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‘The Power Of The Hashtag On Social Media
Platforms.’

THE
POWER
OF THE
#hashtag



Abstract

The following research study addresses the power of the hashtag on social media platforms. This study is a comparative research study between two powerful brands, namely Coca-Cola and Apple Inc and their particular marketing strategies. This study gains insights into whether or not social media and the use of the trending hashtag tool has a significant and direct link to the success of the brands campaign, or whether it merely serves as a tool to enhance the effectiveness. I will be arguing the point of the hashtag serving to have a direct and significant connection however this research study could reveal otherwise. The sample size included 40 participants, female and male, that reside in the Western Cape. There has been no age restriction placed on the study, aside from participants needing to be 16 years or older. The data collection method used was in the form of a survey and the data collected was recorded and reflected in the form of narrative and graphical data. The study highlights the contrasting opinions of the hashtag from previous literature and its importance and use for a brand, analysing both the positives and negatives of the hashtag tool. The research then explores the Coca-Cola brand and its #ShareACoke campaign and their success in this campaign by using their hashtag. It further explores Coca-Cola's approach to marketing and whether this approach is more beneficial to a brand than that of Apples marketing approach. The study then looks at the Apple brand and their alternative approach to achieving their success without the use of a hashtag. The research study concludes by suggesting which social media platform are the most effective for brands to use, which approaches are most valuable, and whether or not the hashtag directly results in a brands success or serves a different purpose.

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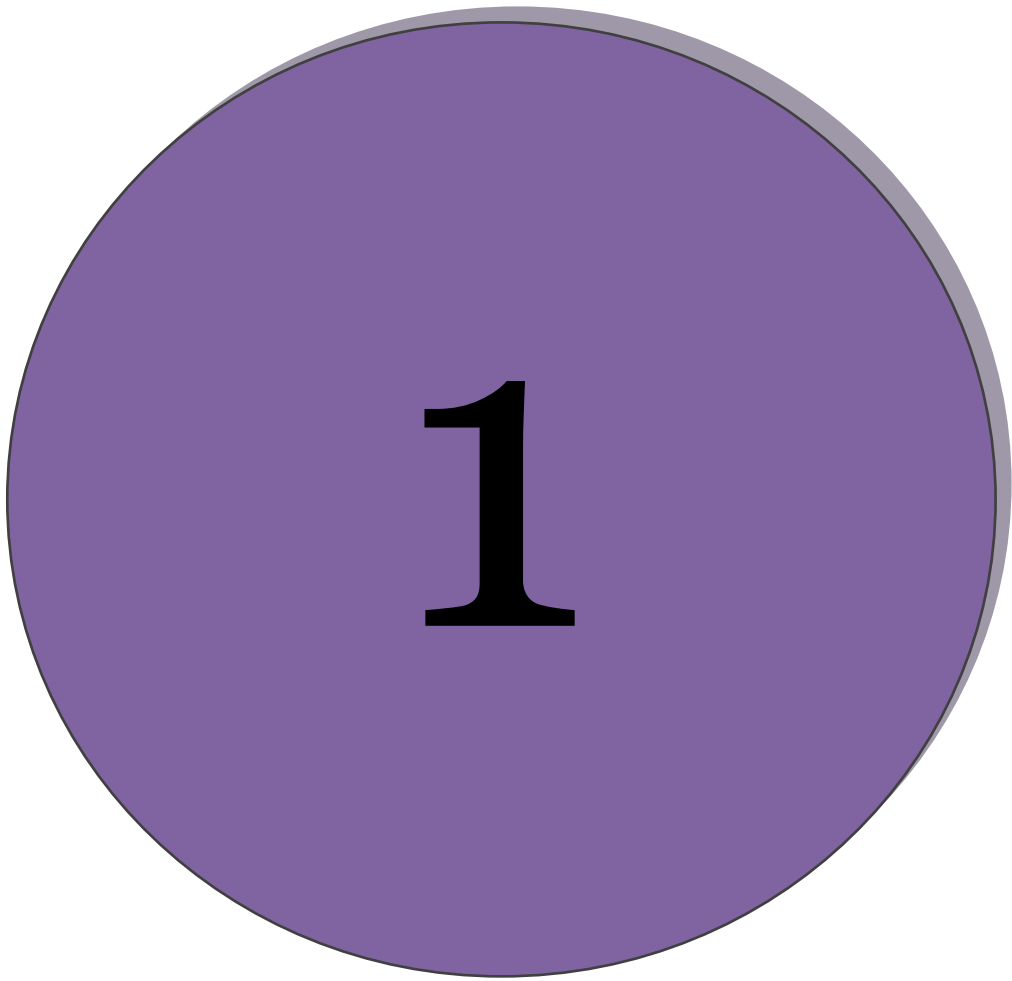
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Background and context of study

“Once upon a time, there was no Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or YouTube. Our lives did not revolve around a stream of status updates, hashtags, tweets, likes, videos and filtered photos (Mary Catherine Wellons; 2016). That was just 12 years ago.

Social media is a very broad term that is used vaguely in the society we live in today, usually to describe what we post on sites and apps such as: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and so forth. The phrase is thrown around loosely and interchangeably amongst one another in daily conversation, but what does social media actually mean?

“Social media are web based communication tools that enable people to interact with each other by both sharing and consuming information” (About tech; 2016). It consists of a countless array of internet based tools and platforms that increase and enhance the sharing of information. This new form of media makes the transfer of text messages, photos, audio messages, video, and information in general increasingly fluid among internet users. Social Media is relevant not only for regular internet users, but business as well. Matt Hayden, an expert in social media, believes that “the main trend will be the continued rise of social media usage in business”. He states that “Across the globe businesses large and small are realizing that having a strong presence on Facebook, Twitter and other big networks is no longer an option. They simply must be there, building their profiles and interacting with customers both present and potential” (Adi Domocos; 2014). Social media is not only used and enjoyed by the youth and millennial generation of today's society, but rather is utilized and made user-friendly for all ages of society too. The result is an enormous amount of information that can be easily shared, searched, promoted, disputed, and created. The amount of information available to any individual or business on the topic of social media is continually increasing and growing at a rapid pace.

There is information available on any topic of interest and as fast as the trend of social media is growing, so is the amount of information available to the user. The future of social media is unclear and specialists in the field can only predict and estimate what the future holds for social media, although what they are sure of is that social media will continue to grow and transform our individual lives as well as businesses in years to come. An expert in the field of social media, a lady by the name of Stephanie Frasco Clegg, believes that everything in our society will be more visual and mobile, that Pinterest, Instagram and Snapchat will be powerhouses for marketing (Adi Domocos; 2014).

Social media does not only come with the positive side of things, the issue of massive amounts of data flooding our society and how to cope with this huge amount of data is an

issue that will slowly creep its way into the picture. Social media is becoming a powerful tool for brands of today, especially specific tools such as the Hashtag, that have grown to be very useful in marketing campaigns and strategies on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The focus of this research study is to develop a better understanding of social media, specifically the hashtag tool as a strategic tool that businesses and brands can use in order to increase the success and of their brand. It will analyse whether there is a link between the use of the Hashtag in a brands social media campaigns and advertising strategies and a successful brand in today's society. The research will also shed light on how brands can use these tools and platforms effectively in order to enhance their success when used.

Problem statement

Based on the environment and other sources having been investigated; this problem is worth investigating for various reasons.

I personally believe social media and especially the Hashtag is a very powerful tool that is being used in the society we live in today. On a daily basis I am on different social media platforms and I am constantly exposed to hashtags wherever I look. I believe the Hashtag has a far greater potential than currently being used for and is more effective for a brand when used as a tool in a campaign or marketing strategy. I believe the effectiveness and growing popularity of the hashtag amongst people and businesses is worth investigating for the benefit of brands to grow, succeed and achieve greater potential especially in the revolutionized world of social media. It is a way to use one hashtag and reach thousands by doing so. The world has now become connected, "we are surrounded by technology on a daily basis allowing us to inform every one of our current activities through the touch of a button; further deepening our obsession. We are glued to our screens 24/7" (Katy Holdcroft; 2015).

Consumers are also using social media such as: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, blogs, twitter and more to stay connected with others, perform their daily activities, learn about different brands and purchase different products as a result of advertising campaigns or promotions. Because of this powerful shift in the use of social media it is transforming the way businesses brand their products, "Social media plays an essential role in how consumers discover, research, and share information about brands and products" (Ring Boost; 2014).

Therefore, this problem is worth investigating because businesses need to realize that social media and its tools such as the Hashtag are becoming one of the strongest forms and tools for marketing. Businesses need to know how to adapt to this change as well as how to implement and integrate social media tools into their business operations. Businesses are not making use of these tools and are therefore not reaching their full potential as easily as they could be with one simple hashtag added to a campaign or marketing effort. The hashtag will “boost the effectiveness of their social media marketing campaign” (Jomer Gregorio; 2014). Social media is going to continue to grow and transform our world and if businesses fall behind with the fundamentals of social media as the way forward, they risk being left behind and risk losing customers, growth and market share.

Main research question and sub-questions.

Main research question:

- What is the link, if any, between businesses that make use of the hashtag tool on social media sites such as; Facebook and Instagram and the overall success of the brand? Looking specifically at the brands Coca-Cola and Apple Inc.

Sub – questions:

- Is the hashtag tool more effective to use as a strategy for success in campaigns and marketing efforts, or is it not more effective and does not change success?
- Which social media platform (Facebook or Instagram) is most effective in using/implementing the hashtag tool?
- Looking at Apple Inc. specifically. Are traditional forms of marketing still more effective than social media use, specifically referring to the hashtag?
- Which brands have made use of the hashtag on social media resulting in a positive influence on their success and which brands have made use of the hashtag and resulted in failure? And why?

Research Objectives.

As a young individual who spends many hours interacting on social media daily and is part of the millennial generation that enjoys modern technology and the social media aspects of our society, I am interested in social media moving from a fad to a phenomenon. I see the huge potential it has to transform businesses and the way they conduct their operations regarding branding, advertising and marketing their products and services to create a successful brand. As a result of being so involved and subjected to social media on a daily basis, whether it's Facebook, Instagram or YouTube, I have come to realize that some of the most well-known and highly successful brands that have launched some of the most successful campaigns, gained a large brand awareness and a created a hype behind their brand, are brands that have adopted the Hashtag tool in their social media and marketing strategies. A brand that displays the above mentioned attributes is the brand Coca-Cola. Coca-Cola have created one of the top social media platforms by using their hashtag #shareacoke and have continued their success by taking a creative approach to their marketing that resonates with their consumers.

Therefore, this study will help determine whether social media, and specifically the hashtag tool, has a significant link to the success of a brand by looking at a campaign from a successful brand (such as Coca-Cola) that use the hashtag and social media actively compared to the campaign of a brand that does not use the hashtag on social media. Other successful brands that exist due to their social media activity will also be looked at. These brands include: Dove, Starbucks, Red bull and Nike.

Successful brands that do not use the hashtag on social media or social media use as a whole, but rather other traditional methods of marketing will be explored in order to determine whether this is more effective or not. The brand that will be used for this will be Apple Inc. Apple Inc. does not use social media extensively and makes no use of a hashtag, yet it is hugely powerful and successful.

The comparative analysis of this study will help to understand: the power of social media for brands, the importance of it in today's society, the way consumers respond to brands that use social media and specifically brands using the hashtag compared to brands that do not and whether or not traditional and other forms of marketing and advertising are still more effective compared to social media strategies.

Only specific forms of social media will be focused on: Facebook and Instagram.

Purpose Statement.

This research will focus on the Hashtag as the social media tool and Facebook and Instagram as the social media platforms that individuals, businesses and consumers use and are exposed to. It will explore how the Hashtag on social media may or may not have a significant link to the success of a brand in the world we live in today and going forward into the future.

The research will compare a successful brand that uses social media and the hashtag very effectively in its marketing strategies, such as: Coca-Cola, to a brand that does not use social media or a hashtag as extensively or at all, such as the brand Apple. This is in order to compare and assess whether or not the success of the brand depends on the social media tools and platforms it uses (In the case of Coca-Cola) or whether traditional and other methods of marketing strategies are more effective and contribute to a greater/equal success.

The research will be conducted in Cape Town, South Africa using various participants of different ages assessing their awareness of the hashtag as a social media tool used by Coca-Cola and other above mentions brands' marketing strategies and campaigns. It will also assess their association of a hashtag to the brands actual product and whether the participant creates a significant link between the hashtag and the brands product and purpose, or whether the hashtag creates no awareness and association. The study will explore the buying behaviours of these participants as a result of their exposure to a specific social media campaign as well as to a traditional marketing strategy.

