

**THE PERCEPTION OF MANAGERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING
TOOL IN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY AT CAR DEALERSHIP, ABC
GERMISTON**

Reuben Gerber

Student number: 15004820

Supervisor: Ruan van den Berg

Module: RESM8419p

Pathway: RESM8419

Lecturer: Ghazala Essop

Word count: 11739 words

Word count: word (Excluding reference list and table of contents)

Due date: 24 October

R.Gerber 15004820

I Reuben Gerber (15004820) hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the RESM8419 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.

.....

Reuben Gerber

.....

Date

Contents

Abstract.....	6
1. Introduction	7
2. Background	7
3. Rationale	8
4. Problem Statement.....	8
5. Research Goal and Research Question	9
5.1 Research Goal.....	9
5.2 Primary research question	9
6. Research Objectives	9
7. Paradigm	9
7.1 Interpretivism	9
8. Literature review Introduction.....	10
9. Theoretical foundation.....	10
9.1 The Marketing mix	10
9.1.1 Product.....	10
9.1.2 Place.....	11
9.1.3 Price	11
9.1.4 Promotion	12
10. Literature review.....	13
10.1 Social media types	13
10.1.1 Facebook	13
10.1.2 YouTube.....	14
10.1.3 Twitter	14
10.1.4 WhatsApp	15
10.2 Perception of social media as a marketing tool on the automotive company's brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty	15
10.2.1 Brand awareness	15
10.2.2 Brand image	16
10.2.3 Brand loyalty	16

10.3 Social Media Marketing versus Traditional Marketing	17
10.4 How Social Media Changed Marketing in the Automotive Industry	18
10.5 Disadvantages of the Use of Social Media as a Marketing Tool	19
10.5.1 Time Intensive	19
10.5.2 User Generated Content (UGC).....	19
10.5.3 Negative Feedback.....	20
11. Literature Review Conclusion	20
12. Conceptualisation	21
12.1 Social Media	21
12.2 Automotive industry	21
12.3 Marketing tools	21
13. Research Paradigm	22
14. Research Design	22
14.1 Population	22
14.1.1 Target population	22
14.1.2 Accessible population	23
14.1.3 Population Parameters	23
15. Sampling	23
15.1 Non-Probability Sampling	23
15.2 Sampling Method	23
15.3 Sample Size	23
15.4 Unit of Analysis	24
16. Data Collection Method	24
17. Data Analysis Method	25
17.1 Software Program	26
18. Trustworthiness	27
19. Anticipated Contribution	28
21. Limitation	29
22. Presentation of Findings	29

22.1 Summary of Interviews	31
23. Interpretation of Findings	32
23.1 Social media marketing.....	32
23.1.1 WhatsApp	32
23.2 Facebook.....	33
23.3 Brand Loyalty.....	34
23.4 Brand Awareness	35
23.5 Traditional Media	36
23.6 Social Media.....	37
23.7 Advantages of Social Media Marketing	38
23.8 Disadvantages of Social Media Marketing.....	38
24. Research Question, Problem, and Objectives addressed	39
24.1 Research Question	39
24.2 Research Problem	40
24.3 Objectives.....	40
25. Conclusion.....	41
References	43
Appendix A – Final Concept Document	48
Appendix B - Interview Schedule.....	50
Appendix C – Safe assign originality report	51
Appendix D – Honours/PGDIP Ethical clearance letter.....	52
Appendix E – Confirmation of manuscript edited	53
Appendix F - Gatekeeper letter and example of consent forms for participants.....	54

Abstract

Social media, as a marketing tool, has been identified as a key form of marketing in the automotive industry with great future potential. The researcher will investigate the influence that social media, as a marketing tool, has on the automotive industry at car dealership, ABC Germiston. It is important to establish the factors that need to be taken into account for this form of marketing to be successful. It is also vital to determine the impact this form of marketing will have on the automotive industry. After the completion of the interviews being conducted, it has been established that social media as a marketing tool has a positive influence on the automotive industry with great potential in the future.

Key words: Social media, automotive industry, marketing tools

1. Introduction

This research paper will outline the various aspects that influence the perception of managers on social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry; with specific emphasis on car dealership, ABC Germiston. This study comprises a detailed background which will motivate the research problem and the central issues and concepts. This discussion is followed by the subsequent elements including the rationale, problem statement, research questions and research objectives. This study will give an in-depth understanding of the marketing mix theory with its applicability to this study, and the literature review. Conceptualisation will be defined and discussed in this research paper. This research paper will then define and discuss the following elements that including research paradigm, research design, population, sampling, data collection method and data analysis method. This research paper will discuss the research questions, objectives and problems addressed. Finally, the ethical considerations, and the anticipated contribution to the academic field will be discussed.

2. Background

The focal point of this study outlines the perception of managers on social media as a marketing tool, at car dealership, ABC Germiston. There will be numerous aspects studied in relation to social media that will affect the way managers make use of social media as a marketing tool i.e. social media types, brand image, awareness, loyalty and social media versus traditional media. The report will also look at how social media changed marketing in the automotive industry and the disadvantages of the use of social media as a marketing tool.

Through assessing this particular field of study will enable the researcher to acquire an in depth understanding of the various factors that would influence management in a certain manner with their attitude towards social media. This permits the researcher to primarily put emphasis on the research problem, which determine the factors that influence a manager's perception positively or negatively.

This study supports the researcher where it identifies the extent social media will be used in their marketing activities in order to give them a competitive advantage in the industry. Thus, through conducting this study it will enable the researcher to gain an

in-depth understanding of the realities of these managers and the factors that they regard significant in using social media as a marketing tool. This marketing mix theory will assist the researcher in addressing its correlation towards the perception of managers on social media as a marketing tool in the industry.

3. Rationale

Social media is a concept that is important for many organisations today where managers and marketers in the automotive industry need to identify ways in which organisations can make the most and profitable use of social media platforms (Makgopa, 2016: 601). According to Luan Wise (2018) for the most of automotive brands the journey that the customer takes has changed. People in the market for a new or second hand car can go through many channels without ever setting their foot in a dealership due to the landscape changes that have affected the automobile industry over the past few decades, largely due to advances in technology (Wise, 2018). The automotive industry has undergone significant changes. In order to create a competitive edge, the automotive industry had to embrace technology and use technology to enhance service offerings to consumers. Social media has become a phenomenon in the turbulent corporate environment and can therefore be utilised as a strategic marketing tool to improve brand image, loyalty, and awareness in order to create a competitive advantage.

4. Problem Statement

The problem under investigation in this particular study is to establish the perception that managers at car dealership, ABC Germiston have with regards to social media as a marketing tool. The managers in various departments will give their opinion regarding this central issue. Once their opinion has been determined, the researcher will then be able to establish to what extent does social media influence car dealership, ABC Germiston as a marketing tool. The social media landscape has undergone a huge transformation over the past decade where social media has grown substantially under the consumer market and in the automotive industry (Makgopa, 2016: 601). This study is aimed at understanding the significance or insignificance that social media

play as a marketing tool and a platform currently to enhance the overall performance of car dealership, ABC Germiston.

5. Research Goal and Research Question

5.1 Research Goal

The research goal is to determine the significance or insignificance of social media as a marketing tool at the car dealership, ABC Germiston through interviewing industry specialists namely the management members.

5.2 Primary research question

What is the perception of managers on social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry at car dealership, ABC Germiston?

6. Research Objectives

To determine the perception of managers on social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry at car dealership, ABC Germiston.

To determine what social media platforms are the most useful in the automotive industry as a marketing tool in order to enhance business.

To determine whether managers believe that social media as a marketing tool has an influence on their brand image, brand awareness and brand loyalty.

7. Paradigm

7.1 Interpretivism

This study will make use of an interpretivist paradigm. The reason why this paradigm fits in with this particular study is due to the fact that it deals with management and their perception with regards to social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry. People make sense of the same subject in different ways, and this paradigm will assist the research process with the suitable path, considering management and their perceptions regarding social media (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 27).

This paradigm is suitable for this study due to the fact that people are inherently different from objects (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 27). This research paper aims to establish the significance or insignificance of social media as a marketing tool for managers at car dealership, ABC Germiston.

This interpretivist tradition was developed in response to the shortcomings and limitations of the positivism tradition, particularly in its application to the social sciences (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 27). Interpretivism sets out to understand human behaviour. With regards to this study, interpretivism will set out to investigate managements perception regarding social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry.

8. Literature review Introduction

This Literature review will outline the various aspects that influence the perception of managers on social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry; specifically putting emphasis on a single car dealership, ABC Germiston. This literature review will comprise a detailed background which will motivate the research problem and the central issues and concepts relating to this study. The problem under investigation in this study is to establish the perception that managers at the dealership have regarding social media as a marketing tool. The managers in various departments will give their opinion regarding this problem. The "Marketing mix" is the key theory that will be used in this study. The five constructs that will be outlined in the literature review is the following; Social media types, brand image, brand loyalty and brand awareness, traditional marketing versus social media marketing, how social media changed the automotive and the disadvantages of social media as a marketing tool.

