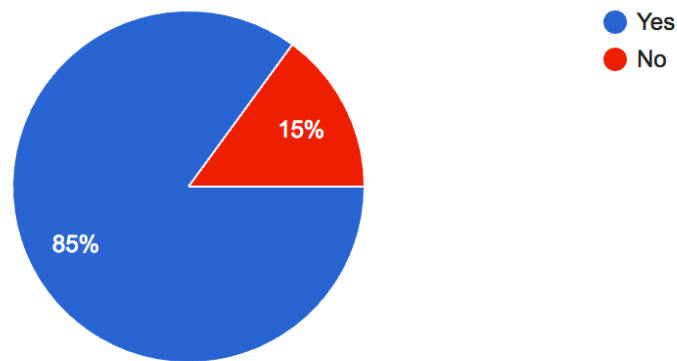


Figure 4.3 Brand engagement on social media

This online survey was distributed on the social media site Facebook, in which it was placed in a forum for university students at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, in the Western Cape. This online forum helped the researcher gather findings that relate to the population relevant in this study. The findings highlight that most of the respondents do actively engage with brands on social media with the help of smartphones (85%); However, 15% of the respondents do not engage with social media with smartphones, and ultimately may still be utilizing computers or they do not have social media. This finding enables the researcher to gain an insight into the influence that smartphone alternatives are having on the media consumption of this studies target audience. The finding can also be interpreted in a manner that allows brands an understanding behind the need for social media presence in the South African branding environment, in order to stay relevant.

Question 4: How many times a day do you engage with social media on your smartphone?

How many times a day do you engage with social media on your smartphone?

107 responses

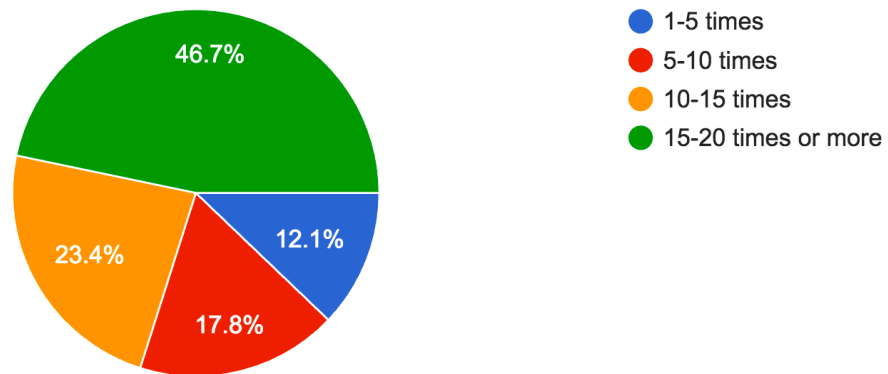


Figure 4.4 Social media engagement times per day

The findings show that 46.7% of respondents are highly active on social media engagement per day, with the majority engaging 15-20 times or more a day. Interestingly the second highest number of respondents at 23.4%, engage social media between 10-15 times a day on their alternative smartphones. The trend continues, and the respondent size decreases as the social media engagement times per day are lowered, at 17.8% for 5-10 times per day and 12.1% at 1-5 times per day. The findings show that the majority of alternative smartphone users are accessing social media frequently each day.

Question 5: What social media sites do you interact with brands on?

What social media sites do you interact with brands on?