There will be a single questionnaire targeted at random participants in Cape Town, both male and female, ages 16 and older. These questionnaires will provide a basis to create a comparative analysis to help determine whether there is a significant link between social media (the Hashtag) and a successful brand in campaigns or whether traditional and other means of marketing are still more effective. The analysis will also serve as advice for businesses on how to use (or not use) social media the most effectively.

Rationale

The social media is transforming the way businesses market their brand and the way we interact and share information with one another in society. About 10 years ago traditional methods of marketing were the only known ways for businesses to establish a successful brand and promote their brand, now days, in the highly technological and cyber world we live in, social media has become an extremely powerful and important tool for businesses and their success.

As a young individual in this society, I am highly interested in all methods of social media platforms and its tools; I am constantly “linked in” and participating on social media and as a result have become aware of its potential and significance to businesses, consumers and brands of today. I am attracted to the creative, interactive and fast paced lifestyle that social media creates and that goes against many conventional methods of advertising. It allows one to connect to a large audience both locally and globally and share information, photos and videos within seconds across countries and cultures. I am interested to learn about how social media platforms, specifically Facebook and Instagram, can transform the way businesses market their products and brand to consumers and not only for the purpose of being socially connected.

This research will give insight into how social media and its tools, such as the Hashtag can possibly contribute to the success of a business and its marketing campaigns amongst consumers. It will analyse the social media platforms of Facebook and Instagram and whether these are successful and effective platforms for businesses to use in marketing their brand. It will also analyse which is the most or least effective between these two platforms or whether other platforms and forms of marketing are preferred or more effective in contributing to success than the platforms under study (Facebook and Instagram).

This research will give insight into how businesses can adapt to this shift in marketing strategies and how to implement and adopt them into their business in the most efficient way if found to prove successful. The study will also explore how consumers perceive brands that use social media and its tools and their related buying patterns as a result of the social media awareness or unawareness. It will explore consumer’s preferences and behaviours with regards to the social media they prefer and use and whether this is linked to the way businesses choose to make use of social media.

Primary research methods will be used as well as secondary research methods to gather information on this research topic. The primary research method will be reflected in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire will be constructed in order to answer specific

questions linked to the consumer with regards to social media platforms, awareness, association and the hashtag as a social media tool. Secondary research will be in the form of online articles, case studies and various websites. The secondary information and statistics found in these articles accompanied with the data gathered during primary research will be used to conduct a comparative analysis between the primary and secondary findings as well as between the brands using social media and their success and brands that do not engage in social media as effectively or at all and their success as a result. Recommendations will be made based on the results, to businesses in our modern society of today on how to use/ not use social media and its tools in the most effective way that will contribute to the success, growth and advantage for the brand.

However, this research is limited as information regarding the future of social media is uncertain and although experts and specialists in the field of social media can make assumptions and predictions about social media continuing to grow and become a very powerful tool, there is no certainty or accuracy to this information as it is only assumptions based on the current trends and facts that we know in today's society.

By conducting various research methodologies, in conjunction with findings from theory and facts, it is possible to determine whether or not there is a significant link between brands that make use of the hashtag in social media and the success of their brand and how businesses can use/not use specific social media platforms and tools to contribute to their success and address their shortcomings.

Conceptualization

The most pertinent concepts related to my study are:

Social media:

“Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, microblogging, social networking , social bookmarking, social creation, and wikis are among the different types of social media.” (whatIs.com; 2016) The social media that is referred to in my research study pertains to the platforms online such as: Facebook, Instagram and YouTube that I will be focusing on.

Social media platforms:

“We can define Social Media Platforms as software that helps brands engage their consumers across social media networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and Vine as well as on a brand’s own digital properties.” (Offerpop; 2016)

The hashtag:

“A word or phrase preceded by a hash mark (#), used within a message to identify a keyword or topic of interest and facilitate a search for it” specifically on social media platforms” (Dictionary.com; 2016). When I refer to a hashtag in my study, I refer to the tool used for social media.

Successful:

“Achievement of an action within a specified period of time or within a specified parameter. Success can also mean completing an objective or reaching a goal. Success can be expanded to encompass an entire project or be restricted to a single component of a project or task. It can be achieved within the workplace, or an individual's personal life” (The Business Dictionary.com; 2016). When I refer to successful brands in my study I refer to brands with large audience bases, market share, coverage, revenue, awareness and recognition by consumers and around the world.

Brand:

“Unique design, sign, symbol, words, or a combination of these, employed in creating an image that identifies a product and differentiates it from its competitors. Over time, this image becomes associated with a level of credibility, quality, and satisfaction in the consumer's mind” (BusinessDictionary.com; 2016). I refer to a brand in my research when I speak about a product, business or specific item sold by a company as well as an image of a business.

Society:

“A large group of people who live together in an organized way, making decisions about how to do things and sharing the work that needs to be done. All the people in a country, or in several similar countries, can be referred to as a society” (Cambridge Dictionaries Online; 2016). I refer to society the community we live in as well as a group of people in my study.

Apple Inc.

“Apple is a prominent hardware and software company best known for its series of personal computers, the iPod and its innovative marketing strategies for its products.” (Rouse; 2009)

“A personal computer company founded in 1976 by Steven Jobs and Steve Wozniak. Throughout the history of personal computing, Apple has been one of the most innovative influences” (Webopedia; 2016). When I refer to Apple in my study, I refer to the physical brand as a whole as well as their products.

Coca-Cola

“The Coca-Cola Company, which is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, is an American multinational Beverage Corporation, and manufacturer, retailer, and marketer of non-alcoholic beverage concentrates and syrups” (Coca-Cola Global; 2016). When I refer to Coca-Cola in the study, I am referring to the brand as a whole as well as their beverages.

Ethical concerns

The research that will be conducted in order to gain insight within this research study will be anonymous and is thus a low risk study as participant's identities will be protected.

Participants will be unidentifiable in the study by myself or by others that may read or be subjected to the research study.

Primary research will be conducted as part of the research methodology which will include a questionnaire for participants to answer as well as statistical and theoretical information from online articles and case studies which of which there are no ethical concerns as it does not involve other participants. Participant consent will also be constructed and attached to each questionnaire that is given to participants in the study, informing all participants about the study being conducted, the topic of the research, that their identities will be anonymous and that the results of their questionnaires will be used solely for the purpose of the research study and nothing else. In addition, questions that are too personal or questions that may be perceived as offensive or pressuring will not be asked. Lastly, the participants in the study will be respected at all times and the study will be conducted with integrity and free from bias.

Delimitations of the research study

The areas that will not be researched due to the fact that they are not applicable or are closely related to, but go beyond my research study are the following: Advertising and marketing strategies of businesses will not be looked at but rather their social media strategies and tools to market their brands, and if not social media strategies, then the ones that are effective in contributing to the success of the business. The many successful brands that exist will not be researched but rather brands that are successful due to their use of social media and the hashtag specifically. In addition, all of social media platforms and tools are not being researched, only Facebook and Instagram as social media platforms will be analysed and the hashtag as a social media tool.

Proposed Chapters

Table of contents		
Chapter 1	Introduction	background to study and approach
Chapter 2:	Literature Review	examination of previous research and theories
Chapter 3	Research methodology	design, approach, population, sample, paradigm and methods
Chapter4:	Data analysis, findings and interpretations	Reflecting data collected in narrative and graphical format.
Chapter 5	Conclusion	Summarizing research study and drawing conclusions with recommendations
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Literature Review.

In the past social media as well as its use was very limited. The popularity of its content was determined by a small number of users, it consisted of mainly one way communication and it was very limited in its interactivity. Social media was mainly used to democratize the sharing of content to enable users to reach a wide audience (Eric Siu; 2016). The first social media platform that was created was called BBS in 1978, it was a computerized bulletin board system that was used to organize events and share information with friends. In 1990 the internet took the world by storm and allowed people to create their own websites, blogs and online communities. This started the world of social media and begun its use for businesses to use in their marketing strategies. Now 10 years down the line there are over 550 million users on Facebook, 65 million tweets being sent via twitter each day, 2 million daily YouTube video views and 1 million page views per month on Tumblr. In the past social media did not exist and the way businesses generated new customer bases was through a salesperson. Now day's customers are engaging with and seeking out companies by using social media platforms rather than through sales staff. It is quick, reliable and easily accessible with instant responses, recognition and gratification for consumers (Devon Glenn; 2012).

Social Media statistics are in favour of Social Media having a positive impact on businesses if used as a part of their marketing strategy. The statistics have proven that 71% of internet users are more likely to purchase from a brand that they are 'following' on a social network site such as Twitter or Facebook. 91% of searchers say they use Facebook to find businesses online, 15% of consumers use social networking sites to search for local businesses, 71% of social media users also said that they would be more likely to buy a product or brand from a business that they follow online and a high number of 63% of social media participants state that they are more likely to use a business if they have information on a social media site. Social networking sites and blogs now account for a quarter (25%) of the total time Americans spend online (Shea Bennett; 2013). This article therefore shows using statistics to prove that social media is used very extensively by consumers in the society of today in order to locate various businesses and their products and services. As well as it highlights that consumers are spending more and more time on social media and behind their screens which is why businesses need to utilize the use of social media in their marketing strategies.

The internet is increasing the role played in consumers' daily lives, people are using the internet for their information search and it has become a vital part of consumers purchasing process. The new technologies and social media have made it possible for businesses to communicate with their customers and social media has become a new way for businesses to market themselves and their products (Trong; 2015).

Images are playing an important role on social media, especially Instagram. Visuals and pictures are increasing the desire for what consumers want online. Consumers are able to process, consume and understand more information faster through visuals than through text, making it easier to grasp a consumer's attention through images and videos on social media than through writing content (Neher 2013, 1-3).

Instagram is one of the many social media platforms that exist. It is a mobile application that allows users to take and share photos from their mobile devices (Neher 2013, 64). Instagram has increased its popularity faster than any other social media platform, And this is what makes Instagram so special (Klie 2015). In addition, Instagram is the first Significant social network built specifically for mobile usage (Miles 2014, 4.). On Instagram There are 100 million active monthly users worldwide to be reached and this is what Makes Instagram such an effective marketing tool for companies (Wood 2015).

Instagram is getting new users faster than any other social media platform before. In addition, In 2014 Instagram had the highest growth rate in the audience engagement than any social media platform. It delivers 58 times more engagement to brands than Facebook and 120 times more engagement than Twitter. For brands looking to market themselves, Instagram also presents an enormous consumer audience. This audience does not only search for content, but also shares photos of their experiences with brands and their products through the hashtag (Klie 2015.).

A figure sourced on the Global Web Index (Globalwebindex; 2015) showed that consumers no longer seek information from traditional forms of marketing channels but they are rather using social media to look for information about products and services. Consumers are also able to share, comment and discuss feedback on certain products and brands that become available to other consumers to read, before they make a purchasing decision themselves. It is a complete network that makes it easier for consumers to become aware of products and as a result, purchase these products.

This above mentioned study which was completed on Social Media significantly relates to my research study as it explores the benefits of businesses using social media to increase the sales, awareness and purchasing decision of consumers. It proves how social media is quickly starting to become a popular and effective choice over traditional marketing.

However the study does not cover aspects on Facebook as a social media platform which my study will be covering and exploring, this study only explores Instagram as a social media platform and its benefits and weakness to a business if used as a marketing tool. My study will be exploring both Instagram and Facebook as platforms and ascertaining which platform, if any, is the most effective between the two, for businesses to use to market their brand.

“In 2007, Twitter users began using the # sign in front of words or phrases to create groups within Twitter. Then in 2009, Twitter took a cue from their users and began hyperlinking all hashtags in tweets. Now, in 2014, all major social networks (excluding LinkedIn) hyperlink hashtags because the adoption rate has been huge!” (Constant Contact Blogs; 2014)

The hashtag has become so valuable for businesses of today, as a simple hashtag has the power to expose a business's content to a wider audience and help a business get found. The consumer that is aware of your hashtag can easily put this hashtag into any social media platform and it is very likely that the business that this hashtag belongs to along with other similar content, will pop up with the brands profile, products, information and campaign or advertisement that the hashtag belonged to. “Hashtags are everywhere. You can see them on sites like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram, at events, or even on commercials and movie trailers.” (Constant Contact Blogs; 2014).

“Social media turned the once simple Octothorpe, symbolizing the words “pounds” and “number,” into a very powerful marketing tool.” “Twitter and Instagram are the two primary social media outlets to revolutionize the hashtag” (Betsy A. Butwin; 2016). By placing a hashtag at the beginning of a word or phrase on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook, it turns the word or phrase into a hyperlink that leads to topically related posts. The hashtag gives businesses the ability to interact with their audience. “When a user tweets or posts on Instagram, other users may then comment, repost, share directly, and basically participate in the conversation surrounding the tweet or post. This audience interaction provides valuable insight to marketers and inflames the reach of a simple marketing effort, sometimes virally” (Betsy A. Butwin; 2016). If a hashtag goes viral, it becomes a trending topic which is the most successful outcome a business could hope for with their marketing efforts. It is critical to remember that it's “the audience's interaction that makes the hashtag such a powerful marketing and branding implement” (Betsy A. Butwin; 2016).

