

RESEARCH PAPER

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The role of Instagram in creating brand awareness among the millennial skate culture of Cape Town.

Abstract

The study investigates the role of Instagram in creating brand awareness among the millennial skate culture of Cape Town. Interviews were administered to a sample group of 11 millennials in accordance with a qualitative ethnographic research design. The study aims to highlight the amplifying effect that the internet has on word-of-mouth about fashion brands, as well as the effect that using this unconventional marketing approach has on the brand's image and overall demand from consumers. Lastly, the study highlights the positive effects that word-of-mouth marketing has on a brand and its image, while demonstrating why traditional advertising lacks these positive effects on brand's images. The study found that Instagram allowed people to be aware of a group of brand loyalists, which in turn caused them to want to be a part of the niche fashion group too.

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1 Introduction

In a general sense, word-of-mouth (WOM) is the act of passing information from one person to another, in the form of a recommendation or a review. In the past, this flow of information mainly occurred orally. (Brysha, 2013) However, this research paper will be concerned with the marketing strategy that has been based on people spreading information relating to brand's products or services, and the impact that the rise of Instagram as a brand communication tool has had on this marketing strategy.

In the 1970s, the psychologist George Silverman discovered what he called "teleconferenced peer influence groups." He is therefore often referred to as the pioneer of word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM). (Brysha, 2013) Silverman then went on to coin the marketing strategy in his book, "The Secrets of Word-of-Mouth Marketing" in 2001, where he pointed out that the success of certain companies' products was largely due to WOMM, and not paid advertising. (Silverman, 2001)

The Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA) has broadly defined the WOMM strategy as "...marketing that encompasses dozens of marketing techniques that are geared toward encouraging and helping people to talk to each other about products." (WOMM, 2007) The Business Dictionary defines the marketing strategy in more specific terms. It states that WOMM is, "Oral or written recommendation by a satisfied customer to the prospective customers of a good or service." The definition goes on to state how WOMM is experienced, by stating that it is "considered to be the most effective form of promotion, it is also called word of mouth advertising which is incorrect because, by definition, advertising is a paid and non-personal communication." (Business Dictionary) This definition highlights the positive attributes that WOMM contains, as well as how the strategy is considered by the public.

1.1 Problem Statement

In relation to above mentioned definition by Business Dictionary, there is research that suggests that younger generations are increasingly more suspicious of advertising. (Forbes, 2015) This creates a gap for more authentic marketing to occupy. Furthermore, research indicates that 90% of people trust friends' recommendations over traditional advertisements. (Nielsen, 2012) Once again, one can see an area in

which online WOMM through social media sites like Instagram could be beneficial as these are essentially peer-to-peer reviews and recommendations. Instagram allows users to share content to all their followers instantly. This sharing of content through the internet could increase the reach and effectiveness of WOMM. Lastly, research suggests that visual marketing through Instagram is on the rise, while marketing through other social media and social network sites is falling. (Henry, 2016) This creates a need to fully research this increasingly important brand communication tool, especially in context of Cape Town. This is due to the fact that most millennials use Instagram to communicate and share content with one another. (Kellmurry, Above the Fold Magazine) It is within this millennial age group that the Cape Town skaters of this study find themselves, and it therefore follows that these skaters also use Instagram to communicate with one another.

1.2 Relevance of Study

This topic is relevant and worth researching because while there is a large volume of information on WOMM strategies with more direct control and management, like referral systems or WOM “agents”, there is lack of research on the effect that visual WOMM on Instagram has on a brand or company’s success.

In terms of information specific to South Africa, there is also a lack of research and information on e-WOMM and its effectiveness in this context. Furthermore, studies on the flow of information through Instagram as a communication tool has specifically been researched in terms of its effect in America, but the effect that this type of online communication has on millennial skaters in Cape Town has never been explored.

This study will be using a specific brand as way of an example; the lifestyle and skate brand Supreme, and will investigate the brand’s communication through its Instagram account. There is no peer-reviewed information or research on Supreme’s Instagram communication as a marketing strategy. Lastly, there is a lack of information on the effect of Instagram as a communication tool in creating international awareness for a brand, without the brand physically being available in a certain country. The study aims to fill this gap as Supreme is not available for sale in Cape Town, but is well known and respected by the skate culture in Cape Town due to WOM through Instagram. The purpose of this is to generate information on e-WOMM specifically in a South

African context, as well as to gain insight into how millennials skaters in Cape Town experience e-WOMM through Instagram by brands like Supreme.

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 Primary Research Question

What is the role of Instagram in creating brand awareness among the millennial skate culture of Cape Town?

1.3.2 Secondary Questions

- How is traditional or paid-for advertising experienced by the customer, when compared to the experience of e-WOMM?
- How is Instagram used as a brand communication tool to develop e-WOM for brands like Supreme?
- How do Cape Town millennials that are interested in skate culture experience Supreme's e-WOM on Instagram?

This study aims to demonstrate the degree that Instagram can be used as a brand communication tool to create and foster WOM, and how this e-WOM is used by brands and companies to create global awareness. The objective is to demonstrate the degree of influence that brands Instagram WOM has on skater millennials living in Cape Town, and how this consumer-created information creates a more authentic marketing strategy, which in turn creates a more authentic brand image for customers. This in turn affects the brands appeal to the public. The study's objective is also to demonstrate how consumers experience traditional advertising, and how online WOM through Instagram creates a different, and in some cases more appealing, experience for customers.

In conclusion, the study therefore aims explore the extent to which Instagram and its users amplify WOM for brands and companies. This will be aided by looking specifically at a brand not located in Cape Town, but a brand that is still widely known in the culture despite the lack of physical access for its Capetonian fans. The focus will be to assess the effect of Instagram communications as a form of WOM, and how a brand can use this organic flow of information to increase demand in an authentic

manner. The success factors of this marketing strategy will be demonstrated through using Supreme as an example.

1.4 Research Methodology

The literature review will highlight theories and views associated with this research topic. This will include reviewing literature on traditional advertising, WOM on the internet, as well as information on Cape Town's skate culture and the brand Supreme.

In order to best achieve the aims of this research paper, an ethnographic qualitative approach has been chosen. The study plans to conduct interviews with skaters that fall within the millennial age group, and live in the city of Cape Town. The sampling method will be purposive due to the fact that the study aims to investigate a certain group of people. Interviews will be conducted with each member of the sample group in a semi-structured manner. The responses will be voice recorded, to later be transcribed in accordance with content analysis requirements. Once this has been completed, the information will be coded in line with emergent coding requirements.

The interview will include questions that pertain to the manner in which they experience Instagram WOM, how they experience Supreme through Instagram and how this online WOM creates brand awareness. The interviews shall also aim to gain insight about how a brand not available in Cape Town (Supreme) can have such loyalty just by having a marketing strategy that appeals to niche markets that rely heavily on customer's WOM through Instagram. (Hawgood, 2016)

1.5 Rationale

The reason for this specific research topic is the interest in how a brand appears or is expressed through its brand communication. While there definitely is value in paid out-of-home advertising, as seen with billboards, bus stops or physical publications, the mentioned strategies do not always create an authentic image and demand for the consumer. The word authentic refers to the consumer seeing the brand as more than just trying to sell its own products. This is due to the fact the product or brand is over exposed to the consumer, whether the person wants it or not, to ensure that they are aware of the brand and do not forget it. (Newman, 2015) It is the brand or company advertising itself, instead of satisfied customers advertising the product to their peers.