106 responses

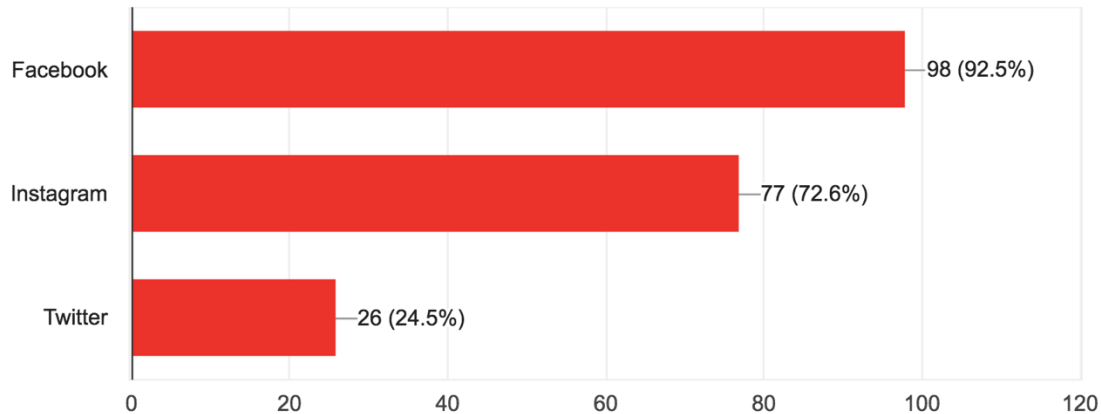


Figure 4.5 Social media sites brand interaction

When it comes to the social media sites that respondents interact with brands on, the three biggest social media sites identified in South Africa were the chosen options, namely; Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The results clearly highlight the fact that 92.5% of respondents utilized Facebook, this shows the researcher that Facebook is a valuable platform for brands in South Africa that would like to connect with and build loyalty with the 18-24 year olds, LSM 3-5 mass market. Interestingly, a large number of respondents are also utilizing Instagram at 72.6%. The smallest number of respondents make use of Twitter, at 24.5%. The interaction with brands on the more popular social media sites such as, Facebook and Instagram, also brings about the ability of these social media sites to provide interesting; visual, auditory and personal messages to consumers.

Question 6: In your opinion is it important for brands to have social media pages?

In your opinion is it important for brands to have social media pages?

107 responses

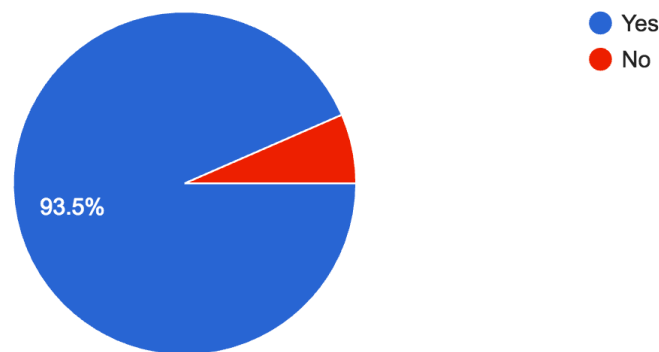


Figure 4.6 Importance of social media pages for brands

The respondent's opinions into the importance of social media pages for brands is extremely clear (93.5%). The data shows that consumers with cheaper, alternative smartphones consider social media presence vital for brands. This data highlights that there is merit to the research question into the, *influence of cheaper smart phone technology on brand communities' consumption of media in South Africa*, as it really places at the core of the research the insight from actual consumers into the importance they place into brand presence on social media and their media consumption use. The importance is also related to the literature on brand trust because of the higher degree of scrutiny that social media offers consumers, as transparency is required to increase trust effectively (Smith, 2014).

Question 7: Do you trust what brands are saying on radio, television or mediums other than social media?

Do you trust what brands are saying on radio, television, or mediums other than social media?