This evidence is similar to this research study because the researcher believes that the hashtag is a powerful tool for business to use in their marketing strategies going forward. The researcher believes it adds value, generates a wider audience and creates awareness around the brand, as a result of these positive outcomes It's believe that the hashtag could also result in greater returns and sales for businesses if used correctly. This study will explore these statements of hypothesis further. The study also differentiates from this study as it only explores the hashtag as a tool for businesses to trend on social media and interact with their audience, it does not explore the hashtag being used in a specific brands campaign to generate awareness and sales, which this study will explore by using Coca-Cola and their #ShareACoke campaign. It also does not explore whether the hashtag has a direct link to the success of a brand, it only explores its contribution to the purchasing decision of consumers. This study will analyse whether or not there is a significant and direct link, by looking at a campaign from Coca-Cola, on social media platforms such as: Facebook and Instagram.

Neil James is the director of digital strategy at Minneapolis-base agency solve. He believes that the hashtag does not serve a purpose and should be “banished from the advertiser’s toolkit”. The first reason Neil James used to argue this point was that the hashtag was not effective and that “truly denting the public consciousness in this manner requires a level of sheer scale that’s simply inaccessible to messaging rooted in commercial intent.” The second reason behind his logic is that traditional forms of marketing strategies that are effectively executed is what causes a reaction on social media about the brand, and not vice versa. Neil states: “Online conversations about brands are the result of effective marketing — not the cause.” In other words there is no use for the hashtag if businesses traditional marketing efforts are not effective. Lastly in favour of his argument, the director argues that businesses try to use the hashtag in order to make them seem more modern and approachable. However he believes that being modern and approachable requires more than just a hashtag, it requires making consumer connections on an emotional level, understanding their needs, human values and their beliefs. Neil James concludes by stating that “If they’re doing that effectively, chances are there’s no need for a hashtag.”

Neil James provides a counter argument to this research study as he believes there is no use for a hashtag if businesses are effectively marketing themselves in other ways. This counter argument will provide a basis to explore whether traditional forms of marketing are in fact more effective than the use of social media to market a brand and specifically the use of the hashtag tool on social media, in contributing to a business’s success.

The literature review will now explore five successful and well known brands that make use of social media and the hashtag tool in their campaigns and how the use of the hashtag has affected their business's success:

Starbucks

Starbucks is a popular and successful brand that uses social media as a platform to create their brands success. This year Starbucks launched "Tweet a coffee" to engage customers and build awareness of the brand, "not only do they provide giveaways, but Starbucks always creates content that encourages its fans to like, comment, and share" (Forbes; 2014). When consumers purchase a Starbucks beverage, they are likely to take a photo of the drink because of its popularity and post it onto Instagram, Facebook or Twitter with the hashtag #Starbucks to show all their friends and followers that they are also part of the Starbucks brand and community. This shows that the hashtag can be used as a way of creating a sense of belonging to a brand for consumers and at the same time increase the brands visibility on social media.

Dove and Oreo

Dove and Oreo are well known brands in our society that are making use of social media platforms and doing an outstanding job. Oreo is constantly bringing out new, fresh and relevant content on its social sites. One of Oreos best campaigns was launched in 2013 during Halloween using a Vine video series as their platform using Oreo cookies in classic horror film situations. They also used the hashtag of #OreoHorrorStories and hundreds of people shared, liked and viewed this campaign with its hashtag included. Dove uses content on social media that is aimed at making woman feel good about themselves and helping woman realize their beauty potential (Social Times; 2015). They also incorporated the hastag #speakbeautiful in their beauty campaign, as a way to attract their consumers and spread the word (Social Times; 2015). People that purchased a dove product would then use this hashtag if they spoke about it on social media. This research reveals that some of the most well known brands such as Oreo and Dove, that are doing very well today in creating brand awareness, loyalty and sales also make use of social media platforms and the hashtag tool in order to create this awareness and success for their brand.

GoPro and Redbull

These two brands are doing very well with their social media. They have been voted as some of the top most successful brands because of their use in social media. The way Redbull and GoPro have made use of their profiles on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, they “have mastered the art of delivering strategically-focused content aimed at attracting a younger demographic of extreme sports enthusiasts” (Zaw Thiha Tun; 2015). GoPro as a brand has made such good use of Instagram and YouTube that with a quick browse of their social media pages, consumers and the rest of the world can see hundreds of hours of user submitted content featuring everything captured by GoPro. This use of social media creates a huge awareness for the brand and increases consumer’s passion for adventure and living life to the fullest. Redbull does its part by sponsoring events which are then documented and posted onto Facebook, Instagram and YouTube for the millions of subscribers to view, like, share and comment. They also make extensive use of Instagram where they support the Arts such as: The Red Bull Music Academy and the Red Bull House of Arts. Red Bull and GoPro have established themselves as these successful, adventurous brands by producing user generated content that attracts the attention of consumers, generates awareness of their brand and establishing a successful identity and position in the market and minds of consumers, through the use of social media platforms and inclusion of their specific hashtags (Zaw Thiha Tun; 2015).

The literature review will now discuss the two brands that are being used and compared as part of the research study. The first brand that will be discussed is Coca-Cola followed by a discussion on Apple Inc.

Coca- Cola

Coca-Cola is one of the two brands that have been chosen to be the focus of this research study and its Campaign of “ShareaCoke” is what will be specifically analysed and discussed to answer the research question. Coca-Cola is one of the most recognized brands in the world and their beverage is enjoyed by millions of people around the world. Its social strategy is not to attract consumers to its personalized stores or Ecommerce sites as other brands may do, its social strategy focuses on creating brand awareness and maintaining its brand image through its advertising campaigns, especially on social media platforms (David Moth; 2013). The brand has attracted over 63 million fans to its main Facebook page, mainly through the use of promoting the brand’s charity work, its advertising campaigns and posing questions and running polls for their consumers on social media (David Moth; 2013).

Its social media platforms create countless interactions and engagement opportunities between consumers and the brand on social media, it allows Coca-Cola to reach thousands, if not millions of people worldwide and creates a brand image that people will remember and recognize. From this perspective Coca-Colas use of social media significantly contributes to their brand awareness and success.

“Coca-Cola’s “Share a Coke” campaign which is being used as the focus campaign of this study, was pure marketing genius. Coke banked on the idea that people find personalization irresistible” (David Moth; 2013). Coca-Cola used the top 250 most popular names in the United States and some of the popular millennial jargon on their Coke bottles, for example: “Bestie” and “Wingman”, for their new campaign. The campaign saw such a success that it had a 7% increase in Coke consumption, the company saw a 2.5% increase in total sales and soft-drink volume went up by 0.4% (David Moth; 2013). Social media use played a huge role in the success of the campaign, aside from Coca-Cola promoting their campaign on every social media platform that they could, When people were successful in finding their name on a bottle, they were encouraged to share their find on social media using the hashtag #ShareaCoke. This sharing behaviour acted as an organic means of spreading brand awareness throughout social media platforms. Friends would see each other finding their names, enjoying a Coke product, and they would be inclined to interact with the brand and join in on the fun (Incitrio; 2014). This interaction could result in individuals liking, sharing or commenting on Coca-Colas posts and pages but also encourage the purchasing of the brand. It also earned a total of more than 18 million media impressions, traffic on the Coke Facebook site increased by 870%, with page ‘likes’ growing by 39%. It has been one of the most successful campaigns to date for Coca-Cola and a massive success on social networks (David Moth; 2013).

This “ShareaCoke” campaign shows that the hashtag, if used correctly, reinforces the effectiveness of a brands campaign, it also proves that its use in a brands marketing strategy, such as; including the hashtag in a campaign or on social media, as done by Coca-Cola, can result in successful and positive outcomes for the brand, In terms of elements such as: Brand awareness, brand sales, brand growth, sense of belonging by consumers, brand publicity, increase in word of mouth about the brand and the amount of fans and reach on social media platforms. It shows that social media and the hashtag is a great new way for a brand to market itself to consumers and achieve success within the business.

This discussion on Coca-Cola and its “ShareaCoke” campaign directly reinforces my research study question as it shows that there is a link between brands using social media with specific use of the hashtag and the success of that brand. It shows that social media is in fact a powerful tool to gain market share, audience size and revenue. Coca-Cola has always been a successful and likable brand but through its additional use, incorporating social media and the trending hashtag tool into its marketing efforts, their brand and their campaigns that are launched, are even bigger successes than before, sometimes even viral.

Apple

The Apple Brand will be used as a comparison brand to the above mentioned Coca-Cola brand. Compared to Coca-Cola and their social media usage, Apple is completely opposite when it comes to their social media strategy and presence. They do not make use of any Hashtags and their presence on social media is little to none, yet they are one of the most successful and valuable companies in the world, much like Coca-Cola. So how is “The biggest company in the world also the world’s biggest social media holdout?” (Wasserman; 2016).

Apple most certainly does social media differently to its competitors in the market. They adopt a completely alternative marketing strategy by ignoring social media and it evidently is working for them. So how do they do it?

To explore this question, Apples various social media platforms must first be explored:

With regards to Apples social media platforms; “It’s not easy to find Apple on Twitter or Facebook and while the company has a very active page on LinkedIn it is used for little other than job advertisements at the company. Its presence on Google + has a 70,000 strong community moderated by other individuals. Products such as iTunes have Twitter pages but the company has never been a fan” (Mumford; 2013). This shows that Apple does have some form of social media presence but there is no official platforms run and controlled by Apple themselves as seen and discussed with the Coca-Cola brand.

Specifically looking at Apples Facebook platform, there is an “unofficial page for an Apple Inc. “computer store” which has more than 24.5 million “Likes.” The company doesn’t appear to have any sort of official Facebook page, yet their unendorsed page has 5.5 million more Likes than Google’s official (and highly active) page. Their recently new official Facebook page for Apple Music also has already more than 1 million Likes” (Kapko; 2015).

The brands page for “Apple Inc.” Is completely inactive and unresponsive, with no official company activity since its creation in July, 2011. It has over 10 million likes. Based on the most recent statistics, that represents 83 million hours per month of Facebook user time that Apple has decided it wants no part of.”(Foulger; 2014).

In terms of Apples Twitter handle, individuals who have tried to mention @apple in a tweet would realize that nobody at Apple was listening. Apples presence on Twitter is almost nonexistent, to the extent that the @apple account on Twitter still shows the default egg image for its avatar, along with two fat goose eggs in its stats: showing zero tweets, and zero following. These above mentioned elements reflect a completely unused and inactive page on Twitter. (Foulger; 2014)

It is evident that Apple does social media differently, specifically with regards to their Twitter and Facebook accounts. “There are millions of consumers signing up to be 'fans' of the brand, on hundreds of unofficial accounts.” (Hartley; 2016). They are not ignoring social media as much as they did in the past as shown with their new Apple Music Facebook page, but individuals should not expect an official Twitter account from Apple themselves anytime soon (Kapko; 2015). With that being said their minimal approach to social media and their unwillingness to want to use social media as part of their strategy, specifically their Twitter presence, seems to bare no impact on their consumers perceptions of the Apple brand and instead continue with a positive perception from their consumers (Kapko; 2015). Therefore this information shows that even though Apple ignores social media to such an extent, it still continues to be a highly successful and valued brand by consumers.

Apples strategy towards marketing themselves and their brand takes a more traditional approach compared to the Coca-cola brand. The pervasive strength of apple means that they do not need to follow the same rules as other brands when it comes to marketing and social media presence on Twitter, Facebook or other networks, but instead can break these rules without consequences (Kapko; 2015).

“Essentially, its strategy is to create a social buzz by staying completely silent, instead letting the rumour mill do the PR work instead.” (Moth; 2012). Apple does ironically market itself on social media, but they let their fans do all the work for them and allow their fans to create a buzz around new product launches and campaigns on Facebook and Twitter. Apple does nothing to get involved in these discussions, unlike Coca-cola which is very actively involved.

Another important aspect to their strategy and what sets Apple Apart from other brands is Apple's veil of secrecy. This secrecy strategy generates excitement and hype around the products and the brand itself. While many brands encourage their employees to blog and tweet about the company, Apple forbids staff from discussing the company or posting comments on third-party Apple and Mac-related sites." (Moth; 2012). Apple keeps its upcoming products hidden from its competitors and when it announces a new product, the company has absolute control over the message. Steve Jobs' keynote presentations (and now Tim Cook's) are always hotly anticipated because (with few exceptions) nobody really knows what's going to happen. Journalist Adam Lashinsky describes Apple as the "ultimate need-to-know culture." (Foulger; 2014).