Many feel this is not the most effective way for a brand to show the consumer that he or she needs or should value the product. (Forbes, 2015)

WOM has existed for centuries and has always been an important way of gaining new information from other people. (Silverman, 2001) However, the rise of the Instagram as a brand communication tool has made WOMM extremely influential to a brand's popularity or demand. (Charrier, 2016) The increase of visual advertising has also made Instagram an even stronger communication tool for brands to create a brand image. The fact that Instagram has become such a powerful and effective communication tool for brand's therefore prompts a study specifically on Instagram WOM. (Charrier, 2016)

This study is not concerned with the sport of skate boarding. While the sport is popular and important around the world, the study is interested in the unique manner in which certain skate brands market themselves. In the case of Supreme, they use WOM through Instagram to their benefit. (William, 2015) For example, Supreme do not do paid advertising and focus mainly on their website and Instagram profile. (Hawgood, 2016) That said, they do not over-use these channels of brand communication. The brand posts two look-books a year, which are photos showcasing the upcoming summer and winter season products. (Hawgood, 2016) They do not keep reposting the upcoming products in the hope of creating demand or "hype" for releases. The brand posts the photos once, and then leave their brand loyals to repost and distribute these photos electronically to their friends and peers if they wish. (Hawgood, 2016) Essentially, the brand leaves the rest of its marketing to its fans.

Furthermore, and due to the far-reaching effect of Instagram, people in Cape Town can see this sharing of Supreme has an authentic international demand, which in turn makes them want the product too. The brand does not look desperate to sell its products by constantly advertising to its potential customers, but merely allows one to access the brand's products if they wish. (Hawgood, 2016) Furthermore, the brand is able to maintain its "skater image" and reject the image of being a large corporate company by not using big, paid advertising. (William, 2015) One could assume that this resonates with the counter-culture attitudes that skate culture, and especially Supreme, embody. It is people within the street wear culture that are sharing these

products by their own choice, and this makes the product that much more appealing. This international awareness of brand loyalty through Instagram can be said to have a snowballing effect. This is due to the fact that as more people post photos of Supreme's products, the awareness of brand loyalty increases, which in turn creates more posting of Supreme's products on Instagram. (William, 2015) This snowball effect is what has caused Supreme to have a loyal, cult-like following globally. (Highsnobiety Fashion) This massive following can best be seen in Complex's documentary profiling the brand Supreme, as well as those that are Supreme's biggest fans. (Complex News, Sold-Out Documentary)

1.6 Conceptualisation

1.6.1 Advertising:

Advertising is a means of communication with the users of a product or service. Advertisements are messages paid for by those who send them and are intended to inform or influence people who receive them. (The Economic Times, 2016)

1.6.2 Brand Awareness:

The extent to which a brand is recognized by potential customers, and is correctly associated with a particular product. (BusinessDictionary.com, 2016) Management study guide define it as "the probability that consumers are familiar about the availability of the product and existence of the brand. It is the degree to which consumers precisely associate the brand with the specific product." (Managementstudyguide.com, 2016)

1.6.3 Brand Communication:

Brand communication refers to the act of creating a brand image by exchanging information with its potential and current customers. (Cambridge Online Dictionary) This communication can be in the form of public advertising, customer-care or WOMM.

1.6.4 Brand Marketing Communication Tool:

This concept is defined as "all the messages and media you deploy to communicate with the market." (MaRS, 2016) In the context of this study, the research views Instagram as a marketing communication tool for brands to utilise in order to generate authentic word-of-mouth.

1.6.5 Brand Loyalty:

Brand loyalty is the extent of consumer faithfulness towards a specific brand and this faithfulness is expressed through repeat purchases and other positive behaviours such as word of mouth advocacy, irrespective of the marketing pressures generated by the other competing brands. (Kbmanage.com, 2016)

1.6.6 Consumer:

A consumer is a person who pays a business or brand for a product or a service. (Merriam-webster.com, 2016)

1.6.7 Instagram:

Webopedia (2016) defines Instagram as “an online photo sharing social Web service that lets you share your life with friends through a series of pictures captured with a mobile device.” In the context of a brand, it allows one to have online brand profile that can share as many, or as little, photos and short videos of its product or service as it likes. All that follow the brand’s profile can then see this media. The users are then given the opportunity to repost and share what the brand has posted with people that follow the user.

1.6.8 Supreme:

Supreme is a skate brand turned lifestyle brand, started in New York. In 1994, founder James Jebbia opened Supreme’s first store in downtown Manhattan. At present, Supreme operates from two physical stores in America, two in Europe and five in the city of Tokyo. (Supreme About, 2016) They also sell from an online store, which is restricted to countries already containing Supreme stores. Due to the scarcity of its products, coupled with the staggering demand, an underground market of Supreme reselling has been created. This involves individuals making a living off buying Supreme from the stores, and then selling it at vastly inflated prices to people who either were unable to buy the product before it sold out, or were unable to get the product because it was not available to their country. (Sold Out: The Underground Economy of Supreme Resellers Documentary, Complex News, 2015) The brand often does collaborations with other brands like The North Face, Vans and Everlast. (Hawgood, 2016) Furthermore, the brand often enlists artists and celebrities to

collaborate on products, whether it be accessories or clothing projects. (Supreme About, 2016)

1.6.9 Marketing Strategy:

A Marketing Strategy is defined as a coherent and agreed upon process formed with the aim of increased revenue and market share. Broadly speaking, marketing strategies refer to the set of actions designed to meet your business goals. (Phillipson, 2016)

1.6.10 Millennial Skate Culture of Cape Town:

This concept refers to people living in Cape Town aged 16 – 24. This concept also refers to their interest and culture as being skate or skateboard related. Due to their interest, the skaters will also be interested in brands that identify as being part of the skate culture.

1.6.11 Word-of-Mouth Marketing (WOMM) and e-WOM:

WOMM is defined as “...marketing that encompasses dozens of marketing techniques that are geared toward encouraging and helping people to talk to each other about products.” (WOMMA, 2007) In the case of this research project, the concept of e-WOMM will relate to word-of-mouth that occurs online through Instagram. This excludes paid agents intended to generate word-of-mouth, and only includes objective sharing of information through Instagram. Plainly speaking, it is the posting and reposting of photos of products between users on Instagram.

1.7 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 4: Findings and Data Analysis

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Addendum A & B: Questionnaire and answers.

1.8 Delimitation/Demarcation of the Study

When talking about WOM and WOMM, the study refers to sharing of information between members of a social network site. This excludes direct control over WOM from brands, as shown in referral systems, paid agents and seeding products to influencers on a payment basis. This does not count as objective. The study will also not be discussing WOMM on twitter, blogs and Facebook as these have been extensively researched already. The study's scope has been narrowed to only a certain age group (millennial, 16 – 24) in the City of Cape Town. This excludes other cities in South Africa that have an active skate culture. The study's focus has been narrowed to Cape Town due to the fact that the study does not have access, or the time, to investigate members of the skate culture in other cities.