107 responses

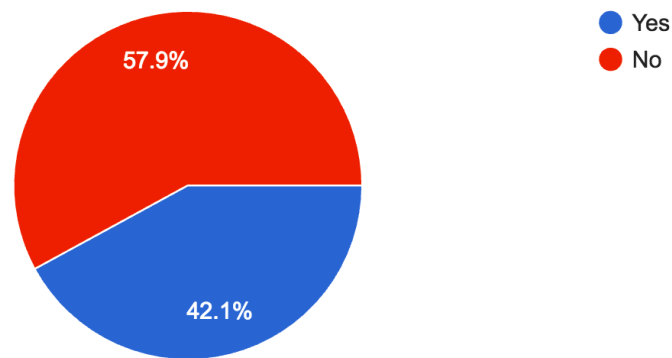


Figure 4.7 Brand trust for traditional mediums

The findings show that the majority of respondents 57.9%, do not trust what brands are saying on the traditional forms of media other than social media, such as radio or television. However, 42.1% of respondents do trust the traditional forms of media. This finding provides an opportunity, in respect to understanding how alternative smartphones are influencing the media consumption of these consumers, as there is an opportunity to increase trust between brands and consumers within the social media sphere. This perception of traditional forms of media could be utilised by brands that are looking to tweak their message to build brand loyalty and trust with the mass market.

Question 8: How strongly do you agree or disagree with this statement: Cheaper smartphones will result in more South Africans engaging with brands on social media?

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this statement: Cheaper smartphones will result in more South Africans engaging with brands on social media?

107 responses

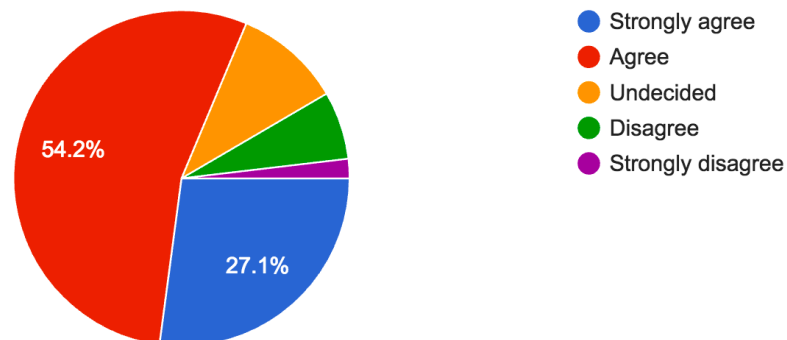


Figure 4.8 Cheaper smartphones and brand engagement on social media

The data highlights the fact that the majority of consumers agree (54.2%), or strongly agree (27.1%), that these cheaper smartphones will result in an increased number of South Africans engaging with brands on social media. Out of the respondents 10.3% were undecided, 6.5% disagreed and only 1.9% strongly agreed with the statement. The finding sheds light on the direction with which brand communication is going, as more consumers previously unable to access brands on social media, can now for the first time afford an alternative cheaper smartphone. Understanding the media consumption of 18-24 year olds, within the 3-5 LSM, can be useful for brands looking for opportunities to alter how they are communicate with the mass market, by understanding the influence that smartphone alternatives are having in South Africa.

Question 9: How strongly do you agree or disagree with this statement: Brands on social media actively want to engage and converse with consumers, not just sell to them.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this statement: Brands on social media actively want to engage and converse with consumers, not just sell to them.

106 responses

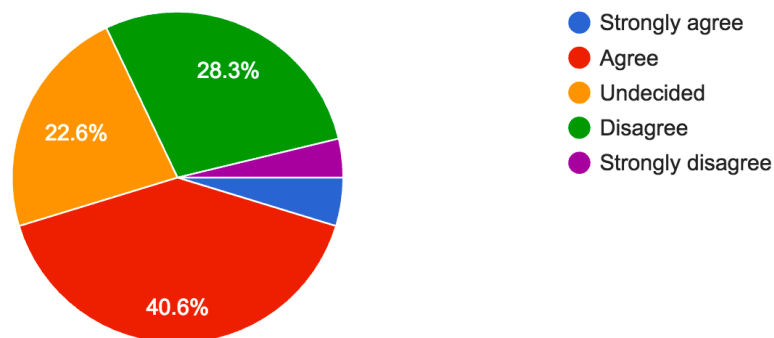


Figure 4.9 Consumer perceptions of brand activity on social media

When it comes to respondents' perceptions of the activity of brands on social media, the data shows that the majority of respondents in this study agree that brands are actively interested in engaging and conversing with consumers, not just there to push sales (40.6%). Although it is important to recognise the fact that 28.3% of respondents disagreed with this statement, and 22.6% of respondents were undecided. However, this is an interesting insight into the perceptions of consumers with cheaper, smartphone alternatives. This finding relates back to the research question about what the mass market of the future thinks of social media presence, and offers an opportunity to build loyalty by ensuring that consumers remain to perceive brands on social media as ones that are interested in their consumers. This finding relates back to the idea of brands constantly engaging in the lives of consumers, which induces more loyalty and thus purchases (Smith, 2014).