Word of mouth plays a significantly important role in Apples marketing strategy because "There is no better marketing than word of mouth and no better selling-point than being cool and funky. Love it or hate it, Apple remains a class apart" (Mumford; 2013). Apples loyalty from their customer base helps this component of their marketing strategy because it gives Apple momentum and this momentum continues to grow and develop as the word of mouth continues, which it does. This momentum is what gives Apple the competitive advantage over other successful brands; because they already had the momentum where as other brands need to play catch up.

To summarize Apples social media strategy, one could say Apple's strategy is to create great products and let people get on with talking about them. Apple products are disruptive. Other companies may produce products as good - or even better - but they're playing catch-up. Apple isn't known for its transparency; instead the buzz that precedes a major product launch is fuelled by rumour, not by any official marketing communications such as Coca-Cola. The lack of official communication helps to build the hype" (Hartley; 2016). Apple can always rely on the press and media to spread the word for them, leaving them with little to no work with marketing themselves through social media as Coca-Cola does so often.

Other brands use social media to interact with their consumers to gain insight into what their consumers' value and desire from them and as a result produce products which reflect these outcomes, but Apple has a different approach. Steve Jobs summarizes their approach to their consumers by stating that: "'A lot of times, people don't know what they want until you show it to them" (Foulger; 2014).

So will Apple ever join the social media movement?

Apple has recently joined the social media craze but not in the way some may think. Apple quietly opened the Apple Support Twitter account. The channel, called @AppleSupport, will share tips and tricks for Apple users as well as answer product and support questions. The company's tactic to introduce the new Twitter account is to increase their customer experience as they realized the need for their users wanting readily available help, advice and tips from the Apple advisors that they trust. The reason they are using social media to do this is that Apple feel it is the most effective way to reach their customers and resolve complaints, not for any other reason other than that. The CEO Tim Cook stated that: "We're always looking for new ways to help you get the most out of Apple products" (Claveria; 2016). This latest social media move for Apple proves that the company doesn't completely forget about social media, Apple merely uses it very differently to that of other brands and competition. This move is an acknowledgement of the growing importance of customer experience and not focused on social media as a strategy for success, but rather customer experience as a strategy and social media as a tool.

Apple takes the road less travelled and this ultimately is the reason behind their success. They do not stick to the rules, breaking almost every marketing rule in the book and there take on social media is no different (Kapok; 2015). Apple may be anti-social but that is because they can afford to be. They already have word of mouth giving them momentum and they have products that are hugely desired by individuals and a good quality, desired product that is easy to use, can get away with a lot (Hartley; 2016). Unlike Coca-Cola whose social media and marketing strategy is completely opposite, which contributes to their success, Apple still proves that the way they do things is better. In 2013, Apple supplanted hyper-social Coca-Cola as the most valuable brand in the world in Interbrand's Global Brand Rankings" (Foulger; 2014). Apple does not believe it needs to be doing more with social media, after all why change a winning formula now (Moth; 2012).

After extensive literature has been read and understood, It can be concluded from the various articles that there is already some relevant information and studies available about which platforms of social media are used by successful brands, as well as information showing that social media is important for businesses of today, not only social media but the hashtag tool specifically, as part of a company's marketing strategy. It can also be concluded that there is some interconnectivity between brands that are successful and their use of social media and the hashtag. However the gap in the literature that has been identified is that although there is evident information about the importance of social media to businesses in the modern day, there is a gap in which there is very little information about

whether the hashtag directly links to the success of the business, the literature I have read and understood only reflects that this social media tool contributes to consumers being able to find a product easier, feel part of a community and belong to a group by using the hashtag and assists in recall and recognition of a product when the hashtag is used. This all leads to consumers knowing about a product or brand, but does it result in the actual success of the brand itself? This research study will investigate whether there is a significant and direct link between the hashtag tool being used in brands marketing strategy and the overall success of the business or whether it just promotes an already successful brand in a better way, serving other purposes.



Research Methodology

- 1) The research design and approach I will be using will be mixed method research in order to add depth and detail to my findings, because it is mixed method research I will be using both qualitative and quantitative research in conducting my research study. This will enable rich, quality and complex findings and datasets that quantitative research may not produce if used on its own. The paradigm I will be using is a positivist approach as I will be trying to understand patterns and relationships of consumers and businesses with regards to their use of social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram) and tools (the hashtag) to the successful outcome for brands. Therefore the method of this approach that I will be using is an Idiographic approach which focuses on understanding individual behaviour. The individual behaviour is factors such as: Awareness, association, use of Facebook and Instagram, adoption of the hashtag and buying behaviour.

- 2) I will be constructing a single survey with 15 questions to use as my data collection method. The survey will incorporate both qualitative and quantitative questions for participants to answer. The questions will incorporate some 'yes' and 'no', tick box questions that are easy and quick for the participant to read and answer. It will also comprise of questions that require a short statement or paragraph from the participants about their opinions, feelings or perspectives on the question asked. This approach used in the survey will allow for a broader perspective on the topic under study, deeper insights into consumer's thoughts and opinions, more data collected which allows for a more comprehensive study and a variety of different answers. This will increase the findings credibility and reliability through the triangulation of different results.

- 3) The population for my research will be the residents in Cape Town in the Western Cape. The population will involve areas such as: The City Bowl, Claremont, Rondebosch, Seapoint, Greenpoint, Gardens, Somerset West, Blouberg and The Waterfront Front. The reason behind my population selection is because the researcher resides and studies in Cape Town and the areas mentioned above are the areas frequented on a weekly basis and will be easy to collect data for the research study as a result.

The Cape Town population comprises of various ethnic groups and cultures, such as: Black African, Coloured, White, Indian and Asian, there is a rich diversity with Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa being the main languages spoken in Cape Town. As a result of Cape Town's rich diversity it will bring depth, reliability and a wide range of knowledge and information to the findings in this study.

- 4) The population sample that I will be using from the above mentioned population group, will be the following: The study will focus on both male and female participants in the City of Cape Town, 15 years and older without an age limit on the oldest participant. I will be using participants that are actively engaged in social media as well as participants who are not in order to obtain knowledge and information from both perspectives of participants to conduct a comparative analysis. I will be using this age range because these participants usually have a cell phone or computer where social media would be used or viewed, they would also be frequently exposed to different marketing and advertising strategies or campaigns of brands whether on television, magazines or radio. This age group is also has the ability to read, understand and form opinions on businesses marketing and social media strategies. This group can also afford to buy their own products either from earning a salary or an allowance from their parents; they have freedom to purchase goods. This age group also forms part of the group in society that is most interactive and familiar with how technology and social media work and are the most active users of social media. It also includes users that are not very active on social media and may prefer traditional methods of marketing and ways of communication. Therefore this sample will be the most appropriate for my research study on social media as it includes both ends of the spectrum.
- 5) I will complete a total of 30 surveys, 15 answered by males and 15 answered by females, from a combination of participants in Cape Town that engage/do not engage in social media.

- 6) I will then collect all the surveys from the participants and order them into male and female categories. I will then organise these categories into sub categories of qualitative information and findings and quantitative findings. The qualitative findings will reflect how the participants feel, their opinions and beliefs where as the quantitative findings will reflect statistics and numbers of participants towards the specific question asked.
- 7) I will then take the above mentioned categories and sub-categories of surveys and systematically analyze the answers from each participant, grouping together comments on similar themes and attempting to interpret them and draw conclusions about the topic under study. I will identify the relationships between the variables and identify the differences between the variables. I will compare these findings from the questionnaires to the findings from my primary research. I will count the number of times these themes occur and group them in categories from highest/most frequented to the lowest/least frequented. I will then describe the data and findings in the form of a research report by using both statistical analysis in the form of tables and graphs for my quantitative research and explanations, paragraphs and descriptions for my qualitative research. I will analysis where the findings from the questionnaire relate (commonalities) to the findings from primary research as well as where these findings differentiate (peculiarities) in order to draw conclusions to whether there is a significant link to the success of brands and social media use, or if there is not. This will allow the researcher to make recommendations to business for their future growth and success.
- 8) Therefore the data collection plan that will be used is a multi-method data collection plan and the data collection techniques I will use will be surveys. Deductive data analysis will also be used for my statistical approach where I will look at numbers, graphs and tables for my qualitative research.



Data Analysis, Findings and Interpretations:

After the vast amount of research pertaining to the study was conducted, completed and collected; the data analysis, findings and interpretation thereof will be discussed. This chapter will first be addressed by an introduction to the data analysis that was conducted (4.1), followed by an analysis, findings and interpretations of the general insight and findings from the survey's that were completed by the participants (4.2), it will then be followed by the findings and interpretations from Coca Cola specifically with regards to social media and the hashtag tool from the surveys completed (4.3) and finally conclude with the findings and insights with the Apple brand and their social media strategy from the surveys completed and the interpretation of these findings (4.4).

4.1) Introduction

This chapter will use both a narrative and graphical format, in the form of Pie Charts, in order to record and reflect the data findings from the surveys that were completed. Due to the fact that a mixed method approach was used in chapter 3 to collect the data, both these data analysis techniques will be used in chapter 4. The findings from the total of 40 completed surveys reflected a positive feedback for the study and the findings were beneficial and relevant to answer the research question of the study.

4.2) General Insights and findings from the survey

From the comprehensive research that was conducted, there were a total of 40 surveys completed by the participants using a link on Facebook to answer a Google Survey which served as the medium to answer these surveys, with a total of 15 questions in each survey. This was an additional 10 surveys compared to what was initially required from the surveys. These participants were all residents of the Western Cape, living in the various surrounding areas around the Cape Town city such as: Sea Point, Green Point, Claremont, Vredehoek, Bloubergstrand, Table View and Newlands.

From the 40 surveys that were completed, the majority of respondents were of the average age of 22 years old with the youngest participant that answered being 21 and the oldest being 75 years old. The majority were female participants with only 30% being male. The majority of participants being female could show that females of that age are the most active on social media platforms and enjoy incorporating it into their daily lifestyles more than males tend to. When asked which social media platform the participants are most likely to use in their daily lifestyles, 90% of participants answered to using both Facebook and Instagram as their primary social media platform of choice. Only 7.5% of participants

answered to solely using Facebook alone and only 2.5% from the study responded to not using any form of social media in their daily life (**See figure 4.2.1**). This response shows that Facebook and Instagram are both the most popular social media platforms for both male and females. These platforms appeal to and are used by a range of ages and this response proves that there are no specific ages that social media caters for, specifically Facebook and Instagram in this study. It suggests that these two platforms cater and are inclusive to all individuals. The response also suggests that the combination of Facebook and Instagram is the most powerful and popular social media platform to use for brands wanting to reach their maximum target audience and make the most of their marketing efforts because by using these two platforms together brands are able to target the most amount of consumers with their marketing tactics. In addition the participant that made up the 2.5% and that responded to not using any form of social media was a male of 75 years old. This response is understandable as it can be assumed that a person of this age may not know how to use social media or may not be able to anymore. On the other hand if they are able to use social media, it may not be the main priority in this stage of their lives.

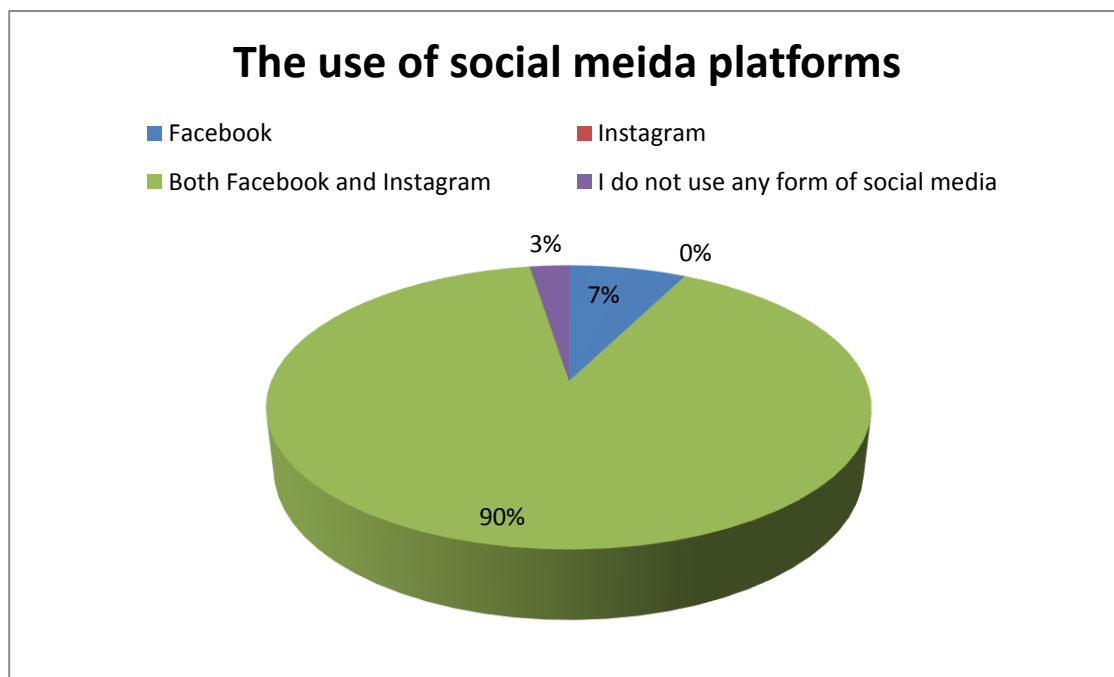


Figure 4.2.1: Participants most predominant social media platform

With regards to the hashtag tool, which is the main focus element of this research study; majority consisting of 85% of the participants said that they made use of the hashtag tool on various social media platforms and included it in their daily social media activities, with only 15% of respondents saying they did not use the hashtag tool at all.