9. Theoretical foundation

9.1 The Marketing mix

9.1.1 Product

Product is the first element in the marketing mix. This refers to the product or products that can be offered in order to meet customers wants, needs and desires (Cant & Van Heerden, 2013: 40). It is a crucial aspect for dealerships to know their market and the qualities that their clients are looking for in the products before they start a promotion

campaign or set a price (Grobler, 2013: 29). Dealerships need to have a dedicated team that does research and study the market in order to provide a specific product with a good brand awareness, after sales service, quality as well as value in order to develop and keep a good company name (Grobler, 2013: 29).

According to Grobler (2013) Social media will allow the faster identification of the needs of customers by management at the dealership. It allows a better platform in order to introduce new cars and additionally enables the company to offer a flagship product that satisfies the majority of customer needs (Grobler, 2013: 49). Social media enables companies to offer more services that includes interactivity and supporting information linked to the core product of the company (Grobler, 2013: 49).

9.1.2 Place

The significance of place in the marketing mix is about making products available at a suitable place and time where clients want and need these products (Cant & Van Heerden, 2013: 40). Place refers to the location concerned with all the business activities under consideration and the online space concerned with the marketing and selling of cars (Antonella, 2017: 637). Organisations thus need to choose a location that will assist them to serve as many customers as possible (Cant & Van Heerden, 2013: 40). The chosen location can play a large role towards the fundamental success of the organisation in the short run and the long run (Grobler, 2013: 30).

Social media has a great influence on place in the marketing mix due to its enormity. Social media offers a new way of distributing cars in the automotive industry through online selling (Grobler, 2013: 50). The customers can make purchase decisions through the use of social media platforms at any time or any place they want or need (Grobler, 2013: 50).

9.1.3 Price

The price of the product should reflect its value to the consumer (Cant & Van Heerden, 2013: 40). Price in the marketing mix is what a client must provide in order to obtain a specific car (Grobler, 2013: 30). Price plays a crucial role in the marketing strategy as it sends a direct message about the products, services and the image of the company

that the client experience (Grobler, 2013: 30). In the process of setting a price, the marketing management department need to take into account the economic environment, customers willingness to pay a certain amount and the comparison of competing brands prices (Cant & Van Heerden, 2013: 40). Pricing decisions differ from one dealership to the next depending on what the market offers and what the profit margin can be in order to still sell a car in a timely fashion (Grobler, 2013: 30).

Social media have a great impact on the economics in the automotive industry (Grobler, 2013: 50). It potentially reduces the search costs the customers incur when searching for information about various cars (Grobler, 2013: 50). Thus, dealerships must ensure they ask market related prices to ensure their vehicles are taken into account in the purchasing process by the consumer market.

9.1.4 Promotion

Promotion can also be referred to as marketing communication (Antonella, 2017: 637). Marketing communication is defined as the process by which marketers inform, persuade and remind potential buyers of a particular car that will as a result influence both their opinion or elicit a response (Grobler, 2013: 30). Promotion is the foremost important element of the marketing mix that concerns the marketing communication methods used to inform the target audience of the car with channels including advertising and public sales promotions (Cant & Van Heerden, 2013: 40).

Promotion have become a decisive factor in influencing a majority of aspects regarding consumer behaviour, that includes brand awareness, source of information, opinions, attitudes, purchase behaviour, and after-purchase communications and evaluation (Grobler, 2013: 50). Social media in the automotive industry has two interlinked promotional roles (Grobler, 2013: 50). Social media allows companies to talk to their customers and empowers clients to talk to one another (Grobler, 2013: 50).

10. Literature review

10.1 Social media types

There are a great deal of social media platforms that can be used as a marketing tool by managers in the automotive industry with the well-known types being the following; Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and WhatsApp (Makgopa, 2016: 602).

10.1.1 Facebook

Facebook is defined as a platform individuals around the world make use of in order to keep up with their friends, upload photos, share links and videos and learn more about the people they meet online (Grobler, 2013: 46). Facebook is one of the social networking platforms that enables users to find and add friends and contacts (Makgopa, 2016: 602). This platform enables the user to send messages to other users and update personal or business profiles (Makgopa, 2016: 602). The evolution of Facebook led to the powerful networking facilities for businesses and entertaining features that are currently the most effective and popular social media tool that connects people around the world (Grobler, 2013: 46). However social media platforms are different than plain text, pictures and videos (Makgopa, 2016: 602). There is a transformation from individual interaction to the collective whereas social networks support the power of relationships and the collective wisdom of a majority of people (Makgopa, 2016: 602).

Facebook has a great deal of opportunities for the Automotive industry (Grobler, 2013: 46). There is potential to form strategic connections with fellow professionals and clients in the automotive industry (Grobler, 2013: 46). Facebook can assist a dealership to develop professional relationships. Professionals in the business landscape state that Facebook is a better networking platform to make use of than a professional networking site specifically created for businesses (Grobler, 2013: 46). Facebook enables companies to raise their companies' profile through advertising (Grobler, 2013: 46). Facebook also enables the company to advertise in two ways including, a specific group of friends or people that liked their page or generally to any Facebook user (Grobler, 2013: 46).

10.1.2 YouTube

YouTube is a video sharing platform where users can upload, share, and view new videos on a wide variety of subject matters, ranging from professional and educational to personal and comical (Makgopa, 2016: 602). YouTube offers a wide variety of features. Users can join various groups aligned with their interests such as video sharing, movie clips, tv clips, videos as well as video blogging and short original videos (Grobler, 2013: 46).

There is a great deal of opportunities for the automotive industry to advertise and offer their products and services on You Tube (Grobler, 2013: 46). Advertising on YouTube is extremely expensive and there is only a small fraction of companies that make use of advertising on YouTube (Grobler, 2013: 46). Dealerships can upload videos and TV clips to advertise their products and services to a relevant target audience that includes registered and unregistered web users. (Grobler, 2013: 46). This video blogging publicity exemplify a successful advertising campaign with unlimited views that can reach a large audience. (Grobler, 2013: 46).

10.1.3 Twitter

Twitter is a real time information sharing network which enables people to relate by tweets with short text messages (Makghopa, 2016: 602). It has been defined as a micro blog. The idea behind the micro blog is that users can express their feeling and emotions in 140 characters at a specific time (Grobler, 2013: 48). Twitter is also not a blog and therefore there is no facilities to upload videos or podcasts (Grobler, 2013: 48).

Twitter is defined as the interaction between users and how users follow each other, a specific group, or an individual looking for the latest news (Grobler, 2013: 48). Twitter lends itself to big open conversations about the latest news and includes various links to websites in their news tweets in the automotive industry (Grobler, 2013: 48). Twitter is a major marketing and information tool for companies in the automotive industry (Grobler, 2013: 48). Twitter users can follow the latest news updates, promotions, car launches as well as offerings of the company on this platform (Grobler, 2013: 48).

10.1.4 WhatsApp

According to Kumar & Sharma (2017) WhatsApp is a popular application used for providing instant messaging services for a smartphone. WhatsApp makes use of internet services to communicate various types of text and multimedia messages between users and groups (Kumar & Sharma, 2017). It is a viral platform being used to send messages across the world (IKF, 2014). As it supports the exchange of multimedia, it is an interactive tool that can be used for interactive communication (IKF, 2014).

WhatsApp can be used to a great extent in the automotive industry as a marketing tool to connect existing customers and future customers (Kumar & Sharma, 2017). WhatsApp can be used to maintain close relationships with an existing client base (IKF, 2014). Since the client or company have already made use of the products and services of the dealership, they will be open to accepting a promotional message for a new product or service from the firm (IKF, 2014). Sending random promotional messages and videos to an unknown audience may lead to a very negative brand perception (IKF, 2014).

10.2 Perception of social media as a marketing tool on the automotive company's brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty

10.2.1 Brand awareness

According to Bilgin (2018) brand awareness is defined as the level of consumer recognition, acceptance and recall of a brand in any case. Brand awareness minimises the risk and time that the consumer will spend searching for the product that they want to buy (Bilgin, 2018). Brand awareness require continuum that range from a feeling of uncertainty for the consumer where they believe a particular brand has been known before and as a result the consumer believes the product is the only brand or dominant brand in a certain group (Tritama & Tarigan, 2016).

According to Bilgin (2018) brand awareness has been divided into four stages namely brand recognition, top of the mind brand and dominant brand. Brand recognition is related with the familiarity of the brand to the consumer where brand recall refers to the situation where the consumer thinks of a brand firstly when a range of products is introduced (Bilgin, 2018). a Brand that comes to mind to the consumer first refers to

the most aware brand in the product category (Bilgin, 2018). The extent of brand dominance refers to the level at which a specific brand replaces other brands in the product category (Bilgin, 2018). Social media can be a great aid in brand recognition when used correctly (Tritama & Tarigan, 2016).

10.2.2 Brand image

According to Bilgin (2018) Brand image is defined as the brands position in the consumers mind beyond these signs. Companies in the automotive sector normally monitor the change of their brand image, although they neglect the quick spread of social media and the ever-increasing numbers of social media users (Bilgin, 2018). Social media is an effective platform used for the transfer of brand image and relationships with potential and current clients of an organisation (Dib & Alhaddad, 2015).