Question 10: Are you more likely to buy from brands that have social media pages?

Are you more likely to buy from brands that have social media pages?

107 responses

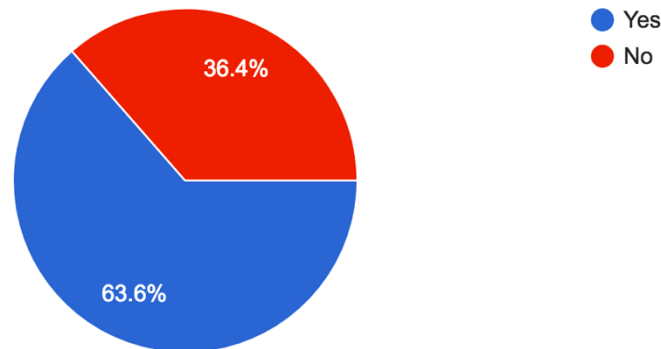


Figure 4.10 Purchase from brands with social media

The findings show that 63.6% of respondents in this study consider themselves more likely to buy from a brand with social media. This is an interesting insight, and can be interpreted as an opportunity for brands to strengthen their consumer brand relationship, with consumers that own cheaper, alternative smartphones. In the broader context of the research problem, the active presence on social media is vital to these consumers, as it enables the brands they follow, to actively engage with them, provide feedback and are essentially more involved in the brand (Smith, 2014). 36.4% of respondent's state that they would not buy from brands with social media. This is interesting as brands need to ensure that they are not intrusive or annoying to consumers.

4.3 FINDINGS: INTERVIEWS

Important themes were identified from data collected from the qualitative interviews. The findings from the open-ended interviews are textual, and are presented after themes are identified. The street interviews were collected at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town, Western Cape. The 5 respondents were students between the ages of 18-24 who make up the LSM 3-5 range.

The interviews findings are comprised of:

Question 1: Do you think that cheaper smartphone alternatives to iPhones and Samsung's will result in more South Africans engaging with brands on social media? Why?

The respondents were asked if in their opinion cheaper smartphone alternatives would result in more South Africans being able to engage with brands on social media. This was carried out through an open-ended question that highlighted the following themes:

- More South Africans would be able to engage with brands.
- The alternative smartphones provide an equal opportunity for South Africans to engage online.
- The alternative smartphones can compete with what they offer.

These perceptions are positive for brands in South Africa. The results highlight the fact that respondents all agreed with the question, relating back to the secondary research question, *what is the impact of cheaper smart phone technology on brand communities' media consumption within the LSM 3-5 group between the ages of 18-24*. The evidence helps with the broader context of this research problem as it places emphasis for brands in South Africa. Brands need to take cognisance of their brand messaging with consumers in the mass market, as it is an important point of future brand contact, with increasing amounts of South Africans engaging with brands.

The findings show that the respondents agree that people are able to now afford these alternative smartphones, such as the Huawei. One respondent found that the Huawei P9 lite, has all the features of the traditional smartphones, but costs almost half the amount for a monthly contract. The respondents also agree that access to social media will definitely increase with these phones being more accessible in terms of price, enabling anyone to afford them. This can be related back to brands, and identifying what they can do to build trust and loyalty.

Question 2: Compared to traditional forms of consumer behaviour (such as television, radio and outdoor), is social media a more personal way of reaching you?

Respondents were asked if social media is a more personal way of being communicated with by brands, compared to the traditional means such as; radio, television and outdoor. The following themes were identified:

- Respondents all agreed that it is a more personal way of being communicated with.
- Social media offers respondents advantages when interacting with brands.