From the 85% of participants that replied to using the hashtag tool, the respondents had various reasons that shed light as to why they made use of the hashtag tool. The reasons for their use were as follows:

- The hashtag is used as a humorous and comedic purpose for participants, the participants responded to enjoying using the hashtag for fun and enjoyment. They revealed that they enjoyed reading hashtags that were light hearted, a play on words, cleverly written and made them laugh.
- For other participants the hashtag served as a search tool and a way for them to connect with other individuals that hashtag the same or similar things, with similar interests and tastes, it enabled participants to find and 'like' their various posts and images, to gain more 'likes' and 'followers' on their social media posts which as a result increased their visibility and social media presence. The participants also revealed that aside from the hashtag increasing their personal social media visibility, they also used it to increase awareness and draw attention to participants' brands and businesses.
- Participants claimed that the hashtag helped them be part of national and international conversations that take place online and in the digital world. The hashtag served as a medium for participants to gain information and knowledge and learn about various topics occurring in and around the world or their communities.
- Participants also stated that the hashtag was a way for them to contextualize their images more by using a descriptive hashtag that would enhance their post or image more than the effect the post would have if it stood alone. The hashtag places emphasis or adds additional information or a description to a post or image. The hashtag helps express further the participants' feelings, emotions and views and adds relevant content to a post or image.
- Participants responded to hashtags making their social media platforms look more 'cool' and served as a way to enhance their personal image.
- Hashtags help individuals become aware if something is trending on social media and be a part of the hype around it. The hashtag revealed to help participants join a movement that was happening in their community or the world.
- Lastly participants responded to using the hashtag because the hashtag and Instagram go hand in hand. The hashtag is almost a prerequisite if an individual would like to use Instagram and use it properly.

These findings have a direct relationship to the research found in chapter 2 because the literature stated that the hashtag is a way for individuals to facilitate brand awareness and visibility about their brand, to expose brands to a broader target audience, it is a way for consumers to gain information and knowledge about current affairs and products, to join a movement or trend, aid as a search tool to connect with others and by using a hashtag it serves as a hyperlink to view related posts and images. Therefore the data collected from the participants in the study was an accurate reflection of the existing literature and reinforced the positive effects of the hashtag.

The various reasons as to why the 15% of participants answered to not using the hashtag tool on social media were as follows:

- The participants felt that there is no point to using the hashtag and in their opinion it did not serve a purpose. It was found that these participants did not use the social media platforms that hashtags were most popular to be used on, such as: Instagram and therefore it is understandable as to why the hashtag did not serve a purpose to these participants. However the other participants stated that they were not at all and/or not very actively involved on social media and as a result did not use the hashtag. This finding applied only to the older audience of participants in the study that either did not use social media or were not aware on how to use the hashtag tool on social media.
- The remainder of participants either felt the hashtag was solely used by other individuals to get attention, gain 'likes' and 'followers' and they did not like using it as it represented something vain and conceited and did not serve a good purpose; or they purely just did not like posting content on social media but rather used social media for viewing other friends and families content and therefore did not use the hashtag.

These findings from the 15% of the participants prove to have a direct relationship with the research found from the literature review in chapter 2. Neil James stated that he believed that hashtags serve no purpose to a brand and that if a business's traditional marketing efforts were effective and if they had an emotional connection to their consumers, fulfilling their human needs, then there would be no need for a hashtag. He also stated that the hashtag was just a way for businesses to seem more modern and approachable and that a brand would need more than a hashtag to do this. This could reflect the participant's feelings that were of an older age, as to why a hashtag serves no purpose to them and as a result did not make use of the hashtag on social media.

Aside from the general perceptions of social media, the hashtag tool used on social media platforms is the most important element of this research study. It is the specific tool that is the focus of the study within the broader umbrella term of social media. The hashtag tool is rapidly growing and has become a popular tool for individuals to include when using social media platforms. Due to the importance of the hashtag tool for this study, participants were asked their opinion and feelings about whether or not the hashtag tool added to the success and effectiveness of a brands campaign. A majority of 87.5% of participants responded by saying that the hashtag tool undoubtedly added to the success of a campaign. The findings reflected in the surveys showed that these participants said that when hashtags are included in a brands marketing strategy or campaign it allowed them to feel included, connected to the brand and part of the community that the brand creates when they then use that same hashtags later in their posts and images.

Participants claimed that the hashtag allows businesses to monitor consumers' interactions with the brand which would lead to a more effective campaign. The participants also stated that the hashtag creates a movement which generates excitement amongst individuals and as a result more people speak about the brand and the hashtag it's using. It also influenced participants to purchase the product because of the excitement created around it and a desire to buy the product thereafter. A hashtag also creates hype around the product on social media according to the participants which once again leads to greater brand awareness and presence because consumers are more actively part of the brand due to curiosity, creating additional expose for the brand. The participants did however state that in order for the hashtag to be effective for them, they believe it should be kept short, clear and easy to read and replicate. These findings relate directly to the literature from chapter 2 as it reflects the similar methods that Apple use to create awareness and knowledge about their products, this being that Apple uses their consumers to generate a hype and excitement around the product.

The participants revealed through the survey responses that a hashtag used by a brand in their campaigns can facilitate an emotional connection to the brand, by making participants remember a memorable experience in their past, making them feel part of the brands campaign, creating a community of people who love the brand and whom individuals feel connected with based on a mutual passion for the brand, it helped people relate and connect with other people using the hashtag, it encourages togetherness, it adds a sense of personal touch by using a hashtag which consumers can use and lastly it creates an emotional connection through humanizing and personifying the brand/product through the use of the hashtag tool.

These findings subsequently contradict the statement by Neil James, as participants proved the hashtag did facilitate an emotional connection, in contrast to Neil James stating that consumers need an emotional connection and that brands needed more than a hashtag to do so. Participants felt the Hashtag fulfilled that human need.

The participants stated that by including a hashtag it reiterated and reinforced the concept and purpose of the brand. They also responded by stating that the hashtag adds another element or level to the brands marketing strategy and another way to reach consumers, to increase their brand awareness and recognition of the brand to achieve an effective marketing strategy.

Through the survey findings it was also found that participants felt that the hashtag was a way for individuals to search for other campaigns using the same and/or similar hashtags that could reinforce and promote the brands campaign in a positive manner, contributing to the effectiveness and success of their campaign.

Lastly participants revealed that by using a catchy hashtag, it was possible for brands to start a trend on social media by using their specific hashtag. If this trending had to occur it would be a great opportunity for the brand to reach a large audience on social media and very quickly too. This trend would create immense popularity and response to the brand, resulting in more views, likes and followings for the brand on social media. This process as a result would then contribute to an effective and successful campaign. From the literature conducted in chapter 2 it stated that if a business could reach a trending hashtag that it is the most successful outcome a business could hope for and would reflect an immensely successful campaign. This finding proves that a hashtag could possibly result in the success of a brand in a direct manner if it were trending.

This 87.5% majority reflected participants between the ages of 21 years of age and 35 years of age. This could suggest that the use of the hashtag is most effective between participants of these ages as they are most actively involved on social media, they keep most up to date with the social media trends and changes, such as the hashtag tool and therefore would be the most influenced by this tool when used in a campaign . This finding has a direct relationship to the literature in chapter 2 which stated that the highest percentages of social media users were between the ages of 16 and 45 years old, with the minority between the ages of 45 years and older. This age proportion supports the reoccurring findings of the older participants not being as actively involved and influenced by the hashtag tool.

The minority of the participants, being 12.5% of the total participants that responded to the surveys had the opinion that the hashtag tool would not and did not contribute to the success of a campaign nor contribute to its effectiveness. These participants felt that hashtags were just a fad and that they would be replaced with something else in the near future. It was found through analysing the data that these participants felt that by using the hashtag tool it was only a way to get more information and understanding of the campaign and doesn't necessarily mean success for the campaign. They felt the campaign spoke for itself without the hashtag tool. However from analysing the individual responses of each survey, the above 12.5% of respondents were of the ages of 50 years and older, this reinforces the above statement of an older target audience and their involvement on social media.

Furthermore, recall and recognition are major elements that marketers strive for when creating a marketing campaign. Their aim is to create the highest level of recognition and recall when consumers see something that relates to their product or brand and ultimately they would strive to create brand loyalty as the highest level on the brand awareness hierarchy. Due to this fact, the participants were asked whether or not a catchy hashtag would facilitate brand recall and recognition if it were included in a brand's campaign. It was found that the majority of participants responded by stating that a catchy hashtag would undoubtedly result in recall and recognition if they saw the hashtag elsewhere aside from in the campaign. These participants stated that the hashtag alone would generate an association for them between the hashtag and the brand itself because they are constantly exposed to hashtags every single day on social media. This information proves that the hashtag can serve as an important and alternative tool to facilitate these outcomes for a brand and that the hashtag certainly serves a purpose **(See figure 4.2.2)**.

Second to the majority of respondents, the study revealed that 22.5% of the participants stated that a hashtag would 'maybe' generate recognition and recall if seen in a campaign **(See figure 4.2.2)**. When these participants were asked further to why this was the case, they stated that only a hashtag that was captivating and memorable and enhance the campaign would facilitate recall and recognition with the brand, otherwise the hashtag would be of no use and redundant to them.

As a contrasting finding, it was found that the 12.5% of the participants that replied by saying 'no' to the question, responded by saying that the hashtag did not facilitate any form of recognition or recall for them when a hashtag was seen away from the campaign and as a hashtag alone.

In addition it was found that 7.5% of the respondents claimed that a hashtag makes no difference to the participants if used by a brand or in their campaigns (**See figure 4.2.2**). These participants stated that the hashtag would not influence them as individuals and that recognition and recall would come from elsewhere and not specifically the hashtag alone. The combined 20% of the above mentioned participants when analysed were found to reflect the few older, more mature age group of the study around the age of 45 years old. Again this could suggest as mentioned previously, that the older participants are not as active on social media or familiar with the hashtag tool as an element on social media and as a result the hashtag would not play a role in generating recall and recognition for them as social media is not an important part of their lifestyles.