According to Dib & Alhaddad (2015) There are 3 essential elements in building a strong brand image with the consumer market namely, positive brand evaluation, positive brand attitude and a brand image that is consistent over time (Dib & Alhaddad, 2015). The mental picture that the consumer market has about a specific brand has formed as a result of marketing communication, social effects and the experience of using a particular product. The influence of these factors on the minds of consumers influence the consumers attitude and trust towards a particular brand (Bilgin, 2018).

10.2.3 Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is the final dimension of consumer brand chemistry being a symbol of the consumers ultimate relationship and level of identification with a particular brand (Tung, 2017: 503). Loyal customers have a positive impact on business performance in competitive markets. It is more expensive to acquire new customers than hiring and keeping hold of existing clients that are steadily increasing the importance of customer loyalty (Bilgin, 2018: 133). Customer loyalty refers to a client's commitment to buy the same organisations products despite the attempts of competing brands to make a commitment in becoming a client of that business on a regular basis in the future (Bilgin, 2018: 133).

The result of a brand that have a loyal client base will lead to increased sales, market shares, profits for the organisation and assist the organisation to maintain or grow its position in the market (Tung, 2017: 503). Organisations make use of social media as a marketing tool to establish brand loyalty by making use of text, images, and videos posted on a social media platform (Tung, 2017: 503). Behavioural loyalty to a particular brand provide the organisations with direct income, while altitudinal and cognitive loyalty enhances the tendency to give reliable recommendations to individuals in their surrounding environment that plays a crucial role in winning over new customers (Bilgin, 2018: 133). Thus, brand loyalty is a significant non-material asset for businesses.

10.3 Social Media Marketing versus Traditional Marketing

According to Geraghty & Conway (2016) Traditional marketing refers to older media including; film, television, radio, billboards, face to face marketing and physical print and placement. The aim of traditional marketing is to provide time, place and possession utility. Thus, the most important part of this type of marketing is that it creates value for customers and motivates them to buy the product or service (Durmaz & Efendioglu, 2016). In traditional marketing, the content, frequency, timing and medium of communication is dictated by the company in partnership with their paid agents that includes advertising agencies, marketing research companies and public relations consultants (Grobler, 2013: 51).

According to Grobler (2013) Social media is a new communication paradigm. Managers should realise and understand the power and vital nature of the discussions that is formed using social media. Grobler (2013) Stated that the influence of the interactions among the consumer market within the social media landscape on the development and execution of unified marketing communication strategies is illustrated by the following points:

- Social media has become the primary platform used by businesses to deliver advertising messages, videos and communication to their target audience
- The consumer market demand more control over what media they consume. Thus, they demand instant access to a rich form of information at their own convenience.

- Consumers are shifting to the use of various types of social media platforms that includes, Facebook and WhatsApp to conduct their information searches and to make purchasing decisions in general.
- The consumer market regard social media as a source that has more trustworthy information referring to products and services than traditional marketing such as corporate sponsored communications.

The consumer market is using social media as a primary channel of communication that directly influence all aspects of consumer behaviour that includes information acquisition, after purchase expressions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Grobler, 2013: 51).

Traditional marketing is still being used by the consumer market in order to get information although social media is becoming much more important in carrying out a particular message (Grobler, 2013: 51). Management who are used to applying a high degree of control over company to consumer messages, must shift their focus to talk directly with customers instead of talking to them (Grobler, 2013: 51). Thus, taking note of the discussions taking place in the social media space and the influence thereof (Grobler, 2013: 51).

10.4 How Social Media Changed Marketing in the Automotive Industry

The Automotive industry is standing out as a fore runner of the effective adoption of social media platforms for the use of marketing purposes (Cocking, 2018). Social media is used by billions of people and is fast becoming one of the defining technologies of our time (Appel, et al., 2019). Globally the total number of social media users is estimated to reach 3.29 billion users in 2022 which will make up 42.3% of the world's population (Appel, et al., 2019). There is massive potential for automotive dealers deploying social media as a marketing tool (Appel, et al., 2019).

Potential buyers are exposed to a great deal of influencing and disrupting factors due to social media during each stage of their path to purchasing (Bartosh et al., 2014). The undeniable influence that technology have on society and the workplace is a reality. Computers, internet, email and cell phones are currently essential parts of social interaction that are continuously expanding (Makgopa, 2016: 601). Consideration and awareness move at a rapid pace as socially shared pictures, links

or status updates via social media sites structure opinions of users in the decision-making process (Bartosh et al., 2014).

By the time a possible customer set their foot in a dealership, their digital experience with a particular brand, dealers sites and the online opinions of friends, family, colleagues, as well as some professional reviews have a great contribution to their final decision (Bartosh et al., 2014). This presents significant challenges for the salesperson and their role at the dealership (Bartosh et al., 2014). The empowered customer makes use of the vast information available on various social media platforms to discover brands, weigh options that ultimately assist them to make purchasing decisions (Adaptly, 2020).

Social media has lowered the barriers to entry for new entrepreneurs with regards to assisting customers to find, evaluate and buy new vehicles making the industry fiercely competitive (Hirsh., et al, 1999). Social media has re-build the space of communication in such a manner which subsequently ensure easier access, user friendly applications and something that makes sense economically (Darsham, 2018: 975).

10.5 Disadvantages of the Use of Social Media as a Marketing Tool

10.5.1 Time Intensive

Social media changed the nature in which marketing is done where the focus is aimed at long term relationships that can lead to an increase in sales (Rubathee & Yasdanifard, 2013: 5). Someone at a dealership needs to be responsible in order to monitor each platform, respond to comments, answer questions and post product relevant content that the client deems valuable (Sharma, 2013: 5). Dealerships without a service to manage these social media networks will find it difficult to be competitive. Social media marketing requires time investment and a company must realise the time commitment and accept or reject it as a factor in their operation (Rubathee & Yasdanifard, 2013: 5).

10.5.2 User Generated Content (UGC)

Social media users have spent more time and shared more information, thoughts and opinions with one another about various topics (Rubathee & Yasdanifard, 2013: 5).

New forms of content generation, communication and collaboration has come out on social media. Whether it's a video, photo or messages shared on a social media site, UGC holds a great deal of promise as a marketing tool. In addition, user generated content comes with high degree of credibility in the eyes of the consumer market especially if someone created the content or it is a message between friends (Sharma, 2013: 5). Businesses can thus not control what is already generated on the internet.

10.5.3 Negative Feedback

Social media transforms consumers into marketers and advertisers where consumers have the ability to create negative and positive influences for the company, their products and their services depending on the way the company is presented online and the quality of the products being offered (Rubathee & Yasdanifard, 2013: 5). Through the use of social media platforms consumers get direct access to post their views in the comment section where there is an equal probability of getting positive and negative feedback (Sharma, 2013: 5). Negative comments are especially damaging to marketing campaigns. Unhappy customers and competitors have the ability to post downgrading and offensive pictures, posts or videos where marketers cannot do anything to prevent this from occurring (Rubathee & Yasdanifard, 2013: 5). Social networks need to be managed well in order to counteract harmful posts in a timely manner (Rubathee & Yasdanifard, 2013: 5).

11. Literature Review Conclusion

In conclusion social media plays a significant role as a marketing tool in the automotive industry. The theory chosen for this study exemplifies the relationship of social media with the combination of product, place, price and promotion in order to get the correct social media marketing strategy for a dealership. Car dealerships can use all the social media platforms to stay in touch with existing and future customers. The way that social media is managed can have a great impact on the brand of the dealership. Social media has some disadvantages where it is time intensive and the threat of user generated information and negative feedback can tarnish a company's brand. Social media marketing is substituting traditional marketing to a great extent in the automotive industry. The explosion of technology and social media changed the way marketing

has been done in the automotive industry. Social media has subsequently re-built the space of communication and marketing in such a manner which ensure easier access, user friendly applications and something that makes sense economically.

12. Conceptualisation

The terms identified for conceptualisation are social media, Automotive industry and marketing.

12.1 Social Media

According to Boyd & Ellison (2008) Social media has been defined as different websites that permit profile creation and visibility of relationships between users. Social media is a term used to describe new forms of median which involve collective participation. Management and marketers go out in order to identify various ways in which they can make use of social media in order to get a profitable outcome for the business (Makgopa, 2016: 602). Social median platforms are used by marketers as a marketing tool in order to give the company a competitive edge in the market (Makgopa, 2016: 602).

12.2 Automotive industry

The Automotive Industry is defined as all those companies that are involved in the manufacturing and selling of motor vehicles. The industries principle main products include passenger automobiles and light trucks. Through broad dealership networks the majority of members of this industry sell vehicles to a global market (Ferraio, 2015). Automotive manufacturers offer a great variety of makes and models with different price classes where there needs to be high brand integration at the marketing, advertising and dealership levels (Ferraio, 2015).

12.3 Marketing tools

The American marketing association (2007) defines marketing as “The activity set of institutions and processes used for the creation, communication, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, client, partners and society at large” Marketing tools are defined as product development and promotional strategies

and actions that automotive dealerships can make use of in order to develop and promote its products and services (Gundlach & Wilkie, 2007).

