

SOCIAL MEDIA AND BEST PRACTICE: THE CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIP

Research Report

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Abstract

The consumer-brand relationship is an essential part in the success of a brand, and therefore brands need to be both aware of this as well as leverage the relationship to its full potential. The study will identify the most important aspects in maintaining and developing this relationship over social media, digital platforms where consumers and brands interact with each other, in a South African context.

Past research indicates that social media is growing in popularity, and therefore communication needs to be differentiated to increase engagement with the brand and ultimately, brand equity (Yan, 2011). Brand equity is the level of familiarity a consumer has with a brand, therefore the brand wishes to achieve a high brand equity.

This study has made use of a collective case study to explore the relationship between the consumer and brands that use social media. The results of the study have identified what is important to the consumer and also compared to brand manager responses, via triangulation. This includes Facebook, the social media platform being the most used both by consumers and by brands. Brands highlighted the importance of having an online presence, in order for brands to easily communicate with consumers, and vice versa. User generated content needs to be used carefully, as also with responding to negative remarks.

This study will propose a best practice recommendations to follow to build brand equity online, and in addition, suggest a strategy to 'activate' the results of the research paper in a creative way.

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Glossary of Terms

Keller Brand Equity Model – A framework that explains why customer responses help building brand equity that is defined by Keller (1993) as ‘the differential effect of the brand knowledge on the customer response to the marketing of the brand’. The highest level of brand equity is called brand resonance, where the where the customer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand.

Social media – Internet and online based software and interfaces that allow individuals to communicate and interact with one another (Investopedia, 2015). This includes exchanging details about themselves in aspects such as personal and professional life, photos, and running thoughts. Anybody with internet access can interact with many people, and spread information at a faster rate than traditional media.

User generated content – Media generated content that is created by online users in order to share information and opinions about a topic or subject with other online users (Tang, T., Fang, E. & Wang, F.,2014). This is a dynamic form of media and there is a high influx of content shared daily via social media platforms.

Consumer-Brand relationship – Interaction between the customer and the brand that generates either a positive or negative connotation associated with the brand (Veloutsou, 2007). Their relationship levels vary in emotional attachment, and this influences brand loyalty and equity, and customers may form attachments with more than one brand in the same category (Veloutsou, 2007).

Consumer Engagement – a range of consumer advertising activities and experiences that aim to have a positive impact with the brand (Ad Age Content Strategy Studio, 2014).

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Orientation

In today's society, the general population is headed towards online platforms. This results in users receiving an endless flow of information, frequently at a higher rate than our cognitive abilities to process information (Gomez-Rodriguez, Gummadi, & Scholkopf, 2014). According to Dahlström and Edelman (2013) of McKinsey, a global consultancy firm that studies markets, trends and emerging best practices in every industry and region, the increasing popularity of the digital age has resulted in consumers that not only require personalized involvement with brands but also expect a marketing strategy that is focused on the creation of a valuable experience. Marketing is now headed towards always being relevant, and content that breaks through distractions with effective delivery (Dahlström & Edelman, 2013).

Social media, a form of online communication, has now become an essential part of brand's communication. According to the 2015 State of Marketing Report, an online survey conducted from October to November 2014, 70 percent of marketers plan to increase spending on social media advertising and marketing, as well as 67 percent of marketers on social media engagement. These statistics indicate that companies are moving more toward social media platforms as core to marketing their business (Salesforce: Marketing Cloud, 2014). While being a powerful means of engaging with the consumer, social media pages of a brand need to be consistent in their offering, otherwise responses from consumers may be perceived as clutter (Dunn, 2010). A brand has an essential opportunity to build a relationship with the brand's consumers by learning what the brand's customers are doing and help them with problems in real time.

Problem Statement

Brands are moving into the fast paced online environment, learning and adapting to create conversation with their consumers over a digital platform. These brands, however, need to evaluate, question and analyse the value of social media and the value it can create, whether profit or by increased publicity (Ladueque, 2010). The consumer-brand relationship can also be affected by social media, and brands also need to evaluate the use of social media to develop and foster a relationship with

consumers. Brands can struggle to capitalise on this opportunity, and require a better, refined online presence in order to keep up with their competitors and remain relevant.

Rationale

A key focus of this study is on social media, online interfaces that allow users to communicate and interact with one another. Brands still need to be differentiated and communicated to audiences, and therefore to create brand equity through connecting and fostering a sense of belonging with users (Yan, 2011). This research paper will explore this consumer-brand relationship within an online context in order to identify what the consumer wants to gain from the brand. This is first done by examining previous literature on social media and what studies have been done to identify what brands are currently doing as well as what successful online brands are doing right. The Keller Brand Equity Model will also be used as a reference tool to assess different customers' levels of awareness and familiarity with a brand. The research will therefore propose recommendations for brands to follow in order to be successful on social media.

Research Questions

Primary research question:

- How can the consumer-brand relationship be further engaged via social media and online platforms in terms of increasing brand equity?

Secondary research questions:

- How do brands use the Keller Brand Equity model to engage with consumers?
- What strategies, tools and formulas exist that a social media manager can use to encourage online conversation between consumer and brands?
- What is user generated content and how do brands use this to leverage equity in building relationships and engaging with consumers?
- What is consumer engagement in an online context?

Significance of the Study

The need for this study in a South African context is to assist in the transition of companies, both old and new, to a more effective use of the digital and social media landscape in terms of fostering relationships and increasing engagement. This is

increasingly significant, with information overload causing consumers to filter out many pieces of information, which coincidentally is presented on online platforms.

Delimitation/Demarcation of the Field of Study

In this study, the research will cover the consumer-brand relationship via online platforms, with reference to the Keller Brand Equity Model, as well as best practice recommendations to follow in order for a brand to be effective and engaging online. This research will also cover the use of user generated content and observing customer reaction and responses to what the brand does and reacting appropriately.

The study will not cover decisions made inside a business, for instance, the use of social media managers as compared to employees promoted to that position. Therefore the specific use of social media managers will not affect the results of the study, and that the results can still be used to develop and maintain the consumer-brand relationship. The data collected during the study will also not have an age limitation, that is, respondent age will not be considered when analysing the results of the study. However, for ethical reasons, all research participants were over the age of 18.

Possible limitations or challenges to this study include the fact that although the benefit is for brands in South Africa, there is not an opportunity to gain information and data from overseas companies, face-to-face other than through secondary sources. A nationwide response will not be achieved, due to the size of the population in South Africa and that the bulk of the study will be conducted in the Gauteng province.

While the research paper seeks to recommend a best practice guidelines for companies to be effective on online platforms, a brand that uses them are not guaranteed success, due to the varying industries, and that customer response may also change. However, the hope is that brands can use the results of this research paper to make an effective start on social media platforms.

Assumptions

This research assumes that brands that utilise social media to engage with consumers have a higher brand equity than those who do not. It is also assumed that brands that use the results of this study can expect to have a better presence on social media and encourage conversation online.

The collated and analysed information may not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the whole country, as most of the study will be conducted in the Gauteng province.

Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to critically analyse online platforms to develop best practice recommendations to improve the brand-consumer relationship on social media and consequently, build brand equity with the consumer.

Objectives to be completed by the end of the study:

- Using the Keller Brand Equity Model to compare and contrast four different brands in South Africa that are doing well online and analyse these brands thereof.
- The relationship between the brand and the consumers are to be explored, through interviews with brand managers as well as questionnaires with the general public, in order to compare and contrast the responses between brands and consumers.
- Analyse the use of user generated content and the effectiveness, if any, of it, and whether brands can utilise this to improve online engagement with the consumer.
- The study also aims to find out how companies can effectively communicate, observe and react to responses on social media, by looking at brands that have done this effectively via social media, such as Lego, KFC, Coca-Cola, and Burger King.