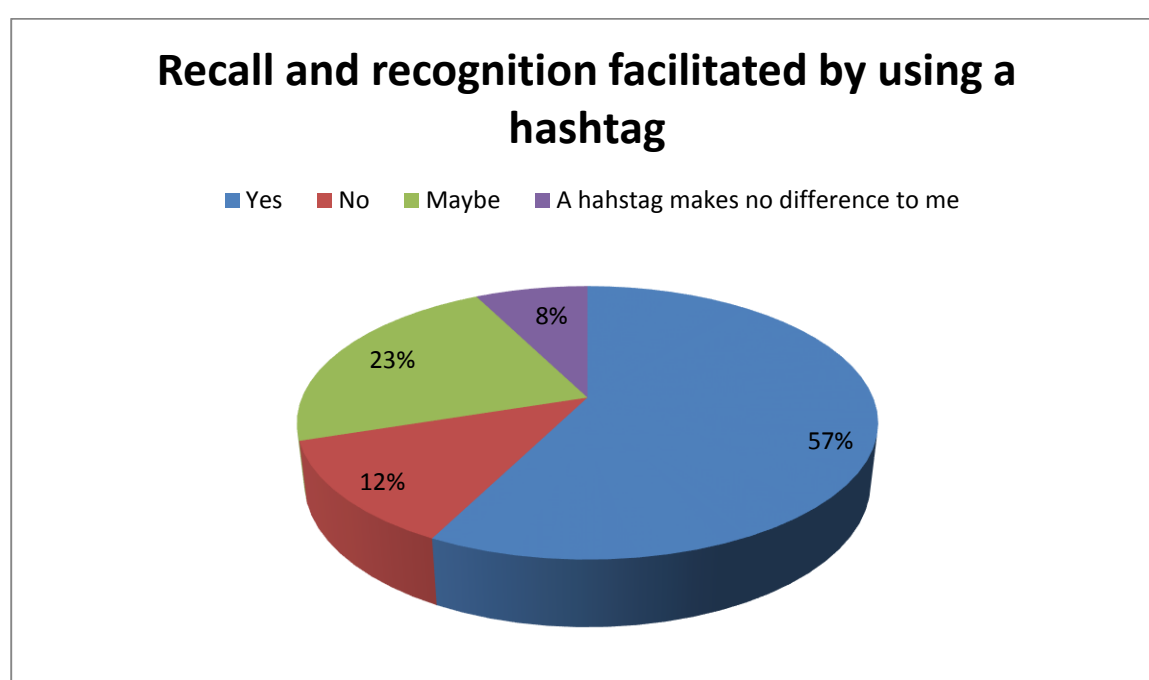


Figure 4.2.2: To determine whether or not the use of a hashtag facilitates recall and recognition to consumers

4.3) Findings and insights about Coca- Cola from the survey

Coca-Cola is the first brand that was researched and will be the first to be analysed and discussed based on the research findings and results from the surveys conducted. Of the 40 participants under study, all 40 of the respondents claimed to have heard and know of the brand Coca-Cola. However even though 100% knew about the brand, majority of participants (42.5%) said that they do not purchase or buy the beverage. In addition only 40% said that they 'sometimes' purchase and drink the beverage and only 17.5% of respondents actually purchased and drank the beverage (**See addendum 4.3.1**).

This information captured shows that even though majority of participants do not drink Coca-Cola, they know about the brand and its product. This suggests that Coca-Cola's marketing strategy is very effective, they have a strong and dominant brand awareness and presence in the minds of both non-drinkers and drinkers of their beverage and that even though majority of participants do not drink the beverage, the brand is held at top of mind for consumers regardless of their consumption. This makes Coca-Cola a powerful brand with an excellent marketing strategy.

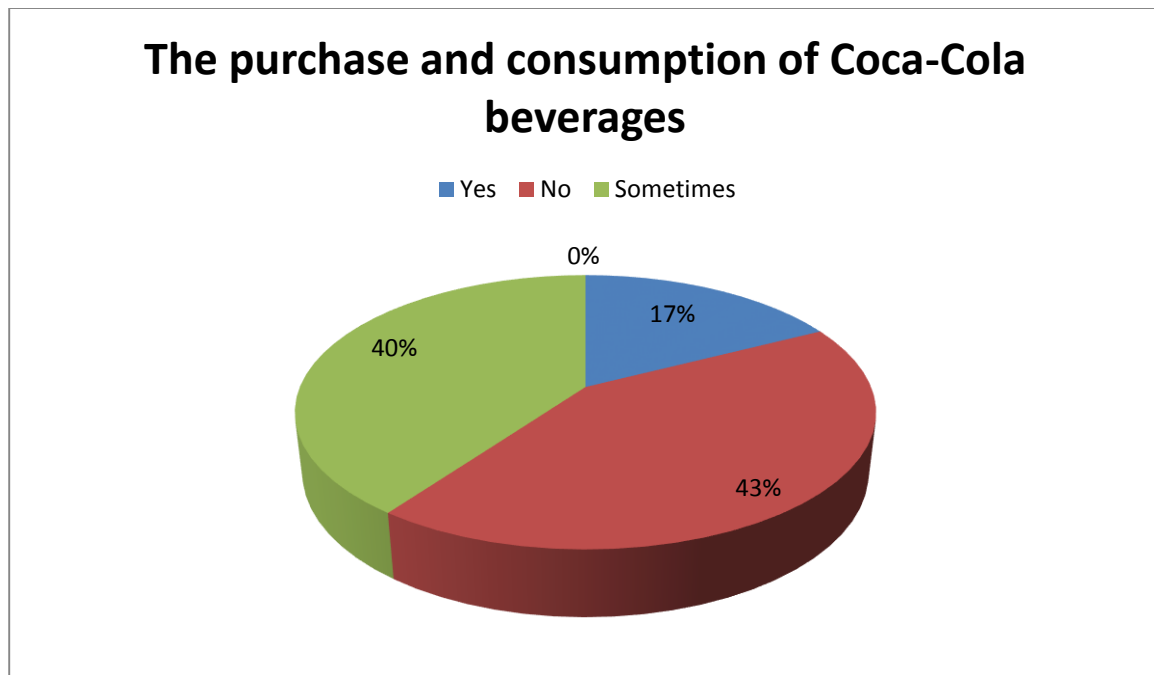


Figure 4.3.1: The percentage of participants that purchase and consume the Coca-Cola beverage.

With regards to the “ShareaCoke” campaign that is the focus campaign within the chosen Coca-Cola brand of this study. This campaign uses the hashtag of #ShareaCoke and when participants were asked whether or not they were familiar with this campaign and/or the hashtag line, majority being 72.5% of participants said that they knew about the brand, the hashtag and the campaign that it was used in. Only a small minority did not know about the campaign but said it sounded familiar as if they had seen it or heard it somewhere (this response reflected a few of the participants that did not drink the Coca-Cola beverage) but even so they were vaguely familiar with the campaign nonetheless, again reinforcing their marketing strength.

Participants stated that the places they saw this hashtag being the most represented were firstly on their customized Coke cans and bottles sold in most stores countrywide, second to that was on social media platforms, specifically Instagram and Facebook and lastly participants came across the campaign/hashtag on television advertisements and the Coca-Cola advertisements before movies in the cinema. These are all the bases in which Coca-Cola covered to promote their “ShareaCoke” campaign showing that participants (even non-drinkers) came into contact with all their campaign contact points, making their campaign effective and successful.

Furthermore, when participants were asked whether the hashtag line alone created an association between the campaign, product and brand name, 90% of participants responded to a strong brand association between the hashtag and the campaign/brand. They stated that they thought about Coca-Cola as soon as they saw the hashtag.

The 90% of respondents reflecting the majority of the study said the following about the association between the brand and the hashtag:

- The participants immediately thought of the brand when they saw the hashtag line alone and represented elsewhere and there was a strong brand association to the hashtag line.
- The Coca-Cola brand comes to mind when participants read the hashtag line and one participant responded with saying that “Coke has always been good with their campaigns and hashtag associations, it is a strength of theirs”
- Participants claimed that by only reading the hashtag line they thought of the brand because the strength of the brand which Coca-Cola has created is so effective.

From the minority of participants that responded with the campaign hashtag not creating an association for them towards the brand, their various reasons were as follows:

- The majority of the participants said the reason behind their response of ‘no association’ was because the product was not part of their lifestyle and that they did not drink it, resulting in being unaware of the hashtag that Coke used for the campaign. They did however stay that it sounded familiar, which reflects previous statements.

- Participants under study also claimed that hashtags are transient and that they do not replace tag lines, therefore these participants revealed that they turn their heads to this sort of behaviour, purposefully making them unaware.
- Lastly the older participants in the study between the ages of 45-75 years old said that they do not use hashtags and therefore there is no association. This finding again has a direct relationship to the research conducted in chapter 2 because hashtags are most actively used on social media platforms such as: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and the research reflected that participants between these ages would be less likely to be involved on these platforms.

The above findings from the participants have a positive relationship with the literature found about Coca-Cola in chapter 2. The research stated that Coca-Cola's use of their hashtag served as a tool to spread brand awareness, interact with their consumers, create memorable experiences, encourage the purchase of the product, increase the brands visibility and increase their customer base and fans as well as leave a lasting impression on their consumers. The response from the participants in the study reinforces and proves this research and that Coca-Colas aim for their hashtag is undoubtedly being achieved and that it does in fact contribute to the success of Coca-Cola's campaign.

4.4) Findings and insights about Apple Inc from surveys

Apple is the second brand that was used for the study as a comparison brand to Coca-Cola. The findings for the Apple brand were very interesting in that they were contrasting to that of the findings for the Coca-Cola brand. 100% of the participants that responded to the surveys stated to knowing about the Apple Inc brand and the products that are sold. They claimed to be 100% aware of the Apple brand. Furthermore, 100% of the respondents replied to owning an Apple product, whether it was an Iphone, MacBook Computer, IPod or a combination or all three. The most popular product owned by the participants was the Apple Iphone, owned by 90% of all participants.

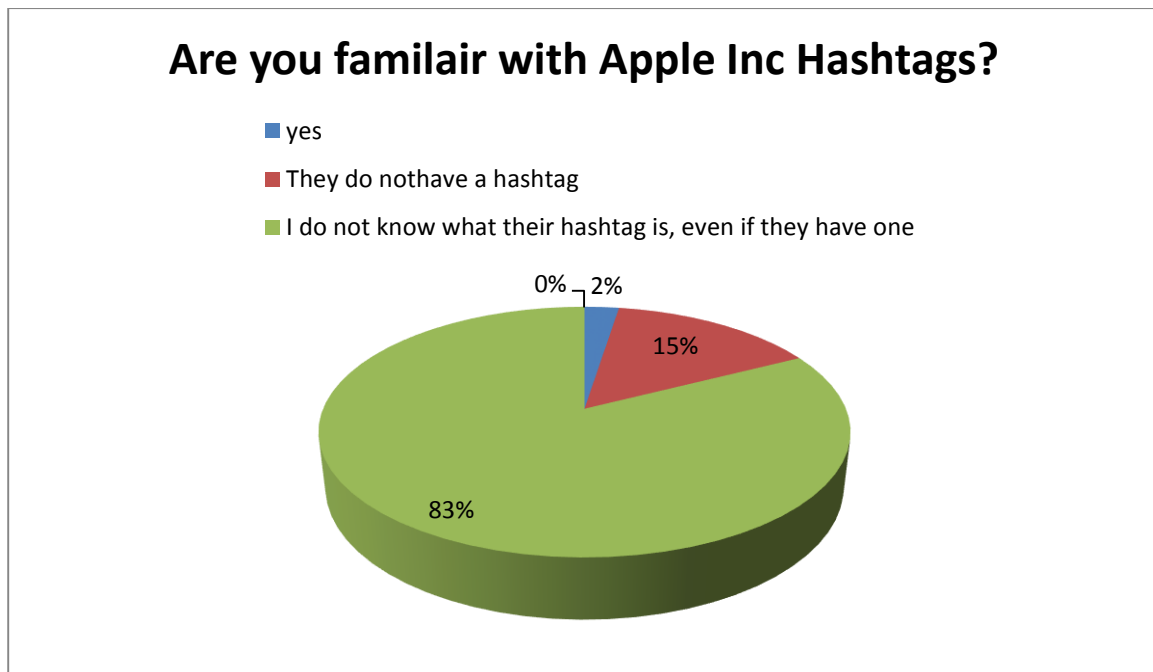
The above findings suggest that Apple's products are a highly desired product and very popular amongst the participants in the study, these participants being the consumers of the Apple brand. The participants choose this brand over a wide variety of other products of the same nature that are offered in the market. When participants were asked as to why they purchase and choose the Apple brand over the many other brands that are on offer, the participant's responses are recorded as follows:

- The Apple products offer superior quality that surpasses all the other products that could be offered as a substitute product. Participants felt that the products were long lasting, an excellent software program, technologically advanced, reliable, efficient and effective products to use that are capable of doing everything that is required by an individual, fulfilling all needs of participants.
- Participants claimed that the products features and use were a popular attraction. The simplicity, user friendly and the way the product looked is aesthetically pleasing to the participants under study and felt it was a product representing a status symbol to others around them. Therefore the Apple product is part of an individual's image.
- The Apple products also served to be the best software for participants to use for their business activities, especially individuals that require design programmes. Participants felt the Apple software was of the highest for design specific tasks. Participants also felt it was a necessity to have the software as part of their business functions and operation systems because it made it easier to manage their business with one system throughout their offices.
- The participants replied to purchasing the Apple products because they felt a sense of loyalty to the brand, they responded to feeling safe and secure with using the brand and felt guilty to purchase any other brand. Participants under study also claimed to trust the brand and therefore refuse to purchase any other brand once this sense of trust and loyalty has formed.
- Synchronicity played another role as to why participants choose the Apple Inc brand over other products. Participants felt that by having all the Apple products, it made their lives easier and more efficient because all their products sync together with ease. Furthermore all updates and changes are almost automatic throughout all Apple products that individuals possess, one change in one product will automatically sync to the others. This is less effort and time consuming for consumers compared to the lengthy and time consuming processes that are required with other products and brands.

- Lastly participants felt that the Apple brand was the most popular and most spoken about brand in the market and as a result they would purchase the Apple products to feel like they belong to the Apple community and be a part of this popular movement.