The findings help brands adapt their communication, by highlighting why social media is a more personal way of interacting with consumers. The findings also shed light on the secondary research objective, which aimed to *gain an understanding of how brands in general, can use changes in media consumption, to potentially change their brand message, and leverage brand loyalty and trust with the 18-24 year olds, LSM 3-5 mass market consumers*. One reason is the fact that brands can see that consumers actually require communication via social media, because it shows that a brand is actually present, and allows the consumer an interface where issues can be raised and questions can be asked. The opportunity for brands in South Africa to build followers and essentially build brand ambassadors, is vital in understanding the influence that cheaper, alternative smartphones are having in the mass market.

The importance of this finding relates to the fact that brand communities on social media are necessary as they allow for an information exchange between consumers and the brand, allowing for brand feedback and thus adaption to needs of consumers (Rutkauskaite, 2013). One respondent highlighted how social media is a more personal way of brand interaction because it offers him the ability to ask questions, get quick responses and thus get assurance from the brand. Participants mentioned the immediacy that social media offers in the respect to directly engage with consumers. These findings can assist brands with making sure their social media interactions are improved to increase brand loyalty and trust to consumers.

Question 3: Are there things that brands should not do on social media?

In order to gain an insight into consumer perceptions of brands on social media, respondents were asked what brands should not be doing on social media. The following themes were identified:

- Not to promote, violence, inequality or racism.
- To not target consumers in a general manner, rather keep it personal to interests of consumer.
- To not constantly inundate consumers with adverts.

The themes identified are useful to brands on social media, or considering it, because it allows them an opportunity to improve their engagement in the correct manner to consumers on social media. These themes shed light on the secondary research objective to gain an understanding of how brands in general, can use changes in media consumption, *to potentially change their brand message, and leverage brand loyalty and trust with the 18-24 year olds, LSM 3-5 mass market consumers.*

The findings allow for brands to alter their message in an insight driven manner. Respondents identified that broad targeting is extremely offensive, as it places adverts that end up not being things respondents were interested in into their social area, creating a negative contact point with the brand. Brands need to constantly ensure they are not invading consumers personal space. The literature discussed reiterates this theme, as the idea of social network fatigue being a potential disadvantage for a brand on social media, as consumers are constantly bombarded by brands which takes away from the initial point of increasing loyalty with consumers in a healthy consumer brand relationship (Solis, 2010).

Question 4: When are you more likely to engage with a brand on social media?

The respondents were asked via an open-ended question to give their opinion on when they would be more likely to engage with a brand on social media. The following themes were identified:

- The more interaction brands have on social media, the more respondents trust the brand. The responses suggest that posts by brands with lots of comments are more trustworthy. This shed light on the idea that majority rules, with one respondent highlighting how his confidence in the brand increases when he sees that there are many voices, especially when he sees the majority present on brand posts. This is reiterated by respondents trusting recommended posts on social media and trending brand communication as it implies that the brand is trusted by multiple people. The public presence makes the brand accountable.
- When a brand offers something new. Interestingly enough, respondents identified the need for something new offered by brands in their interactions. The more widely available cheaper, alternative smartphones are increasing engagement with the mass market, and this market is requiring new and eye-catching brand communication.
- When a brand is meaningful, in its focus on real issues affecting South African communities. This theme was highlighted by all the respondents, as they felt that brands need to be more involved in bringing about the greater good. This is especially true and especially needed in South Africa, due to a history of human rights deprivation. The information gathered really picked up on the theme that brands need to engage with awareness campaigns, and focus on society more than themselves. Respondents highlighted the fact that if a brand supports a real issue, then respondents within the LSM range of 3-5 and between the ages of 18-24, are more likely to support and do what they can to help with this issue. Respondents also highlighted the need for country specific communication from brands, and reiterated the need for international brands to focus their message on South African consumers, and not create international general campaigns.
- When engagement is more personalised to respondents. The personalisation of communication was a key theme to respondents. The more brands attempt to mass communicate with consumers via social media the more consumers feel the message is not directly related to them. A key finding involves the insight that all the respondents found that when communication aligns with the respondents' interests, it results in them being more loyal to the brand. Personalisation examples were given that implied a general need for the interests of the mass market to be adequately communicated, in respect to consumers interests in; competitions, music, local brands and influencers. Interestingly, the idea of interactive brand giveaways and competitions are more likely to be shared, commented on and supported by respondents within this LSM range and age group.