Theoretical Framework

The research paper will explore the consumer-brand relationship. In doing so, a framework needs to be developed in order to gain a better understanding before research is conducted. Key variables in the research include exploring the factors that enable a brand to be effective on social media, and consequently, how brand equity can be leveraged to provide a lasting consumer-brand interaction and relationship. The Keller Brand Equity Model will be used as a measuring tool to find how well the consumer is interacting with the brand.

Overview of Research Methodology

The research will make use of a mixed methods approach, in the form of triangulation in order to cross-check both qualitative and quantitative data collected in order to reinforce the results of the study. Brand and social media managers will be interviewed via email, and a questionnaire will be used for the general public that make use of social media. The aim of collecting the research is to gain an idea of how consumers interact with brands via social media and contrasting it with brand and social media managers to see if there is a correlation in order to develop and maintain the consumer-brand relationship.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2 comprises the literature review for this study, which is focused on the main topics of information relevant to the study, namely: social media, the Keller Brand Equity Model, consumer engagement, content marketing, in order to explore the consumer-brand relationship. Chapter 3 will include the research methodology, which are the specific research approach and designs detailed. Chapter 4 will display these results, analysis of the data and present the research findings. In Chapter 5, conclusions and recommendations will be discussed. The research paper will end off with references as well as any addenda used.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research paper will explore the relationship between a brand and its consumers via online platforms, specifically social media pages, and to suggest a best practice model to follow in order to be an engaging brand. Use of the Keller Brand Equity Model will be used as a reference to ensure that the customer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand, and create unique brand associations in memory.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Focus of Literature Review

The rise in popularity and use of social media tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, have led to an increase in regularity and frequency of interactions between individuals groups and communities. Online platforms and social media networks directly influence the consumer-brand relationship. A social identity is created by consumers naturally through interactions with people and brands, and therefore brands offer the opportunity for consumers to extend their identity and add values that they can relate with (Enginkaya & Yilmaz, 2014).

The content of this literature review is aimed at exploring the consumer-brand relationship, and related topics, such as measuring this relationship via the Keller Brand Equity Model and how brands engage with the consumer via these social media platforms. In addition, consumer engagement, online consumer frequency and behaviour, content marketing, brand conversation, communication and observation, user generated content will be explored, and best practices in current social media will be identified in order to get a view to what successful social media brands are doing right. These themes will help explain the need and relevance of the study.

The consulted literature has assisted in developing an effective conceptual framework for the study, in identifying key areas in which the research needs to focus on. With the main focus of the research revolving around the consumer-brand relationship via social media, certain themes aim to assist solving this primary research question by exploring the use of the Keller Brand Equity Model to assess the varying levels of familiarity a consumer has with the brand, ranging from salience to resonance. Brands also use strategies and tools in order to communicate with consumers online, with the utilisation of user generated content resulting in consumers being more engaged with content and brands. Consumer engagement is vital in the use of social media, with participation, openness, conversation, community and connectedness being vital tools to measure effectiveness of the online consumer-brand relationship.

Social media and online platforms

Social media can be described as a social instrument of communication that interacts with the user while giving information (Nations, 2015). Types range from the more popular networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, to the less mainstream, such as

Picasa and Flickr. Social media is increasing in popularity, and more and more consumers are heading to online platforms in order to receive their daily dose of information. Yan (2011) suggests that brands need to be differentiated and communicated to audiences and that online firms have a heightened sense of connection and belonging with users through engagement.

Social media can reveal the thinking of people behind the brands itself, and therefore can increase the engagement with the brand and make consumers, and stakeholders feel associated and “Feel one with the brand” (Yan, 2011).

Social media has been used effectively by a wide range of brands. Starbucks serves as a good example of how brands are able to engage with consumers via social media. Starbucks have created a platform for consumers to engage with the brand in an untraditional way, by launching their “Tweet a Coffee” campaign, which provides a rewarding aspect to their consumers, providing giveaways, which encourages their consumers to like, comment and share (Pozin, 2014).

Other online platforms that brands can use are that of the actual company website, and online analytics. The company website can be used to tell the full story of the brand and highlight the brand message. This can be where the consumers can view all that the business offers (BTN Academy, 2015). This can be used as a communication tool for consumers that do not necessarily like, or use social media.

Online analytics is an effective tool to evaluate and track the performance of campaigns that are conducted by a company. Although the focus of the campaign may not be focused in digital media, analytics can assess responses, whether positive or negative, to the campaigns. This can be a valuable evaluation tool for the company.

An attractive, and engaging social media presence is now essential for brands both large and small, with consumers looking for social media accounts that employ storytelling and create conversation, while also listening to the needs of the consumer (Pozin, 2014). These social media and online tools help to create an online customer base and brand equity for the brand.

Keller Brand Equity Model

Keller’s (1993) Brand Equity model has been developed with the basic premise that the power of a brand is derived from what customers have felt and learned about the

brand over time. This is done with a set of dimensions taken in a fixed order: brand salience, brand performance, brand imagery, consumer judgements, consumer feelings and brand resonance (Manktelow, 2015). The highest level of brand equity is realised when brand resonance is attained. According to Keller (1993), resonance is attained when the consumer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and holds strong, favourable and unique brand associations in memory.

The Brand Equity Model has relevance in the field of social media and online platforms. Brands need to gain consumer's trust through this virtual platform where there is not much contact except through the Internet, which some consumers may doubt legitimacy of some companies (Fisher, 2000). The Keller Brand Equity model can therefore be used to place the brand in a more competitive position by shaping customer perceptions and feelings about the brand's product and ultimately achieving brand resonance, where the consumer feels true brand loyalty with the brand and enters into a lasting relationship with the brand (Keller, 2002).

The following are the levels of brand equity, as described by Keller (2002). The lowest level begins at brand salience, to the highest level of brand equity, brand resonance, which brands wish to achieve when engaging with the consumer (Keller, 2002)

- Brand salience. *Who Am I?* Describes its identity, ensuring consumers can identify with the brand and a clear association with the brand and its specific product class or category has to be established in the mind of the consumer.
- Brand performance and brand imagery. *What Am I?* Using intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics, the brand needs to connect with current consumer needs while surpassing their expectations, and improving what people think of the brand in order to bring about strong, positive and unique brand associations.
- Brand judgements and brand feelings. The way the consumer thinks and feels about the brand, forming a certain attitude or opinion about the brand, and is based on three criteria: quality, reliability and superiority.
- Brand resonance. Whether the consumer is willing to enter into a lasting relationship with a brand and achieve true brand loyalty, with the consumer identifying him/herself with the values of the brand. This results in repeat purchases, paying a price premium, and less inclination to listen to competitor brands.

In building brand equity for the consumer, the brand needs to ensure that their communication is engaging and attractive, in order for increased brand awareness, connection with customers and even increase sales (Katona & Sarvary, 2014).

Brand communication

Brand communication constitutes changing or forming perceptions that the target market have about the brand and activities thereof (Cambridge, 2015). Through the use of integrated marketing communication (IMC), a company can use promotional tools to create widespread brand exposure (O'Guinn,, Allen, & Semenik, 2013). These range from advertising, sales promotions, direct marketing, personal selling as the traditional methods, and now moving into social media, blogs, podcasts and branded entertainment.

Companies need to use these tools to communicate the attributes of the brand and to ensure the consumer knows what products and services the company offers. IMC is also used to identify the customer target market and pinpoint what promotional tools to use that will have the most effectiveness (O'Guinn, et al., 2013).