With regards to their social media use and the hashtag tool, Apple does not have a hashtag that they use or have used recently in a campaign like the Coca-Cola brand. They also do not actively take part in social media to the extent of Coca-Cola as discussed in previous chapters. Therefore when participants were asked the simple question of what Apples hashtag line was, if any, 82.5% of respondents claimed that they did not know what Apples hashtag line was even if they had one (**See Pie Chart 4.4.1**). The remainder of the participants responded to knowing for certain that Apple did not have a hashtag at all. This response proves that even though apple does not have a hashtag line that is frequently used or created for a campaign, it does not influence participant's awareness or knowledge of the Apple brand. Individuals know about the brand regardless of a hashtag line, showing that the use of a hashtag does not prove to have a positive or negative impact on the Apple brand specifically or its consumers.

As a result one could make the assumption that the reason for this is due to the fact that Apples has a very strong, effective marketing strategy, which is reinforced in the literature research in chapter 2. Apple's brand strength in the market proves that they do not need a hashtag and their current marketing strategy is already a winning strategy.



Pie chart 4.4.1: Participants familiarity of Apples hashtag use.

If Apple does not actively take part in social media or possess a hashtag line as part of their brand or campaign as does Coca-cola, how do consumers know about the brand and how does Apple assert such a dominant presence in the market?

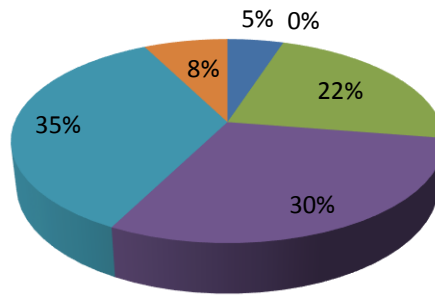
From the survey responses of the participants, it was found that 47.5% of the participants were not sure as to how they came about knowing about the Apple brand but they just did know about it. Second to that response was 30% of participants claiming to have heard about the Apple brand from friends and family that either owned an Apple product or knew about the brand. A further 22.5% of participants said they knew about the brand through word of mouth. These percentages reflect that the majority of participants, being 52.2% of participants came to know about the Apple brand through other people around them and not directly from Apple marketing or communication strategies. It is interesting however to notice that 47.5% of the participants came to know about the brand subconsciously in some way or another **(See pie chart 4.4.2)**.

These findings are a positive reflection of the research that was found as part of the literature review that was conducted in chapter 2. The literature stated that Apples marketing strategy is their veil of secrecy and a traditional approach to marketing. It stated that Apple prefers to keep quiet and let their fans do all the talking for them to create the hype and excitement around the products and Apple as a brand. This is the marketing strategy that they have chosen. This information directly links to the findings from the surveys recorded because the majority of participants responded to knowing about the brand through family, friends and word of mouth. This reinforces Apples effective strategy as stated in chapter 2. Apple's strategy is so effective that it is captured, stored and remembered in the minds of consumers without consumers being conscious or aware of this process and this is proven in the findings where 47.5% of participants responded to not knowing how they came about knowing about the Apple brand, but that they just did.

Apple's strategy is to allow their fans to create a hype and excitement around their brand without doing anything themselves, they focus on word of mouth and the veil of secrecy which is proven and reinforced from the participants responses in this study. It shows that Apple is achieving what they set out to do and that there is no need for a hashtag when they already have a winning formula as stated in chapter 2.

How do you know about Apple products?

- Facebook
- Word Of Mouth
- Friends and Family owning Apple products
- I'm not sure how I came to know about Apple products, I just do.
- Other



Pie Chart 4.4.2: How participants came to know about the Apple brand and its products



Conclusion

The study presented a set of limitations that hindered the overall success of the research that was conducted. The first limitation that presented itself was that only one geographical area was the focus of this study, namely the Western Cape, this therefore excluded other areas of South Africa. Therefore the study would only be considered to be a true reflection of a small portion of the Western Cape and not the whole of South Africa. In addition this limitation would therefore imply that the results found from this study would only be guaranteed to be effective in these parts of South Africa and may not be effective or successful in other parts of South Africa. For future studies I would suggest a greater geographical area to be covered with a greater population and sample size, in order to reveal a more accurate reflection of South Africa. A second limitation of the study was the type and number of data collection methods that were used for this study. The data collection method was only via surveys and included 40 participants that answered these surveys. This collection method was too narrow for the depth that is required from this study and therefore for future studies a larger target audience and a variety of methods should be included, such as the use of focus groups and personal interviews. The addition of these methods will enhance the quality of the data collection and the results.

There were very few implications that were experienced during the research study because of the simplicity of study. The only implication that occurred was that of a few participants whom did not fully complete the surveys they were given and as a result this left critical gaps in the data that was needed for the study. Due to this, additional time had to be taken to find other participants to complete more surveys that would replace the incomplete ones. For future studies it would be recommended to ensure that the research can ensure that participants answer all questions and conduct the research properly.

The ethical considerations and the well being of the participants that were used in the study were strictly adhered to. The identities of all participants succeeded to remain anonymous, the questions asked remained unbiased and not offensive to the participants and there were no complaints or concerns that got brought to attention by any individuals involved throughout the course of the study. The researcher also remained unbiased when analysing and interpreting the data and therefore the findings were accurate and reliable reflections of the data recorded by participants.

Even though the study was a success, the reliability and validity of this research study are moderate; the reason for this is being that the study was conducted on a narrow set of participants, only 40 individuals that only reside in the Western Cape. Therefore the study is moderately reliable and valid for a small population of individuals that live in the Western Cape and would not be considered highly reliable and valid if used for the broader South African population. However most of the research would not differ greatly from one individual to another and therefore if projected to a larger population could be assumed that the outcomes of the study would remain similar but with greater depth.

The study highlighted some interesting insights that were unexpected and added to the complexity of the research study. Firstly and the most important insight the researcher believes to be found, was that the majority of individuals in the study were not certain as to how they came about knowing about the Apple brand and its products, but for some reason or another they just did, showing how powerful and effective Apple's strategy really is, it is subconscious and subliminal marketing from Apple. Secondly it was found that even the individuals who did not drink the Coca-Cola beverage still knew or had heard about the brand and could form brand awareness and association with the product, this forms a similar link to that of the Apple. Thirdly, the most popular social media platform for the ages between 21 and 45 years old were the combination of Facebook and Instagram with Facebook being the most popular for individuals over the age of 45 years old. It was also interesting to discover that individuals between the age of 30 and 45 years of age were just as actively involved on social media as that of the technologically advanced youth which was assumed at the start of the study to be the highest and dominant of the active individuals on social media. This reveals that social media has no age restrictions. Lastly it was found that a hashtag is only effective and accepted by individuals if it is short, easy to read, catchy and memorable. It is not an irrelevant or meaningless tool if used correctly and it definitely serves as an important purpose to increase the success of a brand.

Both Apple and Coca-Cola have strong brand awareness, recognition and recall in the minds of their consumers and they are both powerful brands. However even though their outcomes may be similar, their marketing strategies differ significantly. Coca-Cola focuses their efforts on every form of marketing they can get their hands on. They advertise in magazines, radio, billboards, television, newspapers, sponsoring of events, social media platforms, on the side of trucks, promotions and print media. They cover all bases when it comes to marketing their brand, including all the latest trends and tools (such as the hashtag) to reach their consumers, gain awareness, loyalty and overall success for their brand.

It is therefore quite obvious to consumers to how Coca-Cola reach their success and achievements through their extensive marketing, it is also safe to make the conclusion that there is an indirect link to using social media and the hashtag tool and the success of a brand.

Whereas the majority of Apple consumers either do not know how they came to know about the brand and its products or they know about the brand through Word Of Mouth, friends and family. This awareness and loyalty is not generated through social media, print advertising, campaign marketing or media strategies, as the likes of Coca-Cola. Apple takes a secretive approach to generate excitement and hype around the brand, they let their fans do their marketing for them with minimal effort from their side and therefore it is not as evidently clear as to how Apple achieves their success to most individuals. But after conducting this comparative research study, the ways in which Apple has achieved their success has been understood and proven through the participants used in the study. A conclusion can also be made that Apple does not need a hashtag for their success, they achieve their success via other methods, however this does not mean that a hashtag is not an effective tool for a brand to include, it just means that Apple has chosen not to use one.

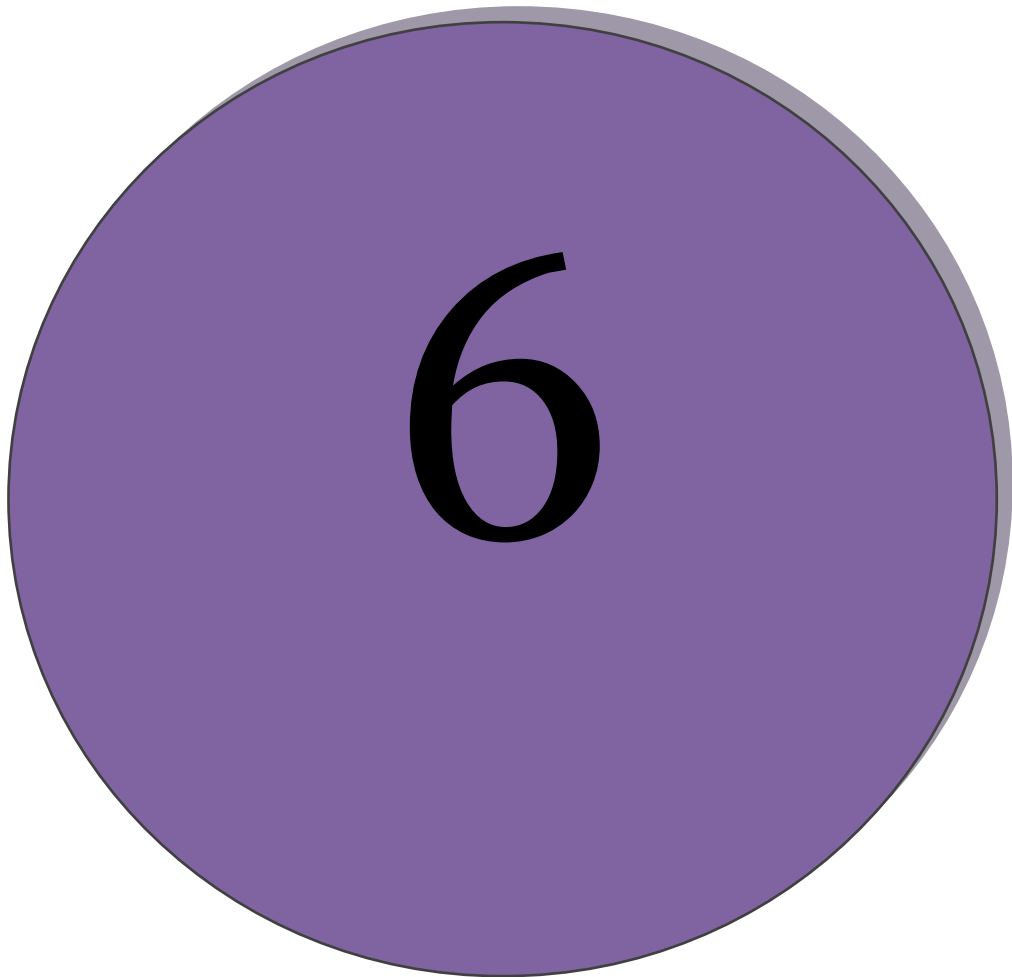
In conclusion, the study revealed that the majority of social media users were between the ages of 21 and 45 years of age with the most active users being females of 22 years of age. It was also found that the most powerful and effective social media platform for businesses to use was the combination of both Facebook and Instagram simultaneously, with Facebook being the most popular for the majority of participants and should be the focus platform if brands would like to target an older audience. Coca-Cola achieve their success through extensive marketing and advertising where as Apple choose to use a silent approach to achieve their success. Coca-Cola consumers are aware as to how they know about the brand where as Apple consumers are unsure as to how they came to know the brand. However, even though both brands choose opposite strategies, it was interesting to notice that 100% of participants reflected strong brand association and recognition to both brands.

Therefore it can be revealed that there is undoubtedly a link between brands that make use of the hashtag tool on social media and the success of their brands campaign, however there was no direct link that revealed the hashtag being the specific and only reason a brand achieved success. This statement has been proven through the Apple Inc and Coca-Cola brands.

The research study on Apple proved that a hashtag was not needed to result in success, their traditional marketing strategy is a powerful one and in Apple's opinion they did not need to include a hashtag. However Apple has not tried to use a hashtag as part of their strategy so one would not be certain to whether or not including a hashtag could enhance their success even further.