2 Literature Review:

2.1 Introduction

Due to the fact that this research paper is concerned with WOM (Word-of-Mouth) through Instagram, the literature that has been reviewed relates to WOM in the traditional sense, electronic WOM, Instagram as a communication tool, the Cape Town skate culture and lastly, Supreme as a case study for this marketing approach. These topics have been used to guide the literature review as the study aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of electronic WOM, and how this WOM is harnessed by brands like Supreme to create authentic awareness or loyalty to the brand in Cape Town.

2.1.1 Traditional Word-of-Mouth Marketing

WOM or WOMM (Word-of-Mouth Marketing) has seen a rise in popularity due to it being increasingly seen as an innovative marketing strategy for brands. (Forbes, 2014) Some have called it “the most effective, yet least understood marketing strategy.” (Misner, 1999) The Business Dictionary however, defines it as, “oral or written recommendation by a satisfied customer to the prospective customers of a good or service.” (Business Dictionary) It has also been noted that brands are turning to WOMM strategies due to the fact that traditional strategies are losing their effectiveness, with the consumer attitudes towards advertising plummeting as early as 2002 and 2004. (Nail, 2005)

As one can therefore see, WOMM has seen a rise due to it being an effective alternative to paid advertising. This highlights the importance of studying the effects of WOM. Furthermore, it highlights the positives to WOM, in comparison to the negatives of paid advertising. However, the rise of the internet has had serious effects on WOMM approaches, and has therefore prompted studies specially on WOM through the internet, or e-WOM. This point is agreed upon by Breazeale, who states, “[the] widespread use of the internet for shopping, information gathering and entertainment purposes has changed not only the ways that WOM can be studied and manipulated, but also the very nature of the phenomenon.” (Breazeale, 2009)

2.1.2 e-WOMM through Social Media Sites

It therefore follows that studies that have been conducted specifically on e-WOMM have aimed to investigate what effect the internet age has had on WOM for brands, as well as the effectiveness of e-WOM in the modern age. Dellarocas' 2003 study investigated the very effect that digitalisation has had word-of-mouth as a brand communication tool, by pointing out the positive effects that said digitalisation of the the marketing strategy has caused. He states that it allows brands to build positive reputation with its customers. This is due to the fact that "online feedback mechanisms can serve as a low cost and, potentially, effective channel for acquiring and retaining customers, complementary to advertising." (Dellarocass, 2003) However, Dellarocas also points out that bad reviews can spread equally, if not faster, when on the internet. (Dellarocass, 2003) Another benefit pointed out by this study, is that of increased insight and understanding into consumer reactions to a brand's products. The downside to this is that competitor brands can also study and learn from consumer reactions to one's own brand. (Dellarocass, 2003)

It is therefore evident that the internet has changed the effect as well as the manner in which a brand can harness WOM. Literature focusing specifically on e-WOM through social media is therefore required for this literature review in order to investigate its specific use of WOMM on these platforms, and to evaluate its effectiveness as a brand communication tool. This is due to the fact that this study focuses on utilising WOM through social media sites like Instagram.

An article by Rigik states that having positive influence through WOM on social media sites is crucial for a business or brand's success. (2015) There have been quite a number of research papers and articles written on twitter and Facebook as communication tools for brand marketing, but those on Instagram are scarce. Instagram's active user base has been recorded as 400 million. (Statista, 2016) This demonstrates the importance of Instagram in the discussion of e-WOM as a strategy to market a brand's product or service. Furthermore, it demonstrates how many Instagram users there are in different countries. This emphasises the reach that Instagram has across the globe.

One study that was reviewed investigated the topic of Instagram influencers, as a form of WOM. (Dorcas, 2014) In this study, it is argued that Instagram influencers have an amplified effect due to Instagram's vast international reach, coupled with people's prevalence to trust recommendations through WOM over traditional advertisements. (Dorcas, 2014) Nielsen substantiates this fact as it states that globally, "90% of consumers trust peer recommendations while only 33% trust advertisements." (Nielsen, 2012) South African statistics show that 20% of conversations are about brands, and 1 in 3 recommendations through WOM are acted upon by the receiver. (Media Update, 2009) This is extremely significant to this study as influencers are an integral part of WOMM and this article highlights how this influencer effect is amplified through Instagram. Furthermore, the study by Nielsen presents quantitative results that prove that WOM is indeed more effective when compared to traditional advertising.

In 2009, Michael Breazeale conducted research on what he called, "word-of-mouse." (Breazeale, 2009) Breazeale's study aimed to determine the manner in which e-WOMM operated, as well as the effectiveness of e-WOMM in modern marketing for brands. The study was conducted in accordance with a quantitative methodology, which analysed past research to attempt to achieve some sort of synthesis of knowledge. He concluded that WOM online changes the way the brand communicates, making it bi-directional and enhancing the consumer's power.

WOMM through the internet is vastly cheaper, when compared to paid advertising in publications or online. (Breazeale, 2009) This therefore highlights how the cost-effectiveness of e-WOMM is another aspect that adds to e-WOMM's effectiveness as whole. This relates to this research project as it aims to explore the effectiveness of e-WOMM, and therefore has to investigate all aspects and factors that contribute to e-WOMM effectiveness or success in creating brand awareness.

One work pointed out that the reason for e-WOMM effectiveness, and the fact that the marketing approach is increasingly important, is due to peer-to-peer connectivity that enhances effectiveness through social media sites. (The Morphology of Word-of-Mouth) The most recent review was by Renfrow (2016), which investigated the effect of paid and organic social media advertising and what role these approaches play in

digital media campaigns. This study defined organic social media as, “viral discussions that originate with the consumer.” (Renfrow, 2016) This approach is said to be received well by potential consumers due to the fact that the endorser is seen to have “no agenda other than give a truthful opinion.” (Renfrow, 2016) This agrees and contributes to the positives of e-WOMM, as discussed above. Another positive effect of this organic approach is that reactions are used as indications for what is and is not working for a product or service. This point was agreed upon in the above mentioned Dellarocas study. (2003) Furthermore, a point on which Renfrow agrees with Dellarocas is that organic WOMM through social media sites can be negative if bad reviews start circulating. (Renfrow, 2016)

The topic of social network websites has been also been researched by Jie Zhang and Terry Daugherty. (2009) The study aimed to examine “...the indirect influence of social network websites on users and how that indirect influence leads to word-of-mouth related behaviours in social network sites.” (Zhang and Daugherty, 2009) In the study they apply the psychological theory of the “third-person-effect’ to show that people interrupt media through social network websites as more influential to others than they do to themselves. (Zhang and Daugherty, 2009) This article is significant because it highlights the authentic image that WOMM through social network websites causes its consumers to experience. Furthermore, this study demonstrates the effect of indirect influence on consumers.

Another reason WOM is so influential and effective is due to people often posting photos of their purchases on Instagram. (Kellmurray, Above the Fold Magazine) The article goes on to state that the consumer is compelled to post a photo of the product with a brand relevant hashtag. This is due to the fact that, “it opens the flow of communication between brand and customer.” (Kellmurray) This communication between brand and customer is seen by all on Instagram, and this creates an authentic demand for the brand as well as an authentic brand image. (Kellmurray) It is therefore evident the effect that WOMM through Instagram has for a brand. This article also highlights the effect that paid, sponsored or promoted advertising cannot have due to its lack in authentic communication between the brand, the customer and all that follow or have interest in the brand.