As the business environment is becoming increasingly competitive and moving more digital, brands need to pay special attention to communicating its identity, image and reputation (Vernuccio, 2014). An exploratory study conducted by Maria Vernuccio (2014) sought to identify strategic approaches in communicating a brand through social media, where it was discovered that while it is indeed effective, businesses have characterised this new form of media as cautious (Vernuccio, 2014). The hesitation of businesses using this new media are from an approach to brand building that has not changed; indicating an older point of view rather than viewing social media as an opportunity of high potential to enhance interactivity and openness. It was suggested to expand the range of social media used, as well as to include many more stakeholders in the dialogue.

In order to assess how effective social media is, it is necessary to look at brands that are indeed performing well on social media and to use these brands as a guideline for the best practice guide proposed in this research paper.

Social Media Best Practice Brands

There are a growing number of brands that are performing well on social media, and these need to be analysed in order to identify key areas that a brand needs to

implement in their social media strategies to be successful and more engaging. Some international brands include Lego, KFC, Coca-Cola, and Burger King. These brands are considered best practice brands due to their outstanding success and engagement with the consumer on social media platforms, according to Digital Insights company BlueHornet.

Nigel Hollis (2013), Chief Global Analyst of Millward Brown, conducted a study to identify the characteristics of successful Facebook brands and discovered that while a brand may not be the largest or oldest, they are achieving social media success due to their distinctive positioning that sets them apart (Hollis, 2013). This is an important indicator for brands not performing as successfully as the industry leaders, as they need to position themselves in a unique way, focusing on providing excellent service and customer satisfaction in order to draw more customers on social media, and consequently, assist in the success of the growing brand.

According to the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) (2013), there are a basic set of do's and don'ts in social media that brands should implement in their social media strategy. Brands need to listen and observe communications related to the brand, its competitors and the industry as a whole. The social media strategy must be integrated with the brand's overall objectives to ensure that the correct message is being communicated consistently (Chartered Institute of Public Relations, 2013). The CIPR (2013) suggests that brands should not be making their audience feel uncomfortable with images, and updates, and criticising people, which can deter the customers from engaging with the brand. Use of analytics to measure and track social media success is important in order to build on the previous year's following and therefore to ensure continued success for the brand (Socialbakers, 2015).

Brands need to understand the importance of their social media, as following and understand that social media is a powerful resource for innovation. Using social media in an innovative and effective way can even combat negative perceptions about the brand, communicate their values and illustrate their position on the issue (McCulloch, 2015). The 2015 State of Marketing Report published by Salesforce shows key points that brands can innovate their social media offering, varying from the use of mobile applications and mobile marketing, the use of marketing analytics to identify key points of engagement with the consumer, as well as customer relationship management tools

that track the history of customer interactions. This results in a brand's positive reputation and increased interaction, new customers and results in restored brand equity.

Best Brand Practice: Burger King

Burger King, in 2003, had low sales, profits, and franchisees were unhappy. Their competitor, McDonald's, had over five times Burger King's advert budget, with money for Olympics and the FIFA World Cup. However, Burger King understood that with social media, they did not need a large budget in order to create a large buzz and conversation. Burger King has a willingness to move quickly to exploit Internet news cycles in an unconventional way (Hunt, 2015). For example, Burger King created immediate buzz when they had their open letter to McDonald's in August 2015, asking them to create a hybrid burger in order to benefit charity. The result was a worldwide conversation about the Burger King brand across social media. According to Josh Kobza, Burger King's chief financial officer, the company would rely more heavily on digital and social media channels to ensure marketing was cost-effective and reaching the right customers (Giammona, 2015). In essence, Burger King relies on guerrilla marketing to create conversation and build hype about the Burger King brand.

Best Brand Practice: Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola successfully launched the 'Share a Coke' campaign and further enforced it through a Twitter campaign that allowed fans to tweet their names to Coca-Cola's Twitter handle, where their name will show up on a digital billboard in Times Square, New York, within an hour.

Coca-Cola has now made a focus on content marketing for their social media strategy in order to keep the engagement with consumers fresh and relevant, because of 24/7 connectivity (Watts, 2015). They have launched a 'Content 2020' strategy to create ideas that are contagious that cannot be controlled. By telling stories, they aim to provoke conversations that 'earn a share of popular culture'. These conversations need to be acted on actively throughout the year.

Best Brand Practice: LEGO

LEGO uses social media to create a level of personal interaction consumers can have with the brand and this is done so by keeping a 'constant eye' on their feeds and make sure they are 'quick to engage' (Hebberd, 2015). By creating a brand consumers can relate to, it helps people warm to the brand.

LEGO's social media strategy is run by one team but across multiple time zones in order to engage with consumers at the perfect time to get a maximum ROI (Hebberd, 2015). They also understand that content needs to be tailored to each specific social media platform, that is, something may work on Facebook but not on Twitter. According to Lars Siberbauer, LEGO's global director of social media, "it is all about connecting with the consumers and finding out what their social needs are, and building engagement on top of that."

On Facebook, there is a mix of various types of content, making good use of images, video and relevant hashtags in order to find content easier over Facebook. LEGO also makes use of shared content from sub-branded pages, that is, pages that incorporate LEGO products in order to communicate their own brands. LEGO has built a social community that communicates their own page as well as those of their partners and brands. They also respond to user generated content that is posted by consumers showing how they are interacting with LEGO products, creating a more human feel and in turn, a powerful consumer-brand relationship. Facebook updates are only done every few days, but are highly engaging and always creates action from their community (Hebberd, 2015).

On Twitter, content is posted early morning and later in the day, in order to hit their audience when they're more likely to be tweeting and scrolling. They do not tweet as much on weekends because they understand there is already much content and therefore would be difficult to be heard (Hebberd, 2015). Their content is always visual, and includes hashtags and is essentially a customer service platform, where consumers can ask about things relating to the brand and any issues they may have.

Instagram is where LEGO posts the same images and videos as they do on Facebook, and use the platform to make the LEGO products look good and to show what creations their fanbase are creating. They are not as active on Instagram, but is

suggested that they make more effective use of this social media platform as it fits the brand perfectly (Hebberd, 2015).

Best Brand Practice: KFC

Bluehornet, a marketing agency that focuses on email marketing, conducted a case study on KFC in order to assess the effectiveness of KFC's integrated email and social campaign. Their research identified that active consumers had a 70% higher click through rate compared to the average consumer (Bluehornet, 2014). This presented an opportunity to encourage consumers to share news about KFC on social networks. KFC promoted one of their new products using email, followed by a call to action by sharing the news via social media. The social media then linked with the email campaign by having a signup segment in which consumers can choose to be added to the mailing list.

As a result, not only had a database of consumers gathered and grown, but the social influencers carried the momentum by spreading the word to peers and acquaintances alike.

Consumer Engagement

Consumers make contact with brands as well as other consumers in social networks in increasingly interactive ways which enables brands to create and extend relationships with them (Enginkaya & Yilmaz, 2014). According to Mayfield (2008) effective consumer engagement is measured using the following characteristics: participation, openness, conversation, community and connectedness.

Consumers participate in online discussions and this is important for brands to understand what is important to consumers and also display openness by welcoming suggestions from customers and potential consumers (Carlos, 2011). This results in a sense of community and connectedness the consumer has with the brand and therefore brands can engage with the consumer and forming relationships with them.

The consumer receives and shares information via online platforms, and this engagement enables brands to reach the right people, in the right place and the right time (Enginkaya & Yilmaz, 2014). In order for brands to be relevant with their engagement, they need to be personal, interesting, interactive and social, and this is

boosted by consumer motivations to gain knowledge about the brand, and thereby maintain their self-esteem, building association with other consumers, becoming brands' storytellers and ambassadors (Sukoco & Wu, 2010).