13. Research Paradigm

This study will make use of an interpretivist paradigm. The reason why this paradigm fits in with this particular study is due to the fact that it deals with management and their perception with regards to social media as a marketing tool in the Automotive industry. People makes sense of the same subject in different ways, and this paradigm will assist the research process with the suitable path, considering management and their perceptions regarding social media (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 27).

This paradigm is suitable for this study due to the fact that people are inherently different from objects (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 27). This research paper aims to establish the significance or insignificance of social media as a marketing tool for managers at car dealership, ABC Germiston.

This interpretivist tradition was developed in response to the shortcomings and limitations of the positivism tradition, particularly in its application to the social sciences (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 27). Interpretivism sets out to understand human behaviour. With regards to this study, interpretivism will set out to investigate managements perception regarding social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry.

14. Research Design

14.1 Population

du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) Defines target population as the sum of individuals who make up the population parameters set out by the researcher. Accessible population on the other hand refers to the individuals out of a population that the researcher has access to and make use of in their study.

14.1.1 Target population

The target population for this study will be all car dealerships, ABC Germiston countrywide including lower, middle and top management in their respective branches.

14.1.2 Accessible population

Car dealership, ABC Germiston will be the accessible population for this specific study where there are five management members that can take part in this study. This branch is popular in Gauteng and will thus be the accessible population for the researcher.

14.1.3 Population Parameters

- Each member must have a management role in the company
- Car dealership, ABC Germiston.

15. Sampling

Non-Probability sampling is identified and will be used for this research study. Convenience sampling, sampling method, sampling size and unit of analysis are factors that will be discussed further below

15.1 Non-Probability Sampling

Non-Probability sampling is used when it is not possible to establish who the entire population are or when there are obstacles gaining access to the entire population (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 137). In this study the aim is not to generalise the findings to a larger population. Thus, this study will involve all management members at car dealership, ABC Germiston.

15.2 Sampling Method

Convenience sampling will be the method made use of in this study. It simplifies the process of getting the sample that is required for this study (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 137). It is inexpensive to make use of a convenience sampling method where identified individuals are readily available to take part in the study.

15.3 Sample Size

With regards to the research study the sample size of this study will consist of 5 individuals who work as managers at the car dealership, ABC Germiston. There are

only a few individuals working as managers at the dealership, thus the reason for the smaller sample size chosen. The results will as a result not be generalised to a larger population.

15.4 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is one of the most significant parts of any research study. This is the smallest elements that the researcher will be analysing (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 137). Management staff at car dealership, ABC Germiston will make up the unit of analysis for this research study. The management members of the dealership will supply enough data to the researcher in order to obtain an adequate understanding of their thoughts regarding the interview process.

16. Data Collection Method

This research study will make use of interviews with open ended questions aimed at management members at car dealership, ABC Germiston. The researcher will gather an in-depth understanding of the response of each participant. The idea of this method is to gain an understanding through implementing this data collection method. The researcher will thus have the ability to get a rich form of information without wasting time.

A Data collection method is defined as the process that the researcher follow in order to gather and measure information on a targeted scale in a systematic manner, This will enable the participants to answer relevant questions and ensure noteworthy outcomes (Khabir, 2016: 202). Interviews will be selected for this study for the reason that the researcher will have the opportunity to view each question from all perspectives and experiences that arise during the meeting.

For this study the data collection method that will be used in order to conduct a complete evaluation will be standardised, open-ended interviews (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 188). Standardised open-ended interviews will be selected due to the reason that the same set of open-ended questions can be asked to every participant (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 188). The information obtained can be analysed in a systematic

manner that will allow the researcher to compare the views and opinions of all the participants easier (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 188).

The researcher will have the opportunity to ask participants questions in various ways relating to the influence that social media has on the automotive industry as a marketing tool. This is relevant in this study as this allows the researcher to gain an in depth understanding to specified information given by industry specialists. A voice recorder will be used to capture what was said by the respondents.

The researcher will ensure that every participant is briefed before the interview is conducted to ensure that they understand how the process will unfold. The instrument that will be used in this research study will be presented in Appendix B of this research report.

17. Data Analysis Method

The researcher will use a thematic analysis approach, which is most suitable for qualitative data mining, as stated by Padayache (2019) Data analysis is the process of applying logical techniques to describe and illustrate data presented by participants (Padayachy, 2019: 40). This form of analysis will be one of the many steps that must be completed when accompanying a research transcription (Padayachy, 2019: 40). Thus, qualitative data analysis methods exemplify the reduction, organisation, interpretation and substantiation of data (Padayachy, 2019: 40).

QDA Miner Lite is the software that will be used for this study (Provalis Research, 2020). It is a computer supported qualitative analysis software (Provalis Research, 2020). It is primarily used for the analysis and capturing of qualitative, textual data that includes interviews, news responses and open-ended responses (Provalis Research, 2020). It improves trustworthiness, strengthens the final report writing and assist in organising data in relation to themes and sub themes (Padayachy, 2019: 40).

The transcribed information received from management will be analysed through a textual basis (Padayachy, 2019: 40). Content analysis is a data collection method used to gather and analyse textual data. The researcher will use this method to analyse the recordings from the interviews that have been conducted.

Coding is defined as the process of grouping raw data into categories (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 188). Coding is a system that will make the process of analysis manageable where this will be used in the interview process. The coding method will be used in this study where each question and response will be coded in terms of keywords related to the study (Padayachy, 2019: 39).

Car dealership ABC, Germiston (CDAG)

Coding Scheme

CDAG A Question 1=A1 Question 2=A2

CDAG B Question 1=B1 Question 2=B2

CDAG C Question 1=C1 Question 2=C2

Qualitative content analysis is used to explore and discover overt and covert themes and patterns in a text. The research paper will use a deductive approach meaning that the researcher will ask general questions that will subsequently lead to specific and detailed answers.

Qualitative data will be analysed with this software. It will thus be used as follows according to the following elements.

17.1 Software Program

The inclusion of QDA miner will further be discussed in relation with content analysis. QDA Miner is a tool that searches for text patterns in documents (Padayachy, 2019: 40). The search patterns may include Boolean operators, wild cards and thesaurus searches (Padayachy, 2019: 40).

Sectional retrieval searches is an additional factor of QDA Miner that constructs documents for sections bounds by fixed delimiters (Padayachy, 2019: 40). This feature enables the researcher to automatically assign codes to returning segments withing a specific theme or numerous documents (Padayachy, 2019: 40). Keywords can also be used in order to retrieve a specific document, paragraph, sentence, or a coded segment (Padayachy, 2019: 40).

The coding frequency tool enables the researcher to obtain a list of all codes which are themes and sub themes in the existing code book (Padayachy, 2019: 40). Thus aiming to determine the amount of mentions or references were made to the themes and sub themes in the research study (Padayachy, 2019: 40).

Coding will now be discussed through the use of the following factors. The coding retrieval tool groups all the segments associated with some codes or with the use of specific patterns or codes (Padayachy, 2019: 40). The codes-co assurance tool use specific information associated with proximity or the co-occurrence of codes within documents to explore the relationships and similarities under the themes (Padayachy, 2019: 40). The coding sequence tool can be used to identify returning sequences of codes (Padayachy, 2019: 40). This feature can be used to produce frequency lists of sequences involving more than one selected set of codes as well as the percentage of times a code follows or is followed by another one (Padayachy, 2019: 40). Finally, coding by the variable is useful for identifying potential code similarities or differences between a subgroup of cases or otherwise to assess the relationship between these different codes and numerical values (Padayachy, 2019: 40).

18. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is used in qualitative research in order to ensure understanding of a particular phenomenon within context relating to other studies, placing emphasis on credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 258). This research paper will take these four elements into consideration. Credibility will be proven through the interpretation of the raw data provided by industry specialists.

Transferability refers to the ability of a research paper to apply to more than the current project under consideration (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 258). This study will produce similar responses for the participants where it will be evident in the analysis process (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 258). Thus, this research paper will be completed where the findings and interpretation of the researcher will support the data collected in the first place (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 258).

There will be enough time spend with each participant to ensure that quality data is collected from participants. This will ensure trustworthiness in this study where results will be captured from management members at car dealership ABC, Germiston.

19. Anticipated Contribution

This research paper will contribute to the body of knowledge where it will outline the findings presented by specialists (Management members) in the Automotive industry with regards to the influence that social media has on the industry.

The automotive industry is very competitive and Social media is playing a significant role as a marketing tool currently (Makgopa, 2016: 601). This study will put light on the importance of the various social media platforms that can be used by the dealerships to identify ways in which the organisation can make profitable decisions making use of these platforms (Makgopa, 2016: 601).

Highlighting the importance of dealerships having a good social media presence to ensure dealerships maintain a good brand name, Brand loyalty and brand awareness in order to keep hold of their existing client base and continually bringing in new clients.

Marketing in the automotive industry is moving from traditional marketing perspective to social media marketing perspective. This study will put further emphasis on the need to adopt social media for dealerships struggling to keep their head above water in the industry.