The alternative to the organic approach is also discussed in detail in Renfrow's study. (2016) She defines promoted social media marketing as originating from the brand and is often paid for. This includes online advertisements that run on Facebook for example, that uses one's interests to ensure the advertisements are relevant to the consumer. While this approach is effective, it is "always interruptive and comes in between what a person is reading, writing, or viewing." (Renfrow, 2016) The study goes on to state that, "promoted social media may not have the same credibility as organic social media. However, it allows the advertiser to target your content down to the individual level." (Renfrow, 2016) It is evident from this study that while promoted social media marketing may be relevant to the customer, it does not create an authentic and credible experience for the potential customer. This is a point that is agreed upon in the objectives of this study. Furthermore, this study substantiates the positive effect of e-WOMM on consumers and their experience of the brand, while highlighting the aspects that promoted or paid advertising fail to achieve in respects to how consumers experience or see the brand. These articles and studies are significant to this research because it demonstrates the effectiveness, authenticity and cost-efficiency that Instagram as a brand communication tool has when marketing with e-WOMM.

2.1.3 Brand Awareness/Loyalty to Supreme and Cape Town Skate Culture

Supreme, the skate and lifestyle brand this research plans to investigate as a case study, really demonstrates the manner in which Instagram can be used to amplify and utilize WOMM internationally. Unfortunately, Supreme does not have a mass of information on it. This is due to the fact that the founder, James Jebbia, is extremely secretive about his brand's history or doctrine it operates by. (Hawgood, 2016) However, the fashion blog Highsnobiety, identifies its less-is-more marketing strategy in an article profiling the skate brand. The article demonstrates how Supreme uses e-WOM, which includes their Instagram profile, to generate authentic buzz for its products. (William, 2015) The Business of Fashion's journalists have also investigated the loyal international following that Supreme has gained. While this is not peer-reviewed or academic, it demonstrates the international loyalty that Supreme has, and how their reliance on WOM and e-WOMM, amplifies this loyal, cult following. (The Business of Fashion, 2012)

Due to a limited amount of scholarly literature on Instagram and the marketing strategy of Supreme, sources outside of the realm of formal academic literature have been used. These articles on Supreme as a brand are important to this study as they demonstrate Supreme's approach to marketing, as well as the large international following it has gained, even though the products are only available in a select few countries. As a whole, Supreme will provide an example of a brand that uses e-WOMM to create brand awareness, and how other strategies may not achieve the same benefits that e-WOMM does if implemented by Supreme.

There is a lack of academic information on Cape Town's skate culture or how they respond to different marketing approaches. "Jas Boude" was watched in order to gain insight into those that live and skate in Cape Town. (Jas Boude, 2015) By studying those that live in Cape Town and identify with the skate culture within the city, one gain suggestions into how the group may respond to different marketing strategies. This creates a gap in the research in which this study can fill by showing how Cape Town skaters experience and perceive marketing strategies.

2.2 Conclusion

It is therefore evident from all the literature reviewed that e-WOMM as a marketing strategy is extremely effective for brands to used, when compared to paid advertising. All research papers agreed on the benefits of e-WOMM, while also agreeing on the aspects that paid advertisements lack for the potential customer. These aspects were mainly defined as lack of authenticity and positive experience for the potential customer. Furthermore, all research agreed that digitization and the rise of the internet has had a profound effect on WOMM, as well as how brands can utilise e-WOMM.

Literature specifically on the use of instagram as a brand communication tool, and how brands utilise this tool for WOMM, was also reviewed. The studies all concluded that Instagram was an effective communication tool for brands due to the social media site's vast user base, and the fact that people posting photos and information on the platform appear authentic. This is due to them not having agenda other than giving their own honest opinion on the product. The articles on the brand Supreme were also reviewed. These gave insight into the loyal following Supreme has across the globe,

as well as insight into their marketing strategy and how big a role e-WOMM plays in the following they have. Lastly, a review of literature relating to skate culture in Cape Town was conducted in order to gain information on the culture's interests and habits. This was done in the hope that it would give suggestions or clues into how skaters experience paid advertising, when compared to more authentic marketing approaches.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This research paper aims to investigate marketing brands through Instagram, and how this marketing strategy can amplify the effect of WOM. This topic will specifically be focused on skaters that live in Cape Town as this is a niche market. In order to best achieve insight into the effects on e-WOM on Capetonian skaters, the study will be administered according to qualitative principles. The participants will be questioned on how they experience word-of-mouth through social media, as well as how they experience a brand that utilises e-WOM on Instagram very successfully. Furthermore, the sample group will be asked questions about how they perceive traditional advertising, as well as questions that pertain to brand loyalty generated from niche word-of-mouth through social network sites.

Therefore, the question to be investigated is, “What is the role of Instagram in creating brand awareness among the millennial skate culture of Cape Town?”

3.2 Research Questions

The following research questions will be explored:

3.2.1 Primary Research Question:

What is the role of Instagram in creating brand awareness among the millennial skate culture of Cape Town?

3.2.2 Secondary Research Question:

- How is traditional or paid-for advertising experienced by the customer, when compared to the experience of e-WOMM?
- How is Instagram used as a brand communication tool to develop e-WOM for brands like Supreme?
- How do Cape Town millennials that are interested in skate culture experience Supreme’s e-WOM on Instagram?

3.3 Research Objectives and Aims

This research aims to investigate the amplifying effect that WOM through Instagram can have for a brand's loyalty and awareness. This will be specifically investigated in terms of Capetonian skaters, as they are considered a niche market. Furthermore, the study also aims to demonstrate the experienced difference between e-WOMM and traditional advertising within this niche market. Lastly, the research aims to achieve insight into how the brand Supreme, which is not available in South Africa, uses e-WOMM to generate loyalty and extensive brand awareness locally.

3.4 Methodology

Methodology is defined as a system of methods used in a particular area of study or activity. Quantitative research has a systematic and objective approach that uses numerical data. This data is only selected from a subgroup of a population in order to generalize the results to that of the whole population.

The advantage of the quantitative approach is that it is able to be objective, as well as being able to generalise the findings for the whole population. The disadvantages, however, are that it is only able to deal with numerical findings and sample groups that are representative of the population. It is therefore unable to research findings that are expressed in words.

It therefore follows that a qualitative research approach is best suited for this study. This research approach is based on subjective findings that come in the form of words that express feeling and experience. Furthermore, it is exploratory in nature, which implies in-depth investigations into phenomena. This approach therefore focuses on understanding a phenomenon, rather than applying results to the whole population. Therefore, a qualitative approach is most suited as the study plans to investigate the phenomenon of e-WOMM specifically within the skateboard culture. The study does not aim to generalise findings for the whole population, it aims to only study a culture within the population.