A study was conducted in 2014 by Advertising Age and Google, using surveys in parallel that studied how consumers engage with brands as compared to how marketers, agencies and media companies engage with consumers. Key insights from the study first identified that consumers that regularly engage with brands online make more purchases than those who don't. Marketers can encourage consumers to engage and become dedicated fans by aligning campaigns with consumer passions across different channels, such as through video channels (Ad Age Content Strategy Studio, 2014).

According to the Ad Age Content Strategy Studio (2014), many companies do not see engagement as a priority and therefore requires active management so as to not lose their customer base. Using metrics and analysis tools, companies can measure engagement and therefore keep track as to how consumers are being reached as well as how successful communication and engagement is with the consumer, as ultimately the engagement needs to be translated to sales.

An example of successful engagement is Vitaminwater that identified music as a common passion between its brand and audience. By engaging this passion, Vitaminwater then hosted a series of live music events that used YouTube as the centrepiece. This resulted in consumers engaging with the product and become dedicated fans with the product (Ad Age Content Strategy Studio, 2014).

As a result of social engagement, customers are more inclined to visit websites relating to the brand, which in turn leads to more opportunities for conversions (McCulloch, 2015). According to McCulloch (2015), having a strong customer service on social media can help business development, by establishing brand affinity and loyalty, boosting digital word of mouth and increase interactions.

Online consumer frequency and behaviour

More and more consumers are heading towards the online platform. This means that information is being received at a faster pace and at a higher quantity. Consumers head to the online platform in order to access their social media, access information

about their interests, for work purposes, and to research possible purchase opportunities, to name a few online uses.

A study conducted in 2013 by Pew Research, an American based research organisation that provides information of social issues, and public opinion, users of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn were asked how often they engage with the website. It was found that Facebook users are highly engaged, while daily Twitter users have decreased, and Instagram and LinkedIn users are of similar frequency when compared to last year. Facebook users are more inclined to comment or share a post, while Twitter users rather view posts only. This frequency and behaviour suggests that Facebook needs to be the focus of social media campaigns, integrated through video channels (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, A.,. Madden, 2015).

Most online and digital marketing campaigns are now being targeted at the group of millennials (18-33 years), as they are the group that use online platforms more frequently than other age groups (Yan, 2011). Consumer search behaviour and frequency has many factors, ranging from content both online and offline, personal factors, and product factors, which all affect how the consumer responds to communication from the brand. This rapidly increasing rate of online consumers is crucial for the businesses of today to tap into this industry, thereby being able to customise and tailor product offerings to the consumer.

User generated content

The amount of content produced online is increasing at a rapid rate. Consumers put in the effort to search for content that match their needs and tastes (Goldenberg, Oestreicher-Singer, & Reichman, 2012). Users posts videos on popular social media networks and gain popularity over a wide scale, should the video gain 'trending' status, which is the term used for content that gains interest and views locally or worldwide. This creates a domino effect, where users search for key words linked to that video, and perhaps create their own content. They also view resultant content based on the trending video, just based on exploration from recommendations.

Studies show that 70 percent of brand-related searches are from user generated content (UGC), and only 30 percent from marketer created research (Christodoulides, Jevons & Bonhomme, 2012). Generated content that is empowering consumers does

not fit into any current model of integrated marketing communications. Consumers therefore are placing more influence over products and brands, and managers need to be aware of this, as it affects perceptions and influences the brand communication. Factors that motivate users to create brand related content include co-creation, empowerment, community, and self-concept (Christodoulides, et al., 2012).

User generated content is a powerful tool used to influence consumers' attitudes and purchase behaviours as it is created by the consumers themselves, which results in the perception of being more credible and trustworthy (Tang, et al., 2014). The use of UGC helps consumers to build a knowledge structure to understand, interpret and evaluate product-related information, which can be used by the brand in order to improve their reputation and standing on social media. The use of UGC needs to be leveraged by the brand in order for them to be perceived by consumers as brands that listen and engage with their consumers, providing unique brand associations in memory (Tang, et al., 2014).

Conclusion of Literature Review

In conclusion, it can be observed that there is an increasing rate of consumers that are headed to the online platform to receive their information. Topics covered in this literature review cover social media and online platforms, the Keller Brand Equity Model, social media best practice brands, consumer engagement, online consumer frequency and behaviour, brand communication and the use of user generated content. The point of this literature review and consequently, research paper is to evaluate the use and effectiveness of brands being more prominent in social media networks, in order to determine what exactly the consumer wants. This will result in gathering enough information in order to formulate best practice suggestions for brands to follow in order to be relevant on the online platform. It has been identified that brands, in an increasingly competitive environment, require an engaging social media presence in order to stand out from competitors and therefore to give consumers a reason to be a supporter and further improve brand equity with the brand.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The research will take a mixed methods approach, in the form of triangulation. This refers to the use of quantitative research to corroborate qualitative research findings (Bryman, Bell, Hirschsohn, Dos Santos, Du Toit, Masenge, Van Aardt, Wagner, 2014). The triangulation approach cross-checks two methods against each other to increase confidence and reinforce both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Research Design

A collective case study research design will be used for the purposes of the study. This entails that more than once case is being examined, in order to explore similarities and differences (Baxter & Jack, 2008). There will be two cases, using brand managers as one and the general public in the other case. Brand managers: in South Africa, specifically Pretoria and Johannesburg, that works with social media and digital platforms as a branding tool, will be contacted for their opinions towards the online platform. The general public for the purposes of this study are defined as: any South African that has access to the internet, and is a user of social media. The two cases were compared and contrasted through collecting and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data.

Data collection and Sampling Methods

The data collection method made make use of both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data, which emphasises words rather than the quantification in the collection and analysis of data, and view social reality as dynamic as information is interpreted by individuals. Quantitative data, on the other hand, emphasise quantification in the collection and analysis of data, which embody the view of social reality as an external, objective reality (Bryman, et al., 2014).

Qualitative data was collected in the form of semi-structured email, or face-to-face interviews from the sample of four brand managers in South Africa that use social media in their branding efforts. The sampling method used was convenience or availability sampling, as many views of branding managers will be collected as possible.

Quantitative data was collected in the form of online questionnaires, from the sample of the general population of South Africa that has access to the internet and is a user of social media. The sampling method used was availability sampling. The sample for this study was 50 respondents.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability is to ensure consistency of results collected during the study. Measures need to be stable in that measures do not fluctuate if applied and reapplied. Internal reliability ensures that respondent scores on one indicator need to be related to scores on other indicators, while inter-observer consistency where subjective judgement needs to be avoided for the sake of reliability (Bryman, et al., 2014)

Convergent validity was devised to gauge a measure compared to measures of the same concept (Bryman, et al., 2014). This is appropriate as mixed methods through triangulation will be used, with qualitative data collecting interviews from brand managers in South Africa, and quantitative data collecting questionnaires from the general population in South Africa using social media, with the aim to compare similar ideas of the same concept between two samples.

Data analysis methods

Inductive data analysis is used to analyse the qualitative data collected from brand managers in South Africa, where the researcher uses theory as the outcome of research. The data collected in the interviews will be coded and thematic analysis will be used to identify, analyse and describe themes across the data set, investigating meaning in context (Bryman, et al., 2014).

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

Pilot study done to test research methods

A pilot study was conducted on the questionnaires for the general public to collect participant responses towards social media, with the questions run past an

independent source to make sure they are not leading and are easily understandable, measuring what needs to be measured. (See Appendix A).