20. Ethical Consideration

Taking into account the nature of qualitative studies, the process of interaction between the researcher and the participants can proof to be an ethical challenge for the participant taking part in this study due to the fact that they are personally involved in various stages of the study (Sanjari et al, 2014). Ethics is an important factor for a researcher to keep in mind and is defined as the foundation of research (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 262). In this research project I will conduct my research and the work I produce in such a manner where I understand the consequences on the larger community (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 262). I will make sure I act with integrity and

honesty in order to make sure everyone maintain confidence in the research process (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 262). This study will not include minors or mentally ill individuals, but each participant will be treated with respect, sensitivity and empathy.

Each participant will sign a consent form giving the researcher consent to do the research. The identity of each participant will be anonymous assigning codes to everyone. The transcripts that will be typed from the recordings will be e-mailed to each participant giving them the opportunity to read through the transcript and give feedback whether this was in line with what was said in the interview.

21. Limitation

According to Bradford (2017), limitations is defined as the influences that the researcher cannot control. A limitation in this research report will be the size of the sample used to collect the data from. There will only be data collected from one dealership in Johannesburg making it difficult to generalise this study to the larger population in South Africa. The automotive industry is a highly competitive and a stressful industry where some participant may not be particularly ready for the interview participating hesitantly and giving vague and shallow answers.

22. Presentation of Findings

The findings of this study were completed through the participation of three members of management. There are two main themes together with their sub themes. Coding frequency will be used where it refers to the number of times the main theme or the sub theme has occurred through the course of the three interviews.

The diagram and figures presented in this study will not be used for statistical purposes as this is a qualitative study. It will only be used for statistical purposes where it is primarily used to notice the number of times the themes and sub themes get addressed by all the respondents.

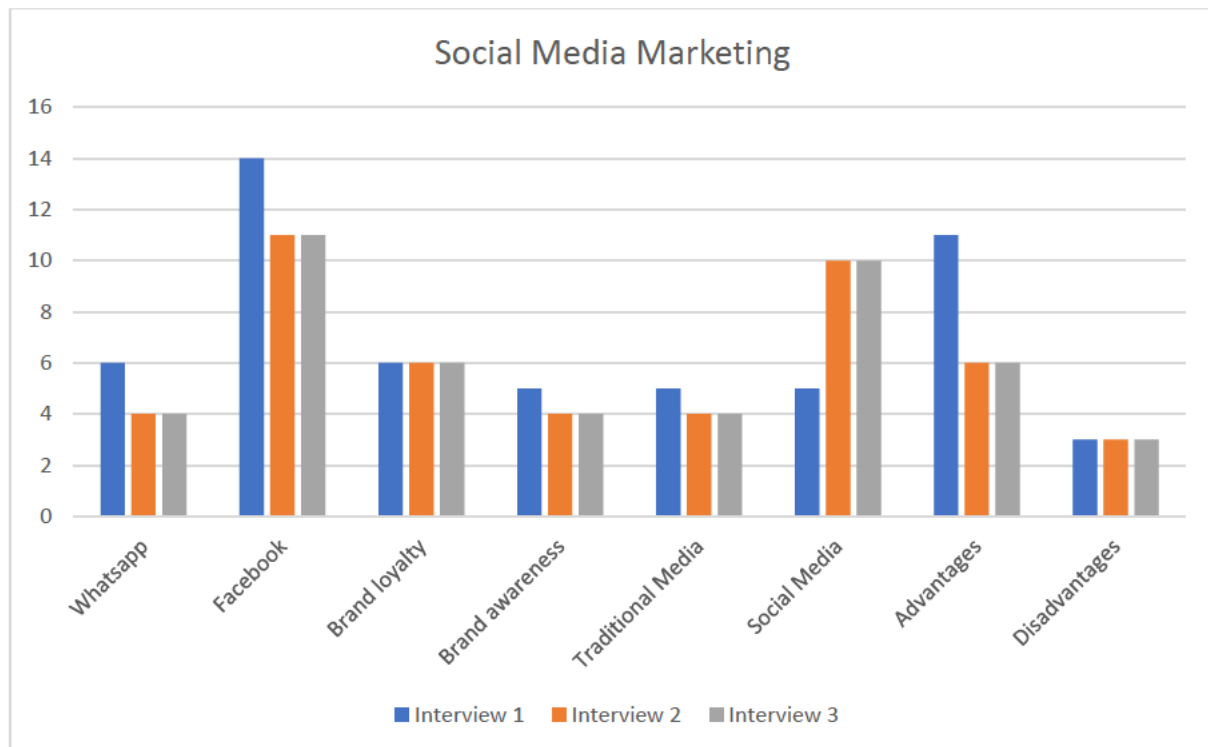


Figure 1: The most mentioned social media marketing themes and sub-themes by respondents

The chart outlines the three interviews conducted together with their sub themes. The sub theme mentioned the most among all three interviews is Facebook. The least mentioned sub theme is the disadvantages of social media as a marketing tool. The detailed presentation of the most mentioned and least mentioned sub themes is discussed below.

The first interview did present a great focus on Facebook, which is one of the social media marketing tools. WhatsApp was the lowest ranked social media marketing tool where interviewee 1 did not perceive WhatsApp as a good marketing tool in the Automotive industry. Brand awareness was regarded as less important than Brand loyalty where interviewee 1 felt that Social media as a marketing tool has a greater influence on brand loyalty emphasising a longer-term goal. There was an equal focus on traditional media and social media where interviewee 1 mentioned that social media and traditional media can be used together in order to reach the right target markets. There was a greater focus on the advantages than the disadvantages of social media,

emphasising the importance to use this as a marketing tool in the automotive industry in future.

The second interview did present a great focus on Facebook compared to WhatsApp. Facebook is thus deemed as a more important social media marketing tool than WhatsApp. Brand loyalty has been regarded as more important than brand awareness where interviewee 2 believed that the focus is more on a longer term goal focusing on brand loyalty, other than brand awareness in the short term. There was a great focus on social media marketing compared to Traditional marketing. Interviewee 2 do believe that traditional media is a dying platform where social media marketing has great potential. There was a greater focus on the advantages that social media marketing offers than the disadvantages of social media as a marketing tool.

The third interview did present a great focus on Facebook compared to WhatsApp. Facebook is deemed as a more important marketing tool than WhatsApp in the automotive industry. Brand loyalty has been presented as a more important factor than brand awareness by participant 3. Thus, putting emphasis on a longer-term goal to build the brand other than short term brand awareness. There has been a great focus on social media marketing compared to traditional media marketing. This participant believes that social media marketing is the way going forward were traditional media is a dying platform. Participant 3 believes that social media marketing has greater advantages than the disadvantages of these platforms.

22.1 Summary of Interviews

The results generated from all three interviews has shown that traditional media marketing is a dying media with a limited future in the automotive industry. To support this statement the advantages of social media far exceeds the disadvantages as a marketing tool in the Automotive industry at car dealership, ABC Germiston. All three managers identified social media as the future marketing platform that will be used in the Automotive industry.

It is clear throughout this study that Facebook is regarded as a very popular social media marketing tool that the car dealership, ABC Germiston makes use of. It Is also clear throughout this study that the effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty and brand awareness is significant.

23. Interpretation of Findings

The interpretation of findings is addressed through the influences of social media marketing as a marketing tool in the Automotive industry. This is further defined with the following factors, namely Facebook, WhatsApp, Brand loyalty, brand awareness, traditional media, social media, disadvantages and advantages. The above mentioned factors will be discussed below.

23.1 Social media marketing

According to Boyd & Ellison (2008) Social media marketing has been defined as different websites that permit profile creation and visibility of relationships between users. Social media is a term used to describe new forms of media which involve collective participation. Management and marketers go out in order to identify various ways in which they can make use of social media in order to get a profitable outcome for the business (Makgopa, 2016: 602). Social media platforms are used by marketers as a marketing tool to give the company a competitive edge in the market (Makgopa, 2016: 602).

23.1.1 WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a popular application used for providing instant messaging services for a smartphone (Kumar & Sharma, 2017).

As it supports the exchange of multi-media, it is an interactive tool that can be used for interactive communication (IKF, 2014). WhatsApp is a viral platform being used to send messages right across the world. With reference to the interviews, all three participants agreed that WhatsApp as a marketing tool is not so effective and is rather used in the internal structures of the dealership. This fasttracks conversations in real time and enables staff within the company to converse as a group. This is substantiated by a response from one of the management members Where he states “WhatsApp can be used as a marketing tool externally with key stakeholders and internally with fellow employees which fast tracks the way information gets spread within the organisation and where everyone is communicating on a real time basis”.

All three participants agreed that it is a user friendly and real time application. This is supported by one of the interviewees where she states, "It's easier sending documents to do a tender document via WhatsApp than to send a bunch of emails. The engagement is real time where for example e-mail takes longer".