The answers to the questions will be subjective insights from the participants and are therefore required to be in words rather than numbers. The selected tradition within the qualitative approach is therefore ethnography. This is due to the fact that the study

aims to interpret and describe a cultural or social group. The disadvantages of the qualitative approach are that those researching may let bias or preconceptions affect the findings. This potential issue must therefore be monitored. Lastly, a disadvantage of the qualitative approach is a lack of replicability. This refers to the fact that the study is not

3.5 Population and Sample

The population for this study will be all those living in Cape Town that skate or identify with skate culture. The population age will be between 16 – 24. The sample group that will be taken from this population will have 8 participants. The sampling method will be a non-probability sampling method. Random sampling is not required due to the results not being required to be representative of the population. If the study aimed to generalise the findings to the whole population, then probability sampling would be required for validity. The type of sampling within this sampling approach will be purposive sampling as the study aims interview and gain insight into certain individuals (16-24), that identify with the skate culture and live in Cape Town. It can therefore be said that the target population is a homogenous group, as they all belong to the subculture of skating.

The sampling type could also be defined as snowball sampling as the interviewees may give insight into further potential sample group members. This is due to the fact that skate cultures tend to be quite tight-knit communities. The size of the sample group is therefore not certain as more participants may join through snowball sampling. The group has been selected due to the fact that the study aims to gain insight into the feelings and experiences of those within the cultural or social group. The sample age has been kept relatively young as there are more young skaters in the city of Cape Town. Furthermore, research suggests young people use social media more than people that are older. (Pew Research Centre)

3.6 Research Design

The research design for this research paper is a qualitative ethnographic study. It could also be considered phenomenology in the sense that it aims to investigate the phenomenon of e-WOM. However, the study is aimed at a certain subculture and its WOM, which makes ethnographic research the most fitting title.

The study aims to gain its insights from the sample group by way of interviews. The interviews will be administered to the sample group in a semi-structured manner, with the sample group being required to answer the questions in spoken form, with the researcher recording the answers electronically. The participants consented to the voice recording of the interviews, which were then transcribed by the researcher. By using qualitative semi-structured interviews as the data collection tool, the study is able to gain insight into how the participants feel about and experience WOM on Instagram, as well as the experienced feelings towards brands that utilise traditional advertising. The effect that WOM has on brand's international awareness of loyalty will also be investigated by using Supreme as an example. The research subjects will relate to if skaters are aware and even loyal to the brand, without it being available for sale in South Africa.

The use of a semi-structured instead of a structured interview allows the researcher to generate questions if they feel a topic or aspect needs further investigation or clarification. These questions are generated from open question that the researcher begins with. This includes detail-orientation and clarification probes aimed at ensuring the researcher understands what the participants are talking about or trying to say. These techniques, coupled with the semi-structured approach, allows even further insight into the experiences of adolescent skaters in Cape Town.

The researcher will also be able to use observation while conducting the interviews. This will be achieved by noting the participant's reactions to certain questions. This information will be additional and will only be used to validate responses in certain instances. The information gathered from the interviews will then be analysed in line with content analysis requirements. This refers to the systematic techniques of compressing transcribed interviews into less information so that it is more efficiently coded. Once the content analysis is completed, the findings will be coded using emergent coding. The coded answers are then separated into themes, which will then undergo thematic analysis in order to identify any commonalities that will eventually lead to an answer to the research question.

4 Findings and Data Analysis

4.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis has been chosen for the analysis of the data extracted from the 9 interviews with the sample group. This method of analysis is defined as a systematic, replicable techniques for compressing many words of texts into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding. It allows one to make inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages (Maree, 2016; 111). This approach has been chosen because it is the most suited for describing a lived experience of a certain group or subculture. Furthermore, this data analysis approach allows the researcher to condense lengthy interview answers into manageable segments. (*Ibid.*)

The content analysis will be applied to all 9 interview transcripts in order to determine themes or commonalities within the data. The researcher will achieve this by interpreting the underlying meaning of the transcripts. Once the content analysis has been completed, the data is to be coded for further investigation and thematic identification

4.2 Emergent Coding

The coding process involves the researcher carefully reading through the transcribed data and separating into meaningful analytical units. The researcher is required to mark each segment with descriptive symbols or words for easier identification of themes or commonalities within the data. Meaningful segments are referred to as meaning units which can be defined as group of words that would communicate sufficient information to provide a piece of meaning to the reader. The coding acts as a heuristic tool to enable further investigation and discovery by using meaning units as collection points for significant data. Furthermore, they enable the researcher to continue to make discoveries about the deeper realities in the data. In the context of this study, open or emergent coding was used. This method of coding was chosen because it allows the researcher to easily retrieve and collect all the data associated with themes or commonalities. These commonalities can then be analysed and examined together and in relation to one another. (*Ibid.*) The coded transcripts from the interviews have been added to addendum B of this research paper. All themes

and analysis thereof was derived from the coded transcripts and the transcripts are therefore if one wants a more detailed look at the participant's responses.

4.3 Thematic Analysis

4.3.1 Physical experience

Some of the respondents interviewed stated that they liked physical stores for fashion brands because they were easily accessible and products are therefore easy to buy. Easy to buy implies the products are relatively cheap, the stores are well-stocked and not out of the way. The respondents who had positive things to say about physical stores for fashion brands also stated that they were often introduced to new brands or items by walking past a store and seeing what is on offer. This ties in with the first point of physical stores being seen by many as a positive or enjoyable experiences, due to the fact that physical stores make fashion brands the most accessible. However, the accessibility of a fashion brand or its store was not seen by all respondents as having a positive effect on the brand's image and popularity.

The respondents who were not interested in big fashion brands like H&M and Topman stated that it was too popular, and this popularity reduced its appeal. They went on to state that most people shop at these stores and by one doing the same, one loses one's uniqueness and personal expression. The clothes appeal to too many people in the city of Cape Town, and this mass appeal is what most of the respondents disliked the most about big fashion brands.

4.3.2 Advantages of traditional advertising

The respondents who liked physical stores like H&M, Cotton On and Topman stated that advertising through traditional methods like print publications and billboards were experienced positively. The reason provided for why they liked traditional advertising approaches was that it keeps the consumer up to date with sales and product offerings. Furthermore, it was stated that magazine and billboard advertising kept the brand relevant and made sure the consumer did not forget the brand or its current offerings. One respondent was also of the opinion that due to the fact that billboard and magazine advertising is a large expense for a brand, seeing brands using these methods implies that the brand is doing well. This, it was stated, in turn implies the products the brands are offering are respectable and good, as the brand is making

enough money to use these expensive traditional advertising approaches. The positive responses to these marketing approaches were outweighed by the negative perceptions however.

4.3.3 Disadvantages of traditional advertising

The majority of respondents had negative perceptions of billboard and magazine advertising for fashion brands. The negative views centred around the previously mentioned issues of making the brand too accessible to too many people. The respondents stated that the brands that used these methods became ‘too popular’, ‘over-advertised’ and made the brands look ‘desperate.’ This last point of the brand looking desperate conflicts with the other respondent who stated that it showed him the brand was making a lot of money and had good products. One respondent stated that expensive advertising was a signal to steer clear of a certain brand, as it showed how heavily advertised it was to the masses. The issue of accessibility of fashion brands is extremely evident here, with the minority of the respondents seeing heavy exposure as positive, while the majority interviewed had negative perceptions of traditional advertising and the effect it has on fashion brand’s image.