Ethical issues

The ethical issues that may be expected during the course of this study may include customers being sensitive to certain brand responses and campaigns that are communicated through social media. Consumers also may affect the image and reputation of the brand with their use of user generated content, which may cause controversy for the brand. These ethical issues will be dealt with, by taking into account the views and opinions of consumers as well as brands, and reporting the information thereof.

Informed consent forms will be handed to brand managers for the interviews (See Appendix B). Should they not want their information to be included in the study, then that specific result will not be posted. Participation is voluntary, and questionnaires will be anonymous.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Research

Primary research was collected in two forms: first in the form of email interviews towards social media managers and experts that can offer expert insight into the consumer-brand relationship and how it can be used or leveraged via social media, and the second being an online survey that was targeted at the general public about their views and feelings towards social media and the brands they are in contact with.

The reason for collecting primary research in these two forms is to triangulate the two viewpoints, from social media managers and the general public, to see differences and similarities in responses so that brands can better understand how to act and react on social media.

Data Analysis

Email Interviews: Social media and the consumer-brand relationship, from a social media manager and expert's viewpoint.

Email interviews were collected from four social media managers and experts in the digital industry, in order to understand their views and opinions about the consumer-brand relationship. For the purposes of this study, their identities and company names remain anonymous.

This qualitative data was analysed using an inductive data approach, where the data collected in the interviews will be coded into themes, and therefore used to identify, analyse and describe themes across the data set, investigating meaning in context.

The collected data was subjective to respondents' own opinions and viewpoints, and consisted of four participants who are either social media managers or managing directors of social and digital media agencies and brands. These participants are from South Africa, and were willing to discuss their opinions about what social media platforms they use as a company, and why these are effective in building the consumer brand relationship.

What social media platforms are currently being used to engage with consumers?

Participants were asked as to what social media platforms they use in their respective companies to engage with consumers, and responses were a mixture of different social media platforms dependant on their required target market and/or the client's

goals. All respondents stated they use Facebook the most, followed by some using Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Why are these specific platforms effective?

Participants were then asked as to why these chosen platforms are effective to their brand. Participants stated that these platforms are effective due to being best suited to their campaigns and reach, as well as being the platforms where consumers are active and can easily find the brand. Facebook and Twitter stimulate conversation between the brand and consumer, allowing the brand to share company news and latest information, while LinkedIn allows the brand to reach out to business people, and present more formal news and insights.

The importance of using social media and online to develop a relationship with consumers.

Respondents, being asked about the sheer value of social media in creating and maintaining relationships with consumers, highlighted the importance of doing so. They felt that an online presence allows consumers to easily interact with the brand, whether to complain or compliment, or to ask advice about a specific topic. Participants stated that social media creates an immediacy when it comes to interactions, and allows the brand to reach consumers and engage directly with them. The ultimate goal of using social media marketing, as stated by one of the respondents, is to turn prospects into brand ambassadors – and social media marketing presents this opportunity to build followers that will market the brand on their behalf. Clear goals need to be established in terms of what the brand wishes to achieve from their social media marketing efforts.

Social media marketing should not be done because the brand has to, but rather do it because it is valuable and useful – sharing knowledge and experiences to keep consumers informed.

How is content created that is engaging and attractive for the consumer?

Respondents stated that it is not necessarily easy to create content that is both engaging and attractive to the consumer, as content needs to try something new or push boundaries. However, this is not always allowed by brands, or restricted by their brand guidelines. A respondent stated that the best way to create valuable content is

to find an insight into how people are behaving on a specific platform, then think of ways in which the brand can intercept that behaviour in a way that is relevant to the audience and gives them a moment of fun distraction. Content is also not always created, but sharing relevant third-party articles also helps to keep content current and fresh that can facilitate better reach, varying on target market and platform.

Do brands look at external brands as benchmarks for their brand to perform better on social media and online platforms?

Majority of respondents stated that they do not look at model brands or external brands in the same industry, but rather use themselves as benchmarks. This is because it is difficult to find out how much other brands are spending on certain media to push their content to their audiences. Respondents stated that they rather look at the audience that they are targeting and how they can product the best results customised for their client. One participant states that “[o]ne size does not fit all, especially when it comes to budget and objectives.”

The one respondent that did look at external brands only does so while performing competitor analysis to monitor how competitor brands are performing in relation to them, as well as the use of analytics to ensure that the client spend is being maximised.

Can social media be used to address an issue that is negatively impacting he brand?

Respondents found that responding to negative issues on social media depends on the situation at hand. Brands need to be careful when responding, as a social media mishap can negatively impact the brand even more than the issue to begin with. However, if negative feedback is dealt with correctly and with immediacy then the brand can change this to a positive outcome. If the brand has built up high loyalty and brand advocacy from other members on social media, they can end up defending the brand without the brand pushing for it.

How effective is the use of user generated content (UGC) and what can brands do to leverage conversation and content produced by consumers?

Respondents were lastly asked about user generated content and its use and effectiveness for the brand. Respondents showed a mixed response towards UGC,

with half of the respondents stating that it is useful, while the other did not prefer the use of UGC.

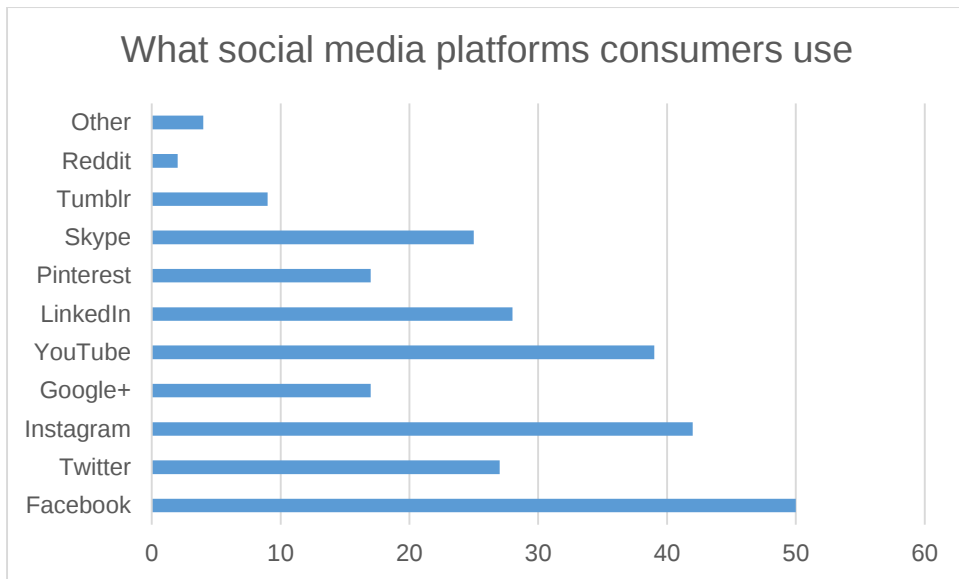
According to participants, UGC can be viewed as useful as it is crowd sourced information 'straight from the horse's mouth,' but also needs to be dealt with delicately. The content produced by consumers has to be closely monitored and a decision needs to be made as to whether they be shared to their community or whether a simple 'like' or reply would suffice.

On the other hand, UGC can be seen as of low quality, and that the brand cannot fully control what people will produce in the campaign, and how they will interpret the message. This means that it can go different ways due to consumers' different needs, wants, preferences, and opinions. A respondent stated that although UGC can be used, the information coming from the brand, or the agency, being the specialists, is more valuable.

Online Survey: Consumer Social media preferences

In the other phase of the data collection, an online survey was created on Google Forms and distributed to any South African consumer that make use of social media. 50 respondents completed the questionnaire. This phase of data collection was done in order to understand consumer preferences on social media, as well as how they interact (or not interact) with the brands on social media networks.