The themes identified are useful to brands in South Africa in they would like to increase their brand loyalty and trust amongst the new mass market. The findings help assess the primary research

question that looks into the *Influence of cheaper smart phone technology on brand communities' consumption of media in South Africa*. The findings could assist brands in adapting their communication to the change in brand communities' media consumption brought about by cheaper, alternative smartphones. The findings also link to the literature on brand communities, as consumers do naturally feel a higher degree of identification with brands that identify with their belief structure (Laroche et al, 2012). Findings also shed light on literature that consumers are more inclined to trust brands that actively contribute to their brand communities in a holistic and personal way (Laroche et al, 2012).

4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS:

The identification of the following findings helps shed light on the broader context of this research problem, by allowing the researcher to gain information on the research objectives and questions.

Research Questions:

What is the influence of cheaper smartphone technology on brand communities' consumption of media in South Africa?

- What is the impact of cheaper smartphone technology on brand communities' media consumption within the LSM 3-5 group between the ages of 18-24?
- What are people in the LSM 3-5 group between the ages of 18-24 doing with cheaper smartphone alternatives that presents an opportunity to increase brand loyalty and trust?
- How can brands adjust their brand message to build brand loyalty and trust with the mass market of the future?

Research Objectives:

To explore how a brands loyalty and trust are influenced by cheaper smartphone technology, as more South African consumers engage with brands on social media, using their alternative smartphones.

- To gain an understanding of how brands in general, can use changes in media consumption, to potentially change their brand message, and leverage brand loyalty and trust with the 18-24 year olds, LSM 3-5 mass market consumers.
- To explore what people are doing with their smartphone alternatives, in order to identify any opportunities for brands to increase brand trust and loyalty amongst those who were previously unable to afford smartphones.

The research findings have identified that, to some extent the influence of cheaper, alternative smartphones on brand communities' consumption of media has the following effect on brand adaption towards increasing brand loyalty and trust amongst the LSM 3-5 range between the ages of 18-24.

It is identified that, cheaper, smartphone alternatives do have an impact on the media consumption of respondents. The majority of respondents found that their sense of loyalty and trust towards South African brands is increased when there is active, meaningful engagement from the brand on social media. This highlights how brands can prepare for the increased accessibility to social media, that will be brought about by increased access to cheaper, alternative smartphones. This shows that brands need to be innovative in their communication in order to suite the mass market. For the majority of respondents, cheaper, alternative smartphones are strongly influencing how they interact with brands, on a daily basis, and ever-increasing amounts per day.

A commonality amongst respondents involved the need for brands to adjust their communication in order to take advantage of the opportunities brought about by the increased influence of cheaper, alternative smartphones on brand communities consumption of media. Respondents identified how there are opportunities to increase brand loyalty and trust, as insights into the target audience allow for real opinions on staying relevant amongst the LSM 3-5 range between the ages of 18-24.

These findings are useful to brands across South Africa, interested in increasing brandy loyalty and trust, and not specifically for brands only located in the Western Cape. Brands interested in building loyalty and trust with the mass market of tomorrow, can utilise information into what consumers amongst the LSM 3-5 range between the ages of 18-24 are doing, in order to take advantage of what consumers are doing with cheaper, alternative smartphones that provides an opportunity to build loyalty and trust.