4.3.4 Online word-of-mouth creates brand awareness and loyalty

The majority of respondents that were interviewed expressed positive views towards word-of-mouth through Instagram. The main reason for viewing online word-of-mouth in a positive light is the fact that it acts as an indication to the public that the fashion brand is popular or relevant. It was said that this perceived popularity through Instagram word-of-mouth makes the brand and its products more appealing to consumers. This fact was increased by the view that all word-of-mouth is not sponsored, and is therefore authentic expression of the person’s views. This authenticity or “being real” was highlighted by most respondents, as well as the fact that traditional advertising lacked this authenticity. This was because respondents viewed it as the brand marketing itself for its own profits. Furthermore, it was stated by the respondents that this word-of-mouth about fashion brands, whether it be online or in person, creates a unifying effect that fosters brand loyalty. This is due to the fact that discussing fashion brands with people with the same interests creates a niche group or “culture”, as one respondent stated, that members feel a part of when they partake in word-of-mouth.

The respondents also acknowledged the power of the internet, and the amplifying effect that the internet has on word-of-mouth and the spread thereof. Therefore, it is clear from the interviews that fashion brand's awareness online has an effect on the consumer's brand loyalty. This is due to the fact that when brand awareness is created or established through online word-of-mouth, it creates loyalty because consumers feel part of a niche, counterculture group.

As an example of the type of brand loyalty created through online brand awareness on Instagram, respondents were questioned about their knowledge of Supreme and whether the respondents were loyal to the brand or not. The majority of respondents had heard of Supreme, despite its complete lack of availability in South Africa. The ways the respondents found out about the brand varied from seeing other skaters wearing Supreme pieces, to seeing items online. This highlights the fact that not one respondent found out about Supreme through traditional advertising.

When those that were aware of Supreme were asked if they were loyal to the skate brand, most answered positively. The reason given for brand loyalty related back to perceived brand awareness through Instagram word-of-mouth. Respondents stated that Instagram allows them to see and experience Supreme loyalists discussing the brand and its offerings with one another. This culture that is created through word-of-mouth about Supreme is appealing to the respondents because it is seen by them as a group of people with an unbiased, authentic interest in the brand, and for this reason they wish to be a member of the group too. Supreme's authenticity is also related to skating which was obviously the requirement for being part of the sample group. Skating is seen as a niche group of people that are loyal to the sport/lifestyle, in the same way that Supreme fans are a niche group loyal to a brand.

4.4 Table of Summarised Findings:

Table of the most important themes from the interviews:

Discover Fashion Brands on Instagram	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Experience of WOM	Neg	Pos	Neg	Neg	Pos	Pos	Pos	Pos	Pos
Experience of Traditional Advertising	Pos	Neg	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Neg	Pos
Value of WOMM	NA	BA	BA	SD	BA and SD	BA and SD	SD	BA	BA and SD
Supreme Brand Awareness	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Loyalty to Supreme	NA	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Pos = Positive

Neg = Negative

BA = Brand Awareness

SD = Sign of Demand

NA = Not Applicable

5. Conclusion

This research paper was started with the aim of investigating the role of Instagram in creating brand awareness for the millennial skate culture of Cape Town. The research therefore centred on the concept of word-of-mouth, or WOMM. More specifically, the effect of online WOM, or e-WOM, was researched to determine the effect it had on brand awareness and loyalty within the cultural group of Capetonian millennial skaters.

The literature reviews highlighted views and theories relating to traditional word-of-mouth, word-of-mouth on the internet through social media websites, as well as information on brand awareness and loyalty to Supreme. Most notable information from the literature reviews emphasised the positive effect that WOM can have for brands, the amplified effect that the internet can have on WOM, as well as the brand awareness and loyal following that Supreme has from these marketing approaches. The most notable authors reviewed were Breazeale, Daugherty and Renfrow who spoke about the positive effects of WOMM. Furthermore, information from fashion journalists like The Business of Fashion provided important information about how Supreme and similar niche brands operated. The mentioned brand awareness that is created through Instagram WOM about fashion brands was then studied in order to determine if brand awareness fostered brand loyalty.

The research approach for this study was a qualitative ethnographic study due to the fact that it dealt with words and investigated by a certain subculture within the city of Cape Town. To answer these research questions, 9 fitting participants were selected and interviewed about their experience of WOM, as well as physical advertising, which is most dominant in South Africa. The questions were aimed at discovering how the participants experienced word-of-mouth on Instagram, and if so, what effect it had on the demand for the fashion brand or its products. These answers were contrasted with questions asked about how the participants experienced and viewed traditional advertising, for example, billboards, bus stops or physical publications. The different views and experiences were then further investigated to determine for which reasons some marketing approaches were viewed positively, and why some were viewed in a negative light. However, above all else, the effect that the marketing approach had on the fashion brand's image was the focus. This is due to the fact that the interest was

in what effect knowledge of brand awareness, as exposed through e-WOM, had on a consumer's experience of the brand, as well as the willingness to be loyal to the brand.

The element about fashion brand's image that was highlighted by the responses was the issue of accessibility. The majority stated that brands like Topman, Zara, H&M and Cotton On, that employed traditional marketing approaches, appealed to the masses too much. They stated that one lost one's uniqueness due to these brands being overly accessible and popular. Furthermore, when the participants were questioned about the effect of experiencing e-WOM, in contrast to billboards and physical publication advertising, they said that the WOM was experienced as a sign of demand, authentic as well as unbiased, while traditional approaches were seen as over-used, irritating and even desperate to sell. The issue of fashion brand's accessibility is evident here, as the participants saw heavy self-marketing exposure as a negative impact on the brand's image. The positive effects that a lack of accessibility had on fashion brands was therefore further investigated.

Participants stated that a lack of accessibility can actually improve the brand's image, which in turn increases demand for its products. This is due to the effect of WOM on Instagram, and the role that this e-WOM has in creating awareness of brand loyalty. Through WOM on Instagram, the participants are able to experience the community of brand loyalty discussing the brand and its offerings. This awareness of brand loyalty shows an unbiased, authentic demand for the products. However, in contrast to the above mentioned large fashion brands, the WOM brand's supply never matches the demand. The effect of accessibility is evident as the community discusses rare products that are not easy to obtain. This community is amplified and grown by the internet as people from all over the world can see, and even join in, on the discussions about the brands. The awareness of these brand loyalty or this community, which is internationally accessible due to the internet, causes others who experience and identify with it to be loyal too. According to the findings, this is due to the fact that the community has not been advertised to them, it is a niche group of people with a specific, but wholly unbiased, interest in the brand. It is something the participants felt they could discover for themselves, and be a part of if they wish.

As way of an example of this, questions about the fashion and skate brand, Supreme, were asked. These questions were intended to show how knowledge of brand awareness, by way of WOM on Instagram, fostered loyalty to the brand, even though the brand is not sold in South Africa. These questions highlighted the fact that no one discovered Supreme through traditional marketing approaches, and these unorthodox marketing approaches create unique brand images that the participants feel loyalty towards. The participants highlighted how important the internet was to discovering Supreme, and how seeing and experiencing online peer-to-peer communications about Supreme created a niche group which they wanted to be a part of. This demand to be part of a community of brand loyals is an indication of brand loyalty to Supreme. Respondents also highlight the positive effects that a low supply of products had on Supreme's image. They stated that the low supply maintained a small niche group which many identified with, while also creating a sense of accomplishment if one was able to obtain a rare Supreme piece.