In contrast, the Hashtag proved to significantly benefit and increase Coca-Cola's success of their #ShareACoke campaign. It increased their brand awareness, sales, fan base, brand recognition, recall, 'followers', 'likes', knowledge and information about the brand, visibility and it allowed Coca-cola to connect to their consumers and allowed their consumers to connect to one another on an emotional level. Without the hashtag Coca-Cola would certainly still be successful as they have established a outstanding reputation and brand presence for themselves, but their campaigns would neglect important elements that satisfy the needs of consumers, that the hashtag facilitates for them.

In conclusion and to answer the research question, a hashtag is not a tool that businesses have to include in their marketing efforts in order to achieve success; there is no direct link that has been found between a hashtag and a brands success. Apple is proof that a brand does not need a hashtag and Coca-Cola proves that a hashtag only enhances an already successful brand. Therefore it can be concluded that the hashtag merely acts as a tool to enhance the success of a campaign, increase its effectiveness and facilitate stronger communication, interaction and connection with other individuals, consumers and brands. The hashtag has no direct relationship to the success of a brand.



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Addendum:

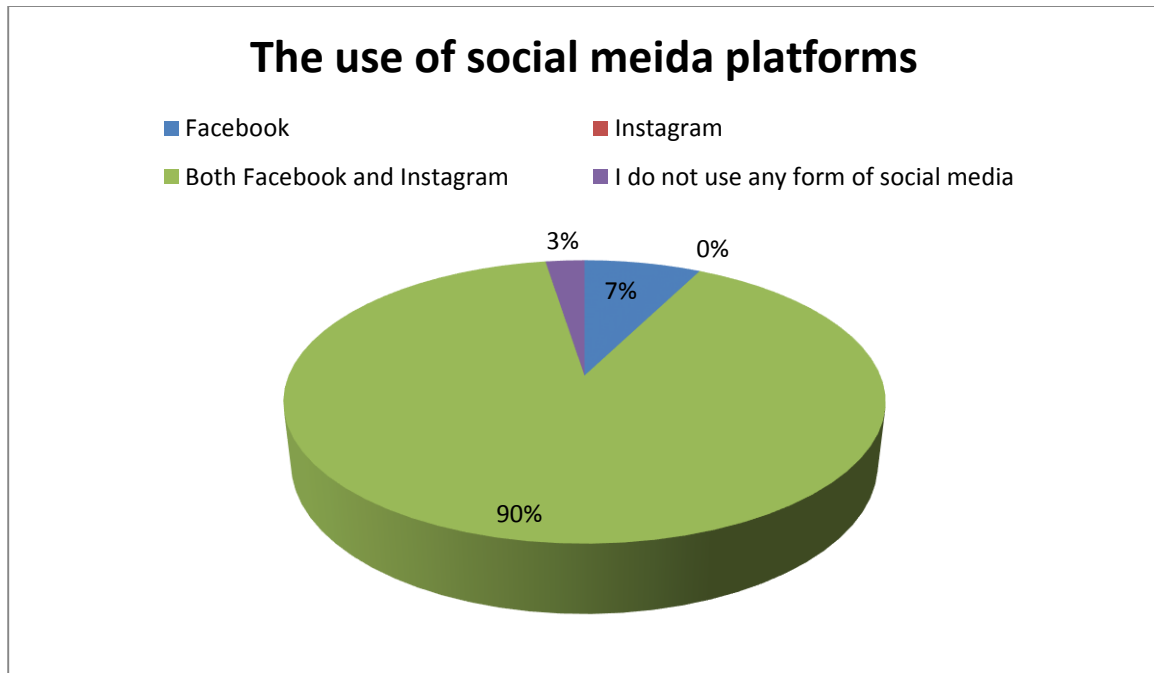


Figure 4.2.1 Participants most predominant social media platform

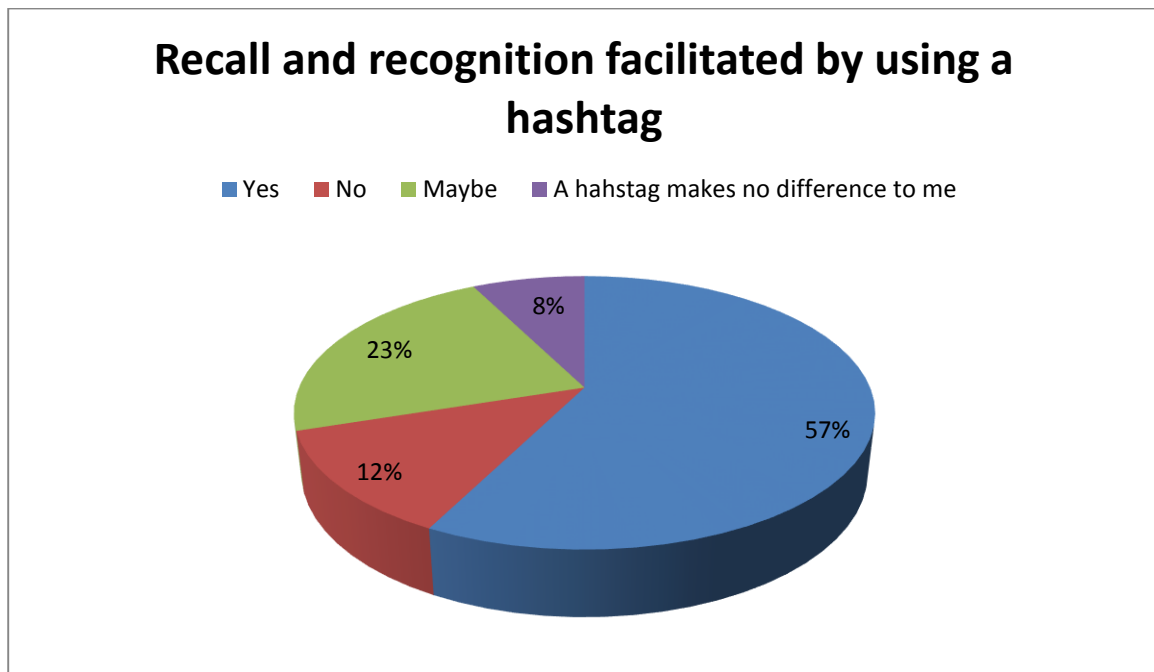


Figure 4.2.2 To determine whether or not the use of a hashtag facilitates recall and recognition to consumers

The purchase and consumption of Coca-Cola

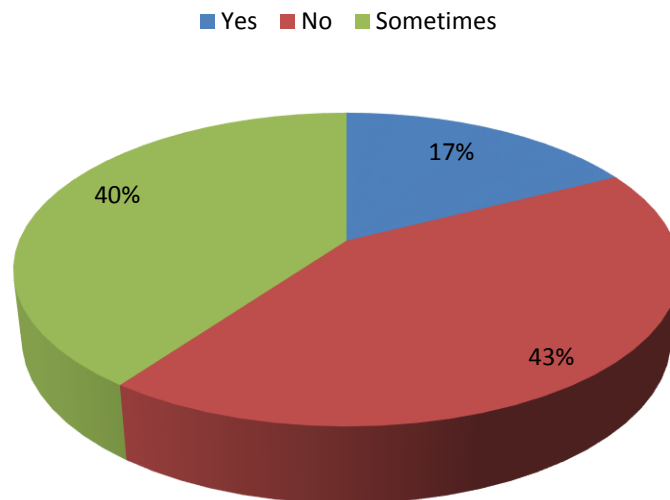


Figure 4.3.1 The percentage of participants that purchase and consume the Coca-Cola beverage.

Are you familiar with Apple Inc Hashtags?

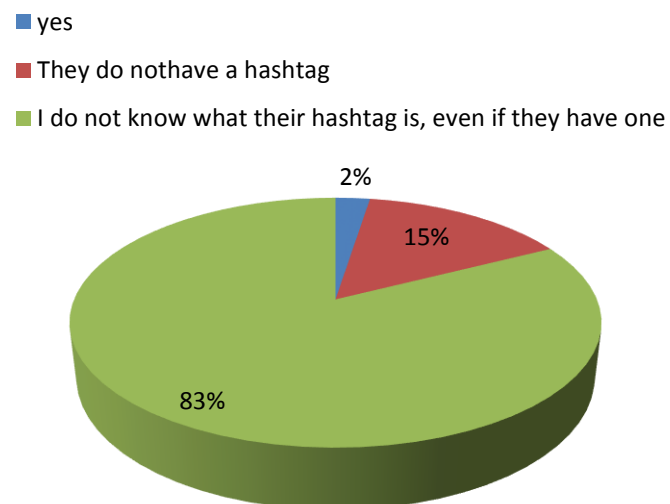


Figure 4.4.1 Participants familiarity of Apples hashtag use.

How do you know about Apple products?

- Facebook
-
- Word Of Mouth
- Friends and Family owning Apple products
- I'm not sure how I came to know about Apple products, I just do.
- Other

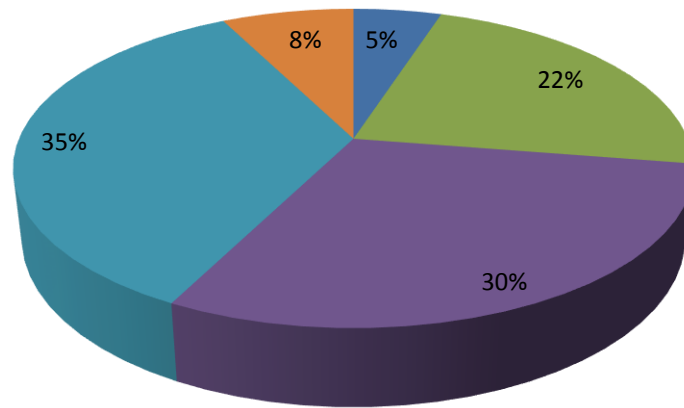


Figure 4.4.2 participants came to know about the Apple brand and its products.

Participant consent form

Research Topic: Social Media

You are invited to participate in a research study on '*The Power of the Hashtag on Social Media Platforms*'. The main purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding to whether or not there is a significant link between: Businesses that make use of the hashtag in their social media strategies and that are actively engaged in social media as a form of their marketing methods, and whether or not this contributes to the success of their brand or whether traditional and other means of marketing are still more effective.

The information recorded in this questionnaire will be completely anonymous and protect the identity of all participants that choose to answer the questionnaire. The information collected from the responses in the questionnaire will be used only for the purpose of this study and will not be used for any other research purposes. I will be ethically responsible in handling the responses and other individuals will not have access to or be able to view this information.

I _____ agree to participate in this research study by answering the following questionnaire, as long as my identity remains anonymous and protected.

Questionnaire

1. How old are you?

2. Where do you live (must be an area within Cape Town)?

3. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Other: _____

4. Do you use Facebook and/or Instagram? If your answer is neither, please state which social media platform you do use.

☐ Facebook

☐ Instagram

☐ Facebook and Instagram

☐ Other: _____

☐ I do not use any form of social media

5. Do you use the hashtag on social media? If yes, please state for what purpose you use the hashtag for? If no, please state why you do not use the hashtag?

6. Do you know the Coca-Cola and Apple brands?

☐ Yes, I know coca-cola

☐ Yes, I know Apple

☐ Yes, I know both Coca-cola and Apple

☐ No I do not know both brands

7. Do you buy and drink Coca-Cola?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. Are you familiar with Coca-Cola's hashtag of '#shareacoke', which it uses in its campaigns? If yes, please state where you have seen this hashtag being used.

9. Does a hashtag, specifically Coke's Hashtag, create an association between the hashtag line and the product that is sold? In other words do you think of the brand Coca-Cola when you read their hashtag line? If no, the hashtag does not create an association, please state your reason why.

10. Does a hashtag in your opinion add to the effective and successful marketing campaigns of brands? Or does it not make a difference to the success of the campaign? Please state Yes or No and the reason behind your answer. (Eg: Makes you feel connected to the brand or encourages you to purchase the brand)

11. Are you familiar with any of Apple's hashtags? If yes, please state what this hashtag is, if any?

- ☐ The hashtag is: _____
- ☐ They do not have a hashtag
- ☐ I do not know what the hashtag is if there is one.

12. Do you own any Apple product? (Iphone, IPod, IPad, IWatch, Apple Mac Computer etc)? If yes, please state which devices you own and how many you own?

13. If you answered yes to the above question, why do you own an Apple product?

14. How do you know about Apple products?

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Magazines
- ☐ By other people owning an Apple product
- ☐ I'm not sure how I came to know about Apple products - I just do.
- ☐ Other: _____

15. Would you as a consumer be more likely to recall and remember a brand's marketing campaign and what they sold, if they incorporated a catchy hashtag line?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ A hashtag makes no difference to me.
- ☐ Traditional methods of advertising appeal more to me.

THANK YOU!!