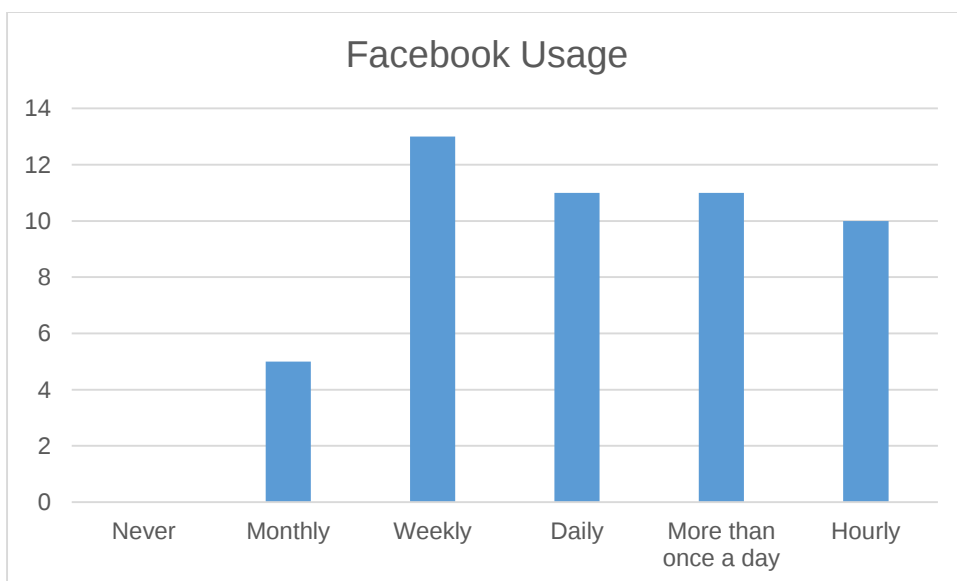
The online survey was then analysed via descriptive statistics, where the data was summarised according to the responses given, and portrayed in graphs or tables, in order to have a simple, easy-to-follow representation of the results.



Facebook	50	100%
Instagram	42	84%
YouTube	39	78%
LinkedIn	28	56%
Twitter	27	54%
Skype	25	50%
Google+	17	34%
Pinterest	17	34%
Tumblr	9	18%
Other	4	8%
Reddit	2	4%

FIGURE 1: What social media platforms consumers use

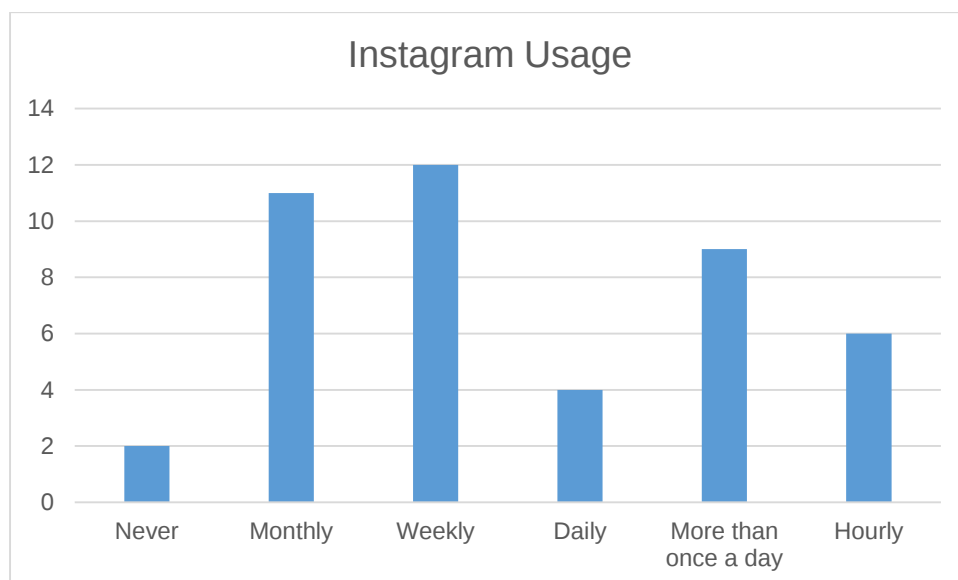
Consumers were asked what social media platforms they personally use, and they were allowed to select more than one platform. Out of the sample of 50 participants, 100% stated they use Facebook, followed by Instagram with 84%, YouTube 78%, LinkedIn 56%, and Twitter 54%. This provides an indication of which social media platforms brands should be focusing their attention to, as these are the platforms consumers are most active in.



Never	0	0%
Monthly	5	10%
Weekly	13	26%
Daily	11	22%
More than once a day	11	22%
Hourly	10	20%

FIGURE 2: Facebook usage patterns

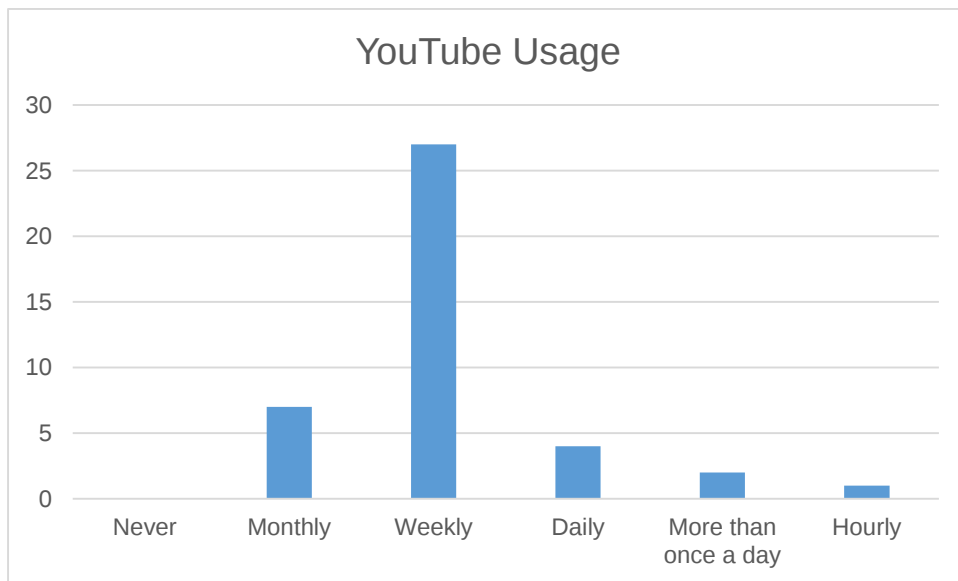
Figure 2 illustrates the usage patterns of Facebook users, with consumers using the social media platform quite often, from Weekly usage (26%), Daily and More than once a day (22%) and Hourly (20%).