Therefore, the research conducted and the information gathered allows one to draw a conclusion on what the role of Instagram is in creating brand awareness among the millennial skate culture of Cape Town. The study concludes that Instagram's role is that of allowing peers to talk and share information with one another, as identified as the concept of online word-of-mouth. The word-of-mouth through Instagram allows users to see the brand being discussed by unbiased loyals, which causes two results. Firstly, the online word-of-mouth exposes users or creates awareness about the brand in an authentic way that is unlike traditional marketing approaches. Secondly, users that experience peer's word-of-mouth about fashion brands feel compelled to be loyal to the brand, due to the fact that they too wish to be part of a niche group in which one chooses products that are not marketed to one directly. The use of word-of-mouth as a communication tool to create brand awareness therefore allows brands to gain popularity, while not gaining too much popularity that it joins mainstream fashion. It allows brands to keep their group of brand loyals relatively small, while still being exceptionally passionate. This creates a unique group that others that see it wish to be loyal and a part of too.

4.5 Recommendations for Further Research

For future research into this topic, a bigger sample group could be selected. This study only interviewed a small group of people within Cape Town. Further studies could be conducted with participants from the whole of South Africa, as well as conducting research on older participants in order to compare their answers with the younger sample group.

4.6 Ethical

The researcher ensured that the interviews did not ask questions that are too personal and that the interviewer was respectful at all times so that he/she did not offend anyone. Secondly, it was ensured that informed consent from all participants was received, as well as disclosing the results after the study was completed if they wish. The respondents were also clear on what the information was going to be used for and where it be presented.

4.7 Delimitation/Demarcation of the Study

When talking about WOM and WOMM, the study refers to sharing of information between members of a social network site. This excludes direct control over WOM from brands, as shown in referral systems, paid agents and seeding products to influencers on a payment basis. This does not count as objective. The study will also not be discussing WOMM on twitter, blogs and Facebook as these have been extensively researched already. The study's scope has been narrowed to only a certain age group (millennial, 16 – 24) in the City of Cape Town. This excludes other cities in South Africa that have an active skate culture. The study's focus has been narrowed to Cape Town due to the fact that the study does not have access, or the time, to investigate members of the skate culture in other cities.

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

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6 Addendum A:

6.1.1 Discussion guide for interviews:

What are your most common methods for finding new clothing brands?

Do you discover new fashion/clothing brands through Instagram?

How do you experience online word-of-mouth about fashion or lifestyle brands?
Does it add value or authenticity to its demand?

How do you experience traditional or classic fashion advertising? (Eg. H&M and Topman billboards or publication advertising) How does this way of marketing make you feel about the products and the brand overall?

What do you feel the value is in an online word-of-mouth marketing strategies, when compared to the mentioned traditional fashion advertising?

Do you know of the brand Supreme? If so, how did you find out about it?

As a consumer, do you feel loyal to Supreme? If so, why?

7 Addendum B:

7.1.1 Coded transcripts:

Respondent A: (Student: 16)	Coding:
1. Stores in the mall, billboards and on social media.	Physical and online experience
2. Yes sometimes, but not often.	Negative
3. I am indifferent to online word-of-mouth. I know what I like it when I see it.	Negative
4. I like it when I see brands advertising on big billboards and expensive pages in magazines. It shows me the brand is doing well enough to pay for these adverts, which implies the clothes are good too.	Positive – shows products are good because of expensive advertising
5. I think there is value in it but not a lot. I think advertising in billboards and magazines is the best way for a brand to gain popularity.	Negative.
6. No.	Negative
7. N/A	Negative
Respondent B: (Student: 19)	
1. Mainly I find new brands just looking in fashion magazines and sometimes I find brands on Twitter and Instagram.	Physical and online experience
2. Yes	Positive
3. Yes, I feel it shows demand if people are discussing brands. This information reaches a lot of people when its online too.	Positive – shows demand
4. I don't really like it. Its over-advertised and too popular.	Negative – too accessible

5. As I've said, I think WOMM shows demand for the brand and its products, and that makes people loyal to brands – if they feel a part of something special or niche. However, traditional methods of marketing of fashion products keep people updated with sales etc.	Positive – crates brand awareness and fosters brand loyalty
6. Yes. I saw it online because everyone talks about it there. It is also really popular with skaters in Cape Town because I think its quite a niche skate brand – I don't know much more about it though.	Positive – discovered through other skaters
7. I wouldn't say I am loyal to it because I don't have any Supreme products. But I am loyal in the sense that I want to own Supreme products in the future? Haha. I like the way they market themselves to those that know, its like a culture I want to be part of.	Positive – likes how the brand approaches marketing
Respondent C: (Store worker: 20)	
1. I just find brands when I go shopping in Long or Kloof street, there is also a shopping Woodstock I shop at.	Physical experience only
2. No not really. I find the brands in person, and then follow them on instagram if I like them and want to keep updated with the products.	Negative
3. I don't really see it. Sometimes I see people talking on social media about the brands I already follow, and that makes me feel good because other people like what I like, its unifying.	Negative. However, if WOMM is experienced, seen as unifying (Build brand loyalty).
4. I don't really shop at Topman and H&M, everyone wears that <i>kak</i> .	Negative. Too accessible.
5. I think its good because it shows things are popular, but you don't want it to be too popular, then its just like H&M and Topman. You want to be cool within a certain circle.	Positive. Shows demand.

6. Yeah I sometimes see skaters wearing a supreme shirt or hat.	Positive. Seen other skaters wearing Supreme.
7. No, I don't really care about brands. A lot of skaters just do this to look cool and wear cool clothes.	Negative.
Respondent D: (Worker: 18)	
1. I find brands in magazines, as well as places like Canal Walk and the V&A Waterfront.	Physical experience
2. No not that much. I do see some brands on instagram but they are not available to buy here so I lose interest.	Negative. Online brands not available locally
3. I do not really see it that much online. But when I hear people talking offline to each other about certain brands, I am usually interested and check it out online afterwards.	Negative. But when offline WOM is experienced, checks online.
4. I like those stores because they have products at good prices. The traditional adverts keep me updated on the deals and current products they are selling.	Positive. Traditional advertising keeps him updated.
5. I think it shows more authentic demand from consumers. It is very different from the way Topman etc market products because it is the brand advertising itself. I guess WOMM shows people are interested, while billboards and magazines adverts do not show consumer's interest.	Positive. Shows authentic demand and interest.
6. Sometimes I see other people wear Supreme caps at the skate park.	Positive. Sees other skaters wearing it
7. Yeah I feel loyal because its popular within the skate culture, and I really like skating.	Positive. Feels loyalty due to popularity with skaters.
Respondent E: (Student/worker: 20)	