The study has shown that social media engagement with respondents amongst the LSM 3-5 range, and between the ages of 18-24 is crucial in order to build a meaningful brand that connects with the mass market of tomorrow. The study has highlighted themes of importance, especially areas in which brands need to improve on to ensure; effective, personalised and meaningful brand loyalty. This loyalty can be leveraged to build brand trust, as brands can make use of the research into what consumers with this new media consumption are expecting brands to not do on social media.

It is suggested that brands in South Africa concerned with appealing to the mass market of tomorrow are actively making use of the opportunities that cheaper, alternative smartphone technology is having on their brand loyalty and trust. Brands need to ensure they have social media presence, combined with interactive, personal and meaningful engagements, in order to harness the growing number of consumers making use of cheaper, alternative smartphones in South Africa. There is room for brands to tailor their message to the new mass market consumers of tomorrow, as only having a physical presence on social media is not enough to influence consumers trust, due to just having a public presence. Loyalty is found to be leveraged in increasing amounts as brands differentiate, personalise and find meaning in their communication to the LSM 3-5 range, and between the ages of 18-24 consumers.

5. CONCLUSIONS:

This chapter contains the research considerations, including the implications of the findings of the research as well as the recommendations for further research areas. The validity, reliability, limitations and ethical considerations will also be discussed.

5.1 Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

Due to the fact that this study utilizes triangulation in its research design, encompassing quantitative and qualitative research the validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the research is of utmost importance. This research is concerned with validity and reliability as it makes use of quantitative data and needs to ensure this data is accurate. Reliability and validity will be assured with the use of a large sample as well as relevant survey questions to ensure that the research produces similar results if carried out again. The issue of trustworthiness is relevant with the qualitative data in ensuring that only honest data is included in the written report.

Interrater tests can be carried out by the researcher to test the reliability of the research. An interrater test involves the division of the sample into two halves, and then conducting the survey on both halves. Responses can then be compared between the two halves, ensuring a reliable study if responses are considered similar.

In respect to the validity, which measures the constructs that the researcher had set out to measure (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). Content validity is important in respect to ensuring that constructs and concepts are well and diligently defined. The survey and interview must only encompass questions that contribute to the constructs and concepts of the research study and this adds to bolster the content validity. In order to help increase reliability, survey and interview design must be logical and numbered.

The research has used an 80% confidence interval with a 10% margin of error, this helps the researcher draw conclusions from the sample and realistically apply them to the population as a whole. Triangulation at its core extends the credibility and reliability of research and thus there should always be focus on the trustworthiness. A keystone factor in the trustworthiness of data stems from the interpretation of the data by the researcher, if this is considered to be carried out accurately, the research is credible.

5.2 Anticipated Limitations of the Study

This research projects scope is youth between the ages of 18-24 who make up the LSM 3-5 range in Cape Town, Western Cape. This study faces the limitation of only being conducted in Cape Town, Western Cape, but the results can be extended to represent the country in a broader sense. In respect to time limitations, delays in receiving the response from the sample could potentially limit data analysis. Further limitations could regard literacy and language levels. The online survey and

qualitative interview will be administered in English, thus potentially resulting in a misunderstanding or a limited response rate.

5.3 Anticipated Contributions of the Study

This research study aims to provide a deep understanding of the influence of cheaper smartphone technology on media consumption of brand communities in South Africa. The fact that brands will be able to understand the implications of cheaper smartphone technology on their brand loyalty and trust is powerful in aligning brand awareness campaigns to the social media based brand community realm. The findings would benefit brands aiming to market to the new 21st century previously disadvantaged consumer, in respect to the advantages of utilizing social media platforms to speak to the new young and digitally connected consumers of tomorrow, benefiting from technology.

The body of knowledge aims to be improved on, as there is research on the amount of social media users, as well as how consumers are connecting with their phones, but there is not a lot of research on the influence of cheaper smartphones on the South African branding environment. This study should help South African brands understand that technology is changing the point of contact between brands and the youth, in respect to their brand trust and loyalty, now, and in the future. The study should highlight insights that lead to brands realising the impact of cheaper technology on the poorer members of society, by including them in their conversations and speaking to them.