Never	2	4.5%
Monthly	11	25%
Weekly	12	27.3%
Daily	4	9.1%
More than once a day	9	20.5%
Hourly	6	13.6%

FIGURE 3: Instagram usage patterns

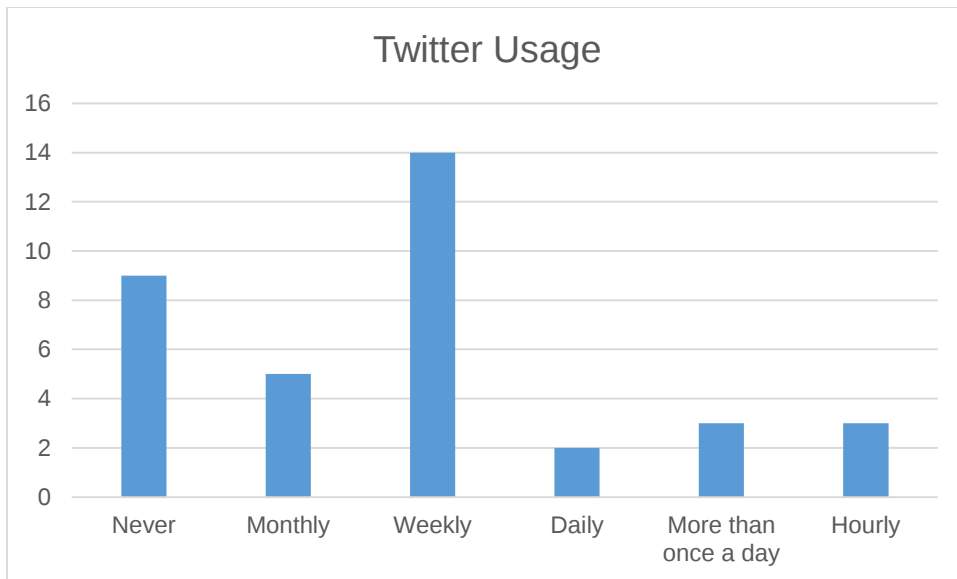
Figure 3 shows the usage patterns of Instagram users, with majority of usage being Weekly (27.3%) followed by More than once a day (20.5%).



Never	0	0%
Monthly	7	17.1%
Weekly	27	65.9%
Daily	4	9.8%
More than once a day	2	4.9%
Hourly	1	2.4%

FIGURE 4: YouTube usage patterns

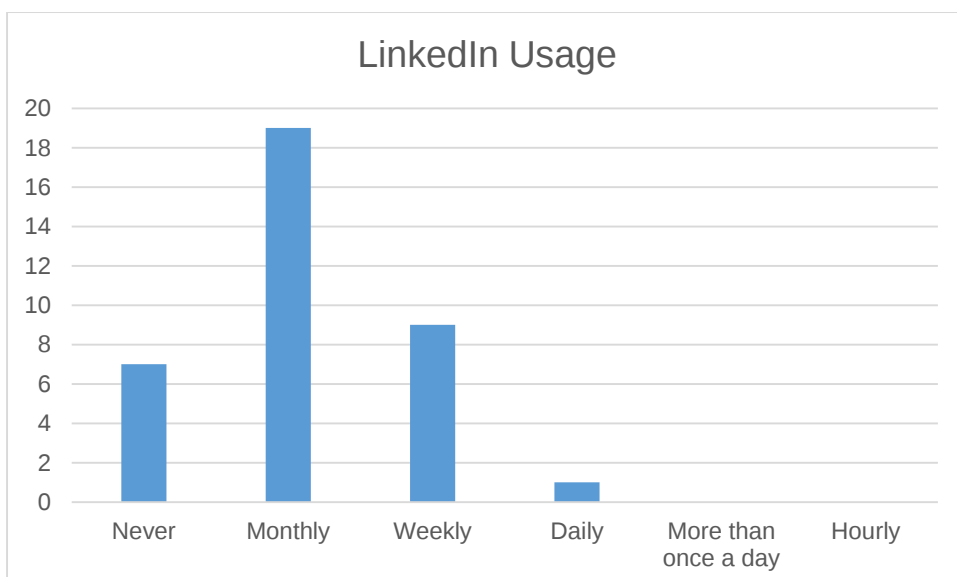
Figure 4 shows consumer usage patterns of YouTube, with majority using the video platform Weekly (65.9%).



Never	9	25%
Monthly	5	13.9%
Weekly	14	38.9%
Daily	2	5.6%
More than once a day	3	8.3%
Hourly	3	8.3%

FIGURE 5: Twitter usage patterns

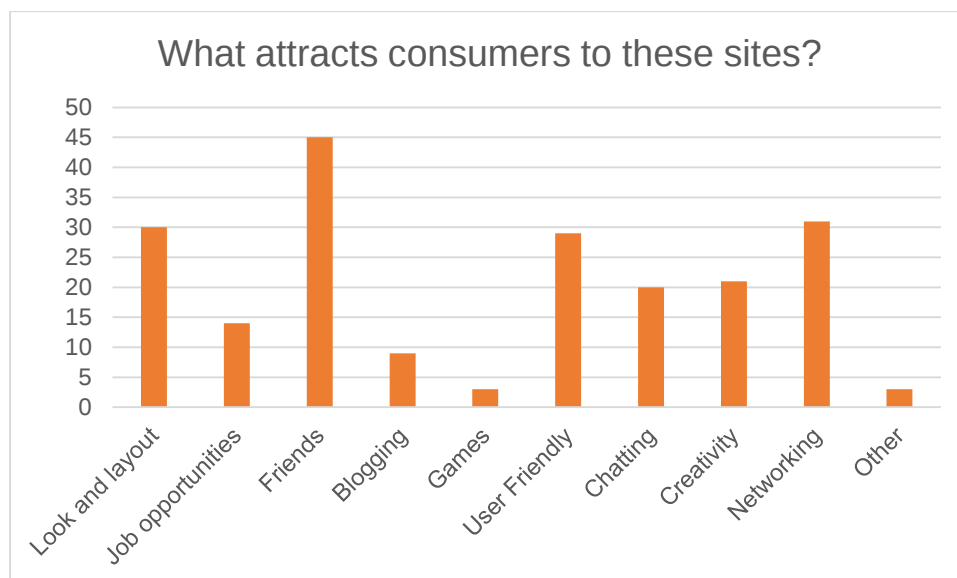
Figure 5 shows the consumer usage patterns of Twitter, with the majority using Twitter Weekly (38.9%).



Never	7	19.4%
Monthly	19	52.8%
Weekly	9	25%
Daily	1	2.8%
More than once a day	0	0%
Hourly	0	0%

FIGURE 6: LinkedIn usage patterns

Figure 6 shows usage patterns for LinkedIn, the social media network for professionals, with consumers using the social platform monthly (52.8%).



Friends	45	90%
Networking	31	62%
Look and layout	30	60%
User Friendly	29	58%
Creativity	21	42%
Chatting	20	40%
Job opportunities	14	28%
Blogging	9	18%
Games	3	6%

Other 3 6%

FIGURE 7: What attracts consumers to these social media platforms

Figure 7 illustrates the features of social media platforms and what attracts consumers the most towards these specific platforms. Consumers have stated that they access these social media platforms for their friends (90%), followed by networking (62%), look and layout (60%) and user friendliness (58%). This also provides an indicator towards brands as to what they need to focus on when developing their social media campaigns and platforms.

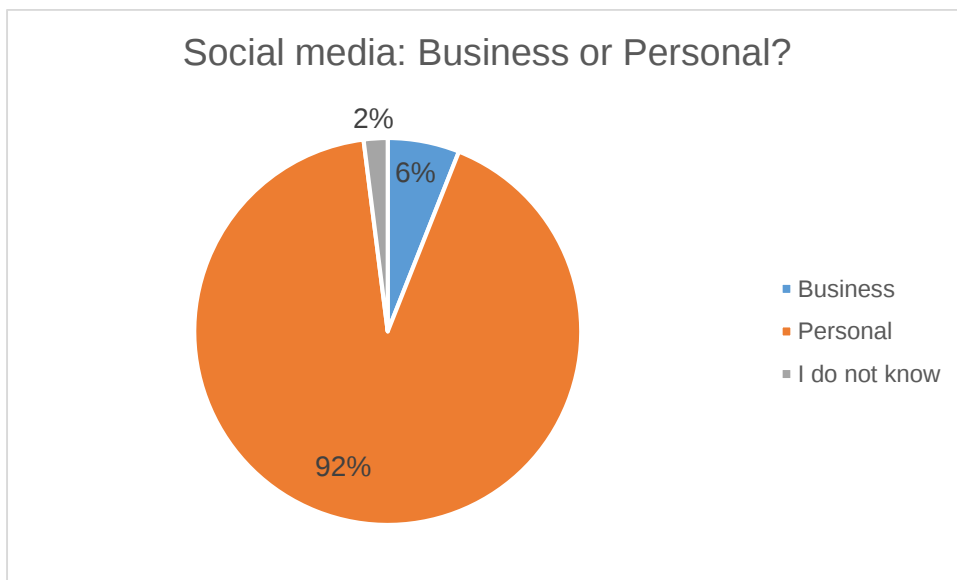


FIGURE 8: Whether social media is used for business or personal concerns

In figure 8, Consumers were then asked whether they use social media for business or personal matters, with majority (92%) stating that they use social media for personal matters. Brands need to be aware of this, so as to not be overly invasive when advertising over social media as consumers will want to see what is relevant to their personal lives.