1. I find most of my brands online, I like international brands because it makes me stand out.	Online experience
2. Yes all the time. Instagram is my first choice for finding new brands.	Positive. Instagram
3. I like it. Its like a culture, where everyone is discussing what they like from certain brands and what they don't like. Being online means someone from South Africa can join in on the talk about skate brands so that's why I appreciate the internet so much.	Positive. Shows demand and interest. Internet allows him to join WOM.
4. I don't really like it because it appeals to the masses too much. The marketing approach is lame in my opinion, its just the brand shoving their products in your face all the time. So boring and makes the brand look desperate.	Negative. Too accessible and over advertised
5. I love it. It makes me actually want a brand when others like me also want it merely for it being a good product. No one has anything to gain in talking about it so you know its real, unlike these fake adverts. Its like the brand has its loyal followers selling products for them just by talking to each other and generating hype.	Positive. Shows unbiased demand and creates brand loyalty.
6. Yes I love it. Its been around for a while but I'm sure I saw it first online. Either a photo of a celebrity wearing Supreme, or just a photo of someone skating in it.	Positive. Discovered online
7. Yes. I feel loyal to it because of the cult-like following it has. Its like a culture of people you can interact with and talk with about the brand. We all just love the brand and love talking about it, and I guess this love is transferred to others through word-of-mouth.	Yes. Loyal to Supreme due to awareness of group of brand loyals. Brand awareness therefore caused by WOM online.

Respondent F: (Worker: 24)	
1. My most common ways of finding brands is online or through friends. Sometimes I also just see stuff I like for sale in store windows.	Online experience. Sometimes physical experience.
2. Yes, sometimes I see new brands on Instagram.	Positive.
3. I think its good, it shows there is interest in the brand and demand for its products. This in turn makes me interested in the brand because I want to see what all the fuss is about.	Positive. Shows demand which in turn causes demand for respondent.
4. I think this method of marketing is good too. It keeps these big fashion retailers in everyone's minds. I do think it can be overdone by brands like H&M though, and gets irritating if you see one of there ads everywhere you look.	Positive. Keeps one updated but can be over advertised.
5. Lots of skate brands like Palace and Supreme have a loyal following and its those people online that generate all the word-of-mouth for their brands. They make it look super popular just by sharing photos on instagram, facebook groups and reddit forums. Its like the loyals choose to do that with their free time, so it seems more real to skaters and buyers. When you compare that to the way H&M and Topman do things, it just doesn't seem as real (<i>authentic</i>). I think that's why many skaters steer away from those big retailers.	Positive. Authentic demand is shown through e-WOM. Traditional advertising lacks authenticity.
6. Yes. I saw one of their skate videos online a few years ago.	Positive – discovered online
7. I'll say I feel more loyal to supreme than the other stores you mentioned. Just because it is niche and I think that appeals to skaters. They don't try too hard with selling their products and I think people see that as them being a genuine brand.	Positive. Loyal because not too accessible and do not over advertise.

Respondent G: (Student: 21)	
1. My friends often show me brands, or I find them on instagram or at malls. When my friends show me brands, its normally a photo or brand they have found on instagram. It seems a lot of brands market themselves there these days.	Online and physical experience
2. Yes (see above answer)	Positive
3. I think its cool when someone you like and trust as a person shows or tells you about something. You trust the brand or product because you trust the person telling you, you respect their opinion. I think that's the value it adds, you trust it more if it comes from a person instead of a paid advert.	Positive. WOM from someone you trust causes trust in the product too
4. It doesn't really appeal to me because those stores are too big and too popular. I understand it appeals to the masses, and maybe that's why it doesn't appeal to me. Some of the products topman sells could be good for example, but the fact that its advertised everywhere and the stores are so popular, means that every second person is going to be wearing that cool thing. Then you all just look like same and no one wants that. So I stay away from the products and I see their ads as a sign to keep staying away.	Negative – too accessible.
5. It adds value in the way that it shows authentic demand. Its not this big store saying "buy my stuff", it's a brand saying here is my stuff, buy it or talk about it, we don't care. It doesn't make the brand look desperate and just comes across as cool. I feel that's why lots of skate brands use word-of-mouth so much, to maintain that cool/laid-back sense or feel.	Positive. Shows demand and doesn't cause the brand to over advertise.
6. Yeah I know it. It's a really popular skate brand internationally, I must have seen it online first because	Positive. Discovered online.

its not available here. Lots of fake supreme here unfortunately.	
7. Yeah I definitely feel loyal to them. I always talk with my friends about what they are releasing next. My friends and I like Supreme because they keep it real, barely advertise except for their site and instagram account, and just make dope stuff. Oh and its super rare, they make very little of everything and never restock. So when you get something, its like more than an item of clothing – you’ve achieved something and now you are part of the group.	Positive. Loyal to the brand because of awareness of other brand loyals and do not over advertise. Exclusivity also adds to demand for respondent.
Respondent H: (Gap year: 19)	
1. I mainly buy second-hand vintage clothes from thrift stores or markets. This way no one has what I have.	Physical experience.
2. No.	Negative
3. When people talk about brands to each other? Yeah when I hear that I guess it makes me intrigued to see what is so good about it. (<i>Asked about adding authenticity to demand:</i>) yeah I guess it shows a real demand because there is nothing in it for them.	Positive. Shows demand.
4. I find those adverts so boring. Not once have I driven past a billboard and thought I needed to get item from H&M. I guess it appeals to most people in South Africa though.	Negative. Too accessible.
5. If I had to compare the two, I would definitely say word-of-mouth is better. Ts more authentic because the people wont have motifs, they just like the clothes tht much they want to share it and talk abut it. I think once it becomes too much showing off then it loses authenticity though.	Positive. Unbiased and authentic indications of demand

6. Yeah I know it. Really hard to get your hands on, especially in South Africa. My friend went on a trip to America and brought me back a hat. I wear it a lot and skaters always comment on it.	Positive. Holiday gift.
7. Yeah I do feel loyal to the way supreme do things. I like supreme for the same reason I like buying vintage clothes, it makes me unique. There is so little supreme compared to its demand, that it makes you stand out if you do have it. You know that that person has gone to a certain level of effort to secure that preme piece.	Positive. Loyal due to uniqueness and exclusivity.
Respondent I: (Worker: 22)	
1. I mainly find new brands just walking around town, in magazines. Sometimes I find new brands online on superbalist.	Physical and online experience
2. Yes sometimes, but I'm not really on instagram that much.	Positive.
3. Yeah it adds value and authenticity because it shows the people are interested in the brand.	Positive. Shows demand and interest
4. I really like it because its informative and keeps the brand in your mind. It can be overdone though and can become overwhelming and just irritating. Like overuse in magazines gets to me personally.	Positive. Keeps one updated but can be over advertised.
5. I think the word-of-mouth shows real demand from people that clearly like the brand. I think traditional advertising could create word-of-mouth though, if the products they advertised were popular enough to start discussions. The obvious different is just when people that don't work for the brand talk about it, it seems real because they don't have anything to gain or have a hidden agenda.	Positive. Shows unbiased and authentic demand and interest.

6. Yeah I've seen it online lots.	Positive. Discovered online.
7. I wouldn't say I'm loyal, but I respect the way they market themselves and the loyal following that has come of it. With such a proud following, its hard not to admire it.	Positive. Not loyal but respects the brand loyalty it has from very little advertising.