WhatsApp can be used to a great extent in the automotive industry as a marketing tool to connect and maintain close relationships with existing customers and future customers (Kumar & Sharma, 2017). The managers agreed that WhatsApp can be used to maintain close relationships with an existing client base by most certainly not with existing platform as this has been identified as a very private social media platform. This is substantiated by an interviewee, she stated "Communicating over WhatsApp for business purposes depends on the level you are communicating from and what your relationship is with the customer".

Sending random promotional messages and videos to an unknown audience may lead to a very negative brand perception (IKF, 2014). All three managers have agreed that WhatsApp as a social media marketing tool can intervene with your personal life. This is supported by one of the managers where she states, "It can be an irritant if they do not use it correctly. One of the concerns is that WhatsApp intervenes with your personal life on weekend and holidays if this is the same phone you use for work purposes as well as personal use".

23.2 Facebook

With regards to the interviews being conducted Facebook is defined as a platform individuals around the world make use of in order to keep up with their friends, upload photos, share links and videos and learn more about the people and pages they meet online (Grobler, 2013: 46).

There is potential to form strategic connections with fellow professionals and clients in the automotive industry (Grobler, 2013: 46). This is supported by one of the interviewees, she said "Not only does Facebook help you to build awareness and reputation you are also engaging at a more exiting level. A six second very interactive and engaging video with content will get allot of people to view it. Facebook is a platform that can be used very innovatively and especially from a marketing perspective, quick and easy, cost effective, efficient way to communicate".

Professionals in the business landscape state that Facebook is a better networking platform to make use of than a professional networking site specifically created for businesses (Grobler, 2013: 46). The participants has disagreed in this regard. They do believe that Facebook is more aimed at the end consumer and not for relationship building with professionals. This is supported by one of the interviewees, She said “Facebook has done exceptionally well where there are a wide customer acceptance of it across a broad demographic that is very nice taking into account customer profiles, age, races and where Facebook enables companies to raise their companies’ profile through advertising”.

Facebook is different than plain text, pictures and videos (Makgopa, 2016: 602). There is a transformation from individual interaction to the collective whereas social networks support the power of relationships and the collective wisdom of a majority of people (Makgopa, 2016: 602). All three managers believed that the interactivity features of Facebook is a significant advantage of this social media platform. This is supported by one of the managers where she states, “Facebook allows you to really communicate with targeted audiences because you have the opportunity to reach the right people at the right time with the right content”.

23.3 Brand Loyalty

With the interviews being conducted, brand loyalty is defined as the final dimension of consumer brand chemistry being a symbol of the consumers ultimate relationship and level of identification with a particular brand (Tung, 2017: 503).

Loyal customers have a positive impact on business performance in competitive markets. It is more expensive to acquire new customers than hiring and keeping hold of existing clients that are steadily increasing the importance of customer loyalty (Bilgin, 2018: 133). All three respondents have agreed that a professional social media platform can assist greatly greatly in enhancing brand loyalty of the brand under the consumer market. This is supported by one of the participants. She said “Its similar to trust where it is build up over time but in the same breath trust can be deteriorated with one instance. Its every single touch point that goes through every life cycle and it touches a whole lot more than only social media”

Customer loyalty refers to a client's commitment to buy the same organisations products despite the attempts of competing brands to make a commitment in becoming a client of that business on a regular basis in the future (Bilgin, 2018: 133). All three managers agreed that there needs to be a commitment and strategy with social media platforms in order to enhance customer loyalty. This is supported by one of the managers, she said "Understanding and knowing your customer intrinsically that even before you are considering change can serve them with certain specific information where you already know where they are at, at a specific stage in their life cycle curve" Thus, brand loyalty is a significant non-material asset for businesses.

The result of a brand that have a loyal client base will lead to increased sales, market shares, profits for the organisation and assist the organisation to maintain or grow its position in the market (Tung, 2017: 503). This is supported by one of the interviewees. She said, "Brand loyalty is key where this is your ultimate measure of success".

Behavioural loyalty to a particular brand provides the organisations with direct income, while altitudinal and cognitive loyalty enhances the tendency to give reliable recommendations to individuals in their surrounding environment that plays a crucial role in winning over new customers (Bilgin, 2018: 133). All three managers have agreed in this regard. This is supported by one of the managers, she said "If you are communicating about the human element you are engaging in those platforms to bring about the humanised element or the excitement or innovation in a different way.

23.4 Brand Awareness

With the interviews being conducted, brand awareness is defined as the level of consumer recognition, acceptance and recall of a brand in any case (Bilgin, 2018) Brand awareness minimises the risk and time that the consumer will spend searching for the product that they want to buy (Bilgin, 2018).

Brand awareness require continuum that range from a feeling of uncertainty for the consumer where they believe a particular brand has been known before and as a result the consumer believes the product is the only brand or dominant brand in a certain group (Tritama & Tarigan, 2016). All three managers agreed that social media plays a significant role in brand awareness reaching a large audience. This is supported by one of the managers, she said " Brand awareness is key, out of mind

and out of site we have heard that saying many times and it is important maintaining top of the mind awareness especially in such a competitive category when looking at how many brands there are in different categories”.

A brand that comes to the consumers mind first refers to the most aware brand in the product category (Bilgin, 2018). With reference to the interviews being conducted all three managers agreed that in order to be the most aware brand there needs to be a time and money commitment developing strategy as best as possible. This is supported by one of the managers, He said “You have an opportunity with social media to truly get the customer engaged with you as a brand and see a different side of the brand”.

Social media can be a great aid in brand recognition when used correctly (Tritama & Tarigan, 2016). With reference to the interviews being conducted all three managers agreed that there needs to be a dedicated team managing the social media platform in order to get the best return on investment. This is supported by one of the managers, she said “ For brands to remain relevant they need to evolve and consumers evolve where this is really what it is all about, being dynamic stand out and make sure that you are still relevant to your customer base”.

23.5 Traditional Media

With the interviews being conducted, traditional marketing refers to older media including; film, television, radio, billboards, face to face marketing and physical print and placement (Geraghty & Conway, 2016).

In traditional marketing, the content, frequency, timing and medium of communication is dictated by the company in partnership with their paid agents that includes advertising agencies, marketing research companies and public relations consultants (Grobler, 2013: 51).

Traditional marketing is still being used by the consumer market in order to get information although social media is becoming much more important in carrying out a particular message (Grobler, 2013: 51). This is supported by one of the managers, he said “Through traditional marketing platforms it is sometimes better to tell a story and when it comes to digital it is sometimes so focused and so targeted where the marketer

want to put the right product with the right price in front of the right people at the right time”.

Management who are used to applying a high degree of control over company to consumer messages, must shift their focus to talk directly with customers instead of talking to them (Grobler, 2013: 51). All three managers agreed in this regard where they mentioned that the dealership needed to make use of the voice of their customer base and respond to what they truly wants. This is supported by one of the participants, she said “The global impact of covid 19 has significantly shifted the way in which we view traditional marketing versus social media marketing. There has been an acceleration of social media marketing at a pace that is incredible to see how brands have moved and shifted”.

23.6 Social Media

Social media has been defined as different websites that permit profile creation and visibility of relationships between users. (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

The consumer market is using social media as a primary channel of communication that directly influence all aspects of consumer behaviour that includes information acquisition, after purchase expressions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Grobler, 2013: 51). This saying is supported by all managers were they firmly believe that social media is the primary platform dealerships will make use of in order to market their brand and interact new information with.

This saying is supported by one of the managers. She said “Consumer expectations have changed significantly and redefined the way we do business, consumers are expecting a high level of service with continues enhancement of the total experience. The increase in smartphone usage is alarming. The number of people who have access to and the delivery platforms there is just so many industries converging to support the massive shift”.

According to Grobler (2013) Social media is a new communication paradigm. Managers should realise and understand the power and vital nature of the discussions that is formed using social media. This is supported by the managers were they said that this will be the primary platform used in order to communicate with the consumer

market. This is supported by one of the managers. She said “There is a huge amount in shift in spend, in particular in media spend from traditional to digital and that has been a year on year increase. The one thing about digital is that it is trackable. Data tracking and understanding your leads and being able to quantify your investment and return on investment is critical.

23.7 Advantages of Social Media Marketing

Social media has lowered the barriers to entry for new entrepreneurs with regards to assisting customers to find, evaluate and buy new vehicles making the industry fiercely competitive (Hirsh., et al, 1999).

Social media has re-build the space of communication in such a manner which subsequently ensure easier access, user friendly applications and something that makes sense economically (Darsham, 2018: 975). This is supported by one of the interviewees. She said “Social media is the most cost effective and most engaging and reachable platform these days where you do not pay for it because the majority of it can be organic so you may sometimes be forced to pay to push your reach and audience”.

23.8 Disadvantages of Social Media Marketing

Someone at a dealership needs to be responsible in order to monitor each platform, respond to comments, answer questions and post product relevant content that the client deems valuable (Sharma, 2013: 5). This is supported by one of the interviewees. She said “ Maintaining social media platforms can be time intensive and with every campaign you need to have a specific strategy in place, for example your media campaign , creative strategy and in the stance you need to have a social strategy.