There is potential to add to the 21st century conversation, which combines technology with changing market dynamics and aims to bring brands closer to the consumer by utilizing the information on cheaper smartphone technology and its influence on the youth and previously disadvantaged to draw conclusions about future trends in branding in South Africa. The study can be adapted to reflect changes in various technological impacts and or influences, in respect to gaining information and knowledge on the consumer's perceptions of this change and its potential to affect brand loyalty and trust.

5.4 Ethical Considerations

In order to produce a valid research project there is a degree of ethics required while conducting the research to ensure that participants are protected. The research must ensure that participants are treated in a manner that promotes acceptable attitudes and behaviours. Furthermore, the analysis of data and the reporting of data must be carried out in an ethical manner.

The academic nature of the research must be divulged to participants. The use of an online survey programme will help distribute the survey, but this must not feel as if it is being invasive towards participants. In the same regard, the interviews will be conducted only after telling them about the academic research.

Confidentiality is also a requisite of the research. The identities of the participants will be known to the researcher but will not be mentioned in the research to ensure anonymity. The freedom of respondents to participate in the study is important in conducting ethical research.

Respondents have control over completing the online survey or participate in the interview. Sensitive information will be avoided in both the survey and interview, and to ensure there is no deception, respondents will be aware of the required data.

The research information and results will not be misused or distorted. The fact that the research is half quantitative and half qualitative means that the quantitative data is less likely to be interpreted with bias due to the nature of the data. The data from the interview will be interpreted in an objective way to ensure validity.

5.5 Implications of Findings and the Final Conclusion

The research study has explored the influence of cheaper smartphone technology on brand communities' consumption of media in South Africa. The research also focuses on how cheaper, alternative smartphones are affecting media consumption, and how brands can use this opportunity to build loyalty and trust. Due to the fact that this study regards cheaper, alternative smartphones and their influence on the media consumption amongst consumers within the LSM 3-5 range and between the ages of 18-24, brands across South Africa could use the results and findings to potentially improve and better understand the mass markets media consumption, in order to build brand trust and loyalty. This study provides brands in South Africa, an understanding into the effects of cheaper, alternative smartphones on the media consumption of the mass market, in terms of identifying effective ways of engaging with consumers on social media. The opportunities for brands, in respect to the changing media consumptions effect on brand loyalty and trust is also highlighted.

The implications of the findings are vital for brands looking to gain an insightful understanding of the influence of cheaper, alternative smartphones on the changing media consumption of the aforementioned target audience in a South African context. The findings suggest that the influence of cheaper, smartphone alternatives on the media consumption of consumers within the LSM 3-5 range, between the ages of 18-24 is both; going to increase, due to the accessibility of alternative smartphones, as well as need for effective social media engagement to harness brand loyalty and trust in a meaningful and personalised manner. Consumers are still adjusting to the fact that cheaper, alternative smartphones are increasingly available and accessible. This reiterates the need for brands to realise the opportunities provided by this increased access to cheaper smartphones, and thus social media.

The research highlights that brand loyalty and trust can be positively impacted on if a brand effectively engages on social media, especially considering the ease of accessibility that cheaper, smartphone alternatives offer, in a manner that speaks to the target audience. The research

contributes to the existing body of knowledge, as conclusions from the findings are drawn, that enable light to be shed on the influence of cheaper smartphone technology on brand communities' consumption of media in South Africa. Researchers that are interested in the effects on brand loyalty and trust, brought about by cheaper, smartphone technology can make use of the key constructs and concepts identified within this study. Findings from the research can be incorporated into a researchers' literature review. Researchers may adjust their respective studies that deal with cheaper, alternative smartphone technology and brand loyalty and trust amongst brand communities to ensure that it suites their research questions, objectives and sample. The study is useful for researchers, as a source of secondary research when studying the influence of cheaper smartphone technology on the mass market of tomorrows brand communities' media consumption in South Africa.

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