Social media marketing requires time investment and a company must realise the time commitment and accept or reject it as a factor in their operation (Rubathee & Yasdanifard, 2013: 5). This is supported by the interviewees, She said “ Car dealership, ABC Germiston pay for this on a retainer perspective because it is consistently being looked at and you have specialist looking at them, you then have an opportunity to ensure that you are organically reaching people and they are

reaching you again putting emphasis on your search word optimisation. Strategic consistent maintenance and analysing on an online basis”.

Negative comments are especially damaging to marketing campaigns. Unhappy customers and competitors have the ability to post downgrading and offensive pictures, posts or videos where marketers cannot do anything to prevent this from occurring (Rubathee & Yasdanifard, 2013: 5). This is supported by one of the interviewees. She said “The Ford Kuga situation is a very good example where it can literally kill your brand in a day. How fast it can be impactful and it can also be exceeding virtually and messages can overnight escalate to a point where there is a lot of negativity and if you don’t manage it well and don’t do social listening and do not act it can tarnish the brand significantly. Social networks need to be managed well in order to counteract harmful posts in a timely manner (Rubathee & Yasdanifard, 2013: 5).

24. Research Question, Problem, and Objectives addressed

The primary research question, problem statement and objectives are discussed individually below.

24.1 Research Question

Primary research question:

The perception of managers on social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry at car dealership, ABC Germiston.

This research question was answered in this qualitative study with the aid of an interview schedule through receiving management members perception on social media marketing in the automotive industry at car dealership, ABC Germiston. This information was received by all three management members where the results were collected regarding social media as a marketing tool through the findings of the interviews. It was clear in this study that social media as a marketing tool plays a significant role in car dealership, ABC Germiston.

Facebook has been identified as the highest ranked sub theme. Thus, it has been addressed. Thus, this social media platform has been identified as the most significant social media platform that that car dealership, ABC Germiston make use of. This is

supported by one of the participants where they responded “Facebook is the widely used platform of the social platforms at the moment. It has done exceptionally well where there is a wide customer acceptance of it across a broad demographic that is very nice taking into account customer profiles, age, races and more”.

The atmosphere in which the interviews were conducted had an influence on the way the interviewees responded to the questions asked. All three participants have a very busy schedule where they had to squeeze me in on their schedule for the day. All the management members showcased a certain type of mindset, keeping in mind that the Covid-19 pandemic influenced their answers in the same direction.

24.2 Research Problem

The problem under investigation in this particular study is to establish the perception that managers at car dealership, ABC Germiston have with regards to social media as a marketing tool. The research problem was addressed through outlining various forms of social media marketing tools such as WhatsApp and Facebook. The influence that this marketing tools have on brand awareness and brand loyalty was addressed. Comparing traditional media marketing with social media marketing was addressed. The future of social media in the automotive industry was addressed. Finally, the disadvantages and advantages of social media as a marketing tool was outlined and explained.

24.3 Objectives

24.3.1 To determine the perception of managers on social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry at car dealership, ABC Germiston.

It was determined that certain sub themes get used more than other sub themes by the management members according to the research conducted. It was identified that management members do make use of social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry.

24.3.2 To determine what social media platforms are the most useful in the automotive industry as a marketing tool to enhance business.

Facebook has been identified as the most useful social media platform according to the research being conducted. The managers identified this as a widely used platform taking customer profiles, age groups and different age groups into account. Thus, reaching a wider audience than Twitter, You Tube and WhatsApp.

24.3.3 To determine whether managers believe that social media as a marketing tool has an influence on their brand image, brand awareness and brand loyalty.

It has been identified in this study that social media as a marketing tool has a great influence on these three elements throughout this study. Through the use of social media as a marketing tool it assisted in maintaining top of the mind awareness especially in such a competitive environment when looking at how many brands there are in different categories in the automotive industry. Through the efficient use of social media marketing tool brand loyalty can also enhance the dealership over a period of time with good reviews and good content.

25. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shed light on social media as a marketing tool. Facebook is currently the primary social media marketing platform used by car dealership, ABC Germiston as it speaks to a wide audience. WhatsApp has been identified as a platform that is better suited for the internal use rather than marketing to a larger unknown audience. The platform is primary staying in contact with friends and family.

It is clear in this study that car dealership, ABC Germiston has made a significant move from traditional media to Social media and plans to continue in this fashion currently and in years to come. It has been identified that there are still a place for Traditional media marketing if used correctly reaching a specific target market or transforming a traditional media platform such as magazines into digital. It has been identified as a dying media in the Automotive industry with little opportunities for future growth.

This study emphasised that social media as a marketing tool can be used to enhance business and increase brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty. According

to the interviews being conducted social media marketing is identified as the future way of conducting marketing in the automotive industry.

This study did address the background of this study, and as a result motivate the research problem and the main issues and concepts. This was followed by the rationale, problem statement, research questions and research objectives. This study presented an in depth explanation of the marketing mix theory with its applicability to the study and the literature review. Conceptualisation of key words was discussed in this report. This research report also outlined the research paradigm, research design, population, sampling, data collection, problem and the objectives addressed, ethical considerations as well as the anticipated contribution of this study.

References

- Adaptly. 2020. *Automotive trend report: How digital media is transforming the car buying experience*. [Online]. Available at: <https://adaptly.com/insights/automotive-trend-report-how-digital-media-is-transforming-the-car-buying-experience/> [Accessed 16 April 2020].
- Antonella, S.A. 2017. *The effects of Marketing Mix on Companies Profitability: A Case of Automotive Industry in France*. [Online]. Available at: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0524/c82f773d95a2c5e5a8f8f25478bee693c2d4.pdf> [Accessed 8 April 2020].
- Appel, G. Grewal, L. Hadi, R. Stephen, A.T. 2019. *The future of social media in marketing*. [Online]. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336484814_The_future_of_social_media_in_marketing [Accessed 16 April 2020].
- Bartosh, E. Bsted, M. Eder, S. Knox, G. Nguye, T. O'Driscoll, S. Shimizu, T. 2014. *Social selling: A Digital blueprint for the automotive industry*. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.pwc.lu/en/automotive/docs/pwc-social-selling-a-digital-blueprint-for-the-automobile-industry.pdf> [Accessed 12 April 2020].
- Bilgin, F. 2018. *The effect of Social media marketing activities on brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty*. [Online]. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324809945_THE_EFFECT_OF_SOCIAL_MEDIA_MARKETING_ACTIVITIES_ON_BRAND_AWARENESS_BRAND_IMAGE_AND_BRAND_LOYALTY [Accessed 12 March 2020].
- Bradford, R. 2017. *Limitations and Delimitations of research*. [Online]. Available at: <https://blog.stcloudstate.edu/ims/2017/03/28/limitations-and-delimitations-in-research/#:~:text=Limitations%20are%20influences%20that%20the,the%20results%20should%20be%20mentioned.> [Accessed 25 June 2020].
- Business dictionary. 2020. *Advertising campaign definition*. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/advertising-campaign.html> [Accessed 13 May 2020].
- Cant, C.M. Van Heerden, C.H. 2013. *Marketing Management*. 2nd ed. Cape Town: Juta & Company Ltd.

Cocking, S. 2018. *How Social Media has changed the Automobile industry*. [Online]. https://irishtechnews.ie/how-social-media-has-changed-the-automobile-industry/?_cf_chl_jschl_tk__=a683efde870b00d1f1d1a49ad5b1d88f422e6674-1583396765-0-AdMV8bGbILsW_BQOSRtF-DOLToXQEdSCLfwYyR9apRv8Z_XVRo7sl_Fj2Fdun6AFSRLhcvQVDNsxlew2VCqgMz9xKV1LSkFBGC92fG-yue4dsyHHnWlQrml2VZ6f3J3hP2Z5w3cZjQCs_Eb3gEE5KW_FFYqeY04WfVmUbAvzGJ0xtlndhbgxWifNG4JCVHPn7BBLJ53o0UUuhjaLa25fRFspJYVhDN7YmOLZVmxBwcvUelSCxOZmBMbnGc9FU3J57Nfp8DWjgep-5qikniEy750r2MhbA24QqiUfWi4B6N1qX9N6URiXhp1DOGTewb5MM8enl0DtVELFPaTN-uJUzL4zY3u7-SzZrjgaov47Ji [Accessed 5 March 2020].

Darsham, B.M. 2018. *Influence of social media on vehicle purchasing decisions: An empirical study on automobile industry*. [Online]. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327679663_Influence_of_social_media_on_vehicle_purchasing_decisions_An_empirical_study_on_automobile_industry [Accessed 5 March 2020].

Dib, H. Alhaddad, A.A. 2015. *Determinants of brand image in social media*. [Online]. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283835135_Determinants_of_Brand_Image_in_Social_Media [Accessed 8 April 2020].

du Plooy – Cilliers, F. Davis, C. Bezuidenhout, R.M. 2014. *Research Matters*. 1st ed. Cape Town: Juta & Company Ltd.

Durmaz, Y. Efendioglu, I.H. 2016. *Travel from Traditional Marketing to Digital Marketing*. [Online]. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303940843_Travel_from_Traditional_Marketing_to_Digital_Marketing [Accessed 4 April 2020]

Ferrao, M. 2015. *Industry Overview: Automotive* [Online]. Available at: https://www.valueline.com/ticks/Industries/Industry_Analysis_Automotive.aspx#.XsaJKWqzZPY [Accessed 14 May 2020]

Geraghty, G. Conway, A.T. 2016. *The study of Traditional and Non-Traditional marketing communications: Target marketing in the events sector*. [Online]. Available

at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1075&context=tfschmtcon>
[Accessed 9 April].

Grobler, E. 2013. *Social media marketing versus traditional marketing in the South African motor industry*. [Online].
<https://scholar.ufs.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11660/2262/GroblerE.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> [Accessed 10 March 2020].

Guesalaga, R. and Kapelianis, D. 2012. *Research update: Social media and the sales organization*. SMA Webcast, Sales Management Association. [Online].
https://www.academia.edu/37995745/The_use_of_social_media_in_sales_Individual_and_organizational_antecedents_and_the_role_of_customer_engagement_in_social_media [Accessed 5 March 2020].

Gundlach, G.T. Wilkie, W.L. *The American Marketing association's new Definition of Marketing: Perspective and Commentary on the 2007 revision*. [Online]. Available at:
https://www.unf.edu/~ggundlac/pdfs/pub_07.pdf [Accessed 25 June 2020].

Hirsh, E. Rodewig, L.F. Soliman, P. Wheeler, S. 1999. *Changing channels in the automotive industry: The future of automotive marketing and distribution*. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.strategy-business.com/article/10102?gko=afc62> [Accessed 16 April 2020].

IKF. 2014. Can Whatsapp be used as a New Digitalm Marketing Tool [Online].
https://www.academia.edu/9466433/Can_WhatSApp_Be_Used_As_a_New_Digital_Marketing_Tool [Accessed 3 April 2020].

Khabir, S.M.J. 2016. *Methods of data collection*. [Online]. Available at:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325846997_METHODS_OF_DATA_COLLECTION#:~:text=Data%20collection%20is%20the%20process,research%20is%20common%20to%20all [Accessed 6 June 2020].

Kumar, N. Sharma, S. 2017. *Survey analysis on the usage and impact of WhatsApp messenger* [Online].
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316892755_Survey_Analysis_on_the_usage_and_Impact_of_WhatSapp_Messenger [Accessed 3 April 2020].

Makgopa, S.S. 2016. *Online social media usage of car dealerships in Gauteng Province, South Africa*. [Online].

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309896080_Online_social_media_usage_of_car_dealerships_in_Gauteng_Province_South_Africa [Accessed 5 March 2020].

Malthouse, E.C, Haenlein, M, Skiera, B, Wege, E. and Zhang, M. (2013). *Managing customer relationships in the social media era: introducing the social CRM house*, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*. [Online].

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1094996813000431> [Accessed 10 March 2020].

Odhiambo, C.A. 2012. *Social media as a tool of marketing and creating brand awareness*. [Online].

<https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/44591/Christine.A.Odhiambo.pdf?sequence=1> [Accessed 3 April 2020].

Owen, J. 2019. *10 Disadvantages of social media marketing & What to do?* [Online].

Available at: <https://techjackie.com/disadvantages-of-social-media-marketing/> [Accessed 13 May 2020].

Padayachy, I. 2019. *Types of Intrinsic factors that motivate King Price sales team leaders in Pretoria*. [Accessed 18 June 2020].

Provalis Research. 2020. QDA Miner Lite – *Free Qualitative Data Analysis Software*. [Online]. Available at: <https://provalisresearch.com/products/qualitative-data-analysis-software/freeware/> [Accessed 18 June 2020].

Rubathee, N. Yazdanifard, R. 2013. *Social media Marketing: Advantages and Disadvantages*. [Online]. Available at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256296291_Social_Media_Marketing_SOCIAL_MEDIA_MARKETING_ADVANTAGES_AND_DISADVANTAGES [Accessed 12 May 2020].

Sanjari, M. Bahramnezhad, F. Bahramnezhad, F, Khoshnava Fomani, M, Shoghi, M, Ali Cheraghi. 2014. *Ethical challenges of researchers in qualitative studies: the necessity to develop a specific guideline*. [Online].

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4263394/> [Accessed 11 March 2020].

Sharma, P. 2013. *Disadvantages and Advantages of Social Media Marketing*. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.wisitech.com/disadvantages-of-social-media-as-a-marketing-tool/> [Accessed 13 May 2020].

Taufique, K. Shahriar, F.M. 2011. *Online Social Media as a Driver of Buzz Marketing: Who's riding*. [Online]. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/220449382_Online_Social_Media_as_a_Driver_of_Buzz_Marketing_Who's_Riding [Accessed 13 May 2020].

Trainor, K.J, Andzulis, J.M. Rapp, A. and Agnihotri, R. (2014). *Social media technology usage and customer relationship performance: A capabilities-based examination of social CRM*, *Journal of Business Research*. [Online]. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0148296313001720> [Accessed 10 March 2020].

Tritama, H.B. Tarigan, R.E. 2016. *The effect of social media to the brand awareness of a product of a company*. [Online]. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307556250_The_Effect_of_Social_Media_to_the_Brand_Awareness_of_A_Product_of_A_Company (Accessed 3 April 2020).

Tung, I.T. 2017. *The impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty: The case of digital products in Vietnam*. [Online]. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326316213_The_impact_of_Social_media_marketing_on_Brand_loyalty_The_case_of_Digital_products_in_Vietnam [Accessed 8 April 2020].

Wise, L. 2018. *How the automotive industry is getting results from social media*. [Online]. <https://socialmediaweek.org/blog/2018/06/how-the-automotive-industry-is-getting-results-from-social-media/> [Accessed 12 March 2020].

Appendix A – Final Concept Document

Please see below

Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Literature Review - Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Methods	Ethics	Anticipated Findings	References
determine the perceptions of managers on social media as a marketing tool on the dealership	What is the perception of managers on social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry at Car dealership ABC, Germiston?	Social media is a concept that is important for many organisations today where managers and marketers in the automotive industry need to identify ways in which organisations can make the most and profitable use of social media platforms	Darsham B.M S.S Makgopa M J Scarth M.S Ntsike	-Social media types -Social media perception on the automotive company's brand -Social media vs traditional media -How Social media changed marketing in the automotive industry -Disadvantages of the use of social media as a marketing tool	Paradigm Interpretivism Epistemology: a Positive correlation between social media usage and marketing and brand image in the automotive industry Ontology	Qualitative Population Car dealership ABC, Germiston	In depth interviews using voice recorder	Ethics is an important aspect of research and I will conform to the standards set out in the Book Research matters	A Very positive attitude of the sample interviewed on the influence of social media on the automotive industry	Refer to reference list
Research Problem	Secondary Questions /objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories		Reality is a combination of reality and social construction	Sampling	Data Analysis Methods	Limitations	Anticipated Contribution	
This study aims to establish the perception that managers at Car dealership ABC, Germiston have with regards to social media as a marketing tool.	-the perception of managers at the dealership regarding the significance or insignificance of social media on their marketing activities -what extent can social media have an effect on the brand of the dealership	-Bidvest management -Social media -Automotive industry -Marketing -Social media -Automotive marketing -Marketing tools	Marketing mix model		Axiology Research should support current studies and should contribute adequately to the body of knowledge	Non-Probability Convenience sampling	Qualitative analysis. QDA miner application will be used to sort the information gathered from the interviews	The sample may be a bit too small where results might be subjective towards a certain area	A better understanding about how managers perceive social media to impact their dealership currently and in the future to come.	

Appendix B - Interview Schedule

Please see below

The perception of managers on social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry at Nissan South Africa

Social media types	1.What is your perception on the WhatsApp as a social media marketing tool to enhance business in the automotive industry 2. What is your perception on the Facebook as a social media marketing tool to enhance business in the automotive industry
Perception on Brand awareness and brand loyalty	3. How can social media as a marketing tool be used to enhance brand loyalty positively or negatively 4. How can social media as a marketing tool be used to enhance brand awareness positively or negatively
Social media versus Traditional marketing	5. What is your perception on the move from traditional media (newspapers and magazines) to social media marketing (WhatsApp and Facebook)? 6. Is there still a place for both traditional and social media marketing in the automotive industry?
How social media changed the automotive industry	7. What is your perception on the magnitude that social media changed the way marketing gets done in the automotive industry? 8. What is your perception on the future of social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry?
Advantages and Disadvantages of social media marketing	9. What is your perception on the disadvantages of social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry? Please name a few examples and elaborate. 10. What is your perception on the advantages of social media as a marketing tool in the automotive industry? Please name a few and elaborate.

R.Gerber 15004820

Appendix C – Safe assign originality report

Please see below

R.Gerber 15004820

Appendix D – Honours/PGDIP Ethical clearance letter

Please see below

R.Gerber 15004820

Appendix E – Confirmation of manuscript edited

Please see below

Appendix F – Gatekeeper letter and example of consent forms for participants

Please see below – The respondents consent forms are kept with me with the voice recording saved on a USB (Universal Serial Bus)