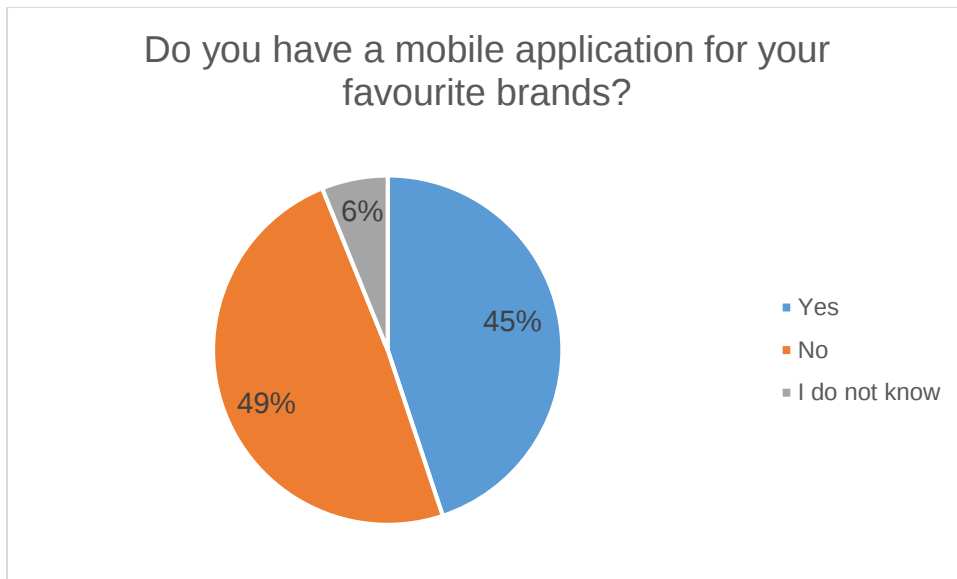


FIGURE 9: Do consumers have a mobile application for their favourite brands on their phones

In figure 8, consumers were asked whether they have a mobile application for their favourite brands on their phones. There was almost an even split, with 45% of participants stating they do have a mobile application, while 49% do not.

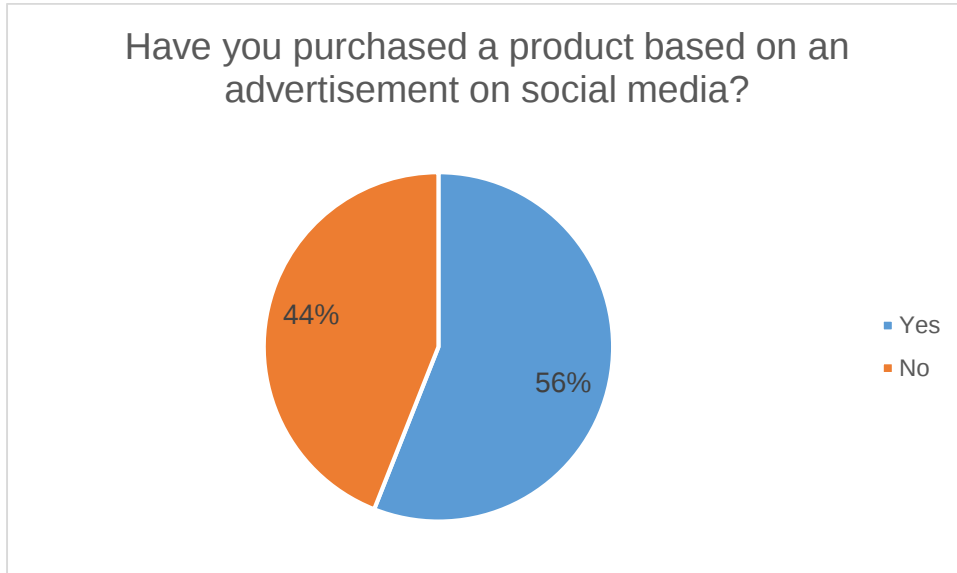


FIGURE 10: Have consumers purchased a product based on advertisements on social media

Figure 10 shows whether consumers have purchased a product based on advertisements on social media, with 56% of consumers saying they have, while 44%

saying they have not. This can provide an indication of the effectiveness of paid or unpaid advertisements on social media.

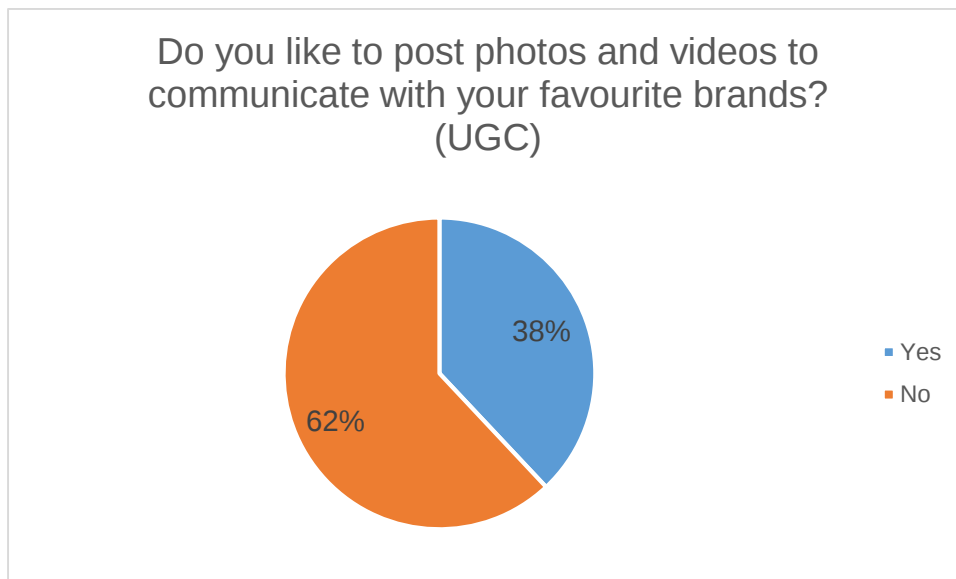


FIGURE 11: Do consumers make use of User Generated Content (UGC) to communicate to their favourite brands?

Figure 11 shows consumer use of User Generated Content to communicate and engage with their favourite brands, with 38% of consumers stating they do, while 62% stating they do not. Brands can then decide whether to react to the UGC to further engage with the consumer, or to rather just monitor the content. Interviews with social media managers had mixed views towards UGC and saw it as something to be handled with care. As the majority of consumers did not use UGC to communicate to other brands, brands need to find ways to leverage UGC to be a positive interaction with the brand instead of the brand choosing how to engage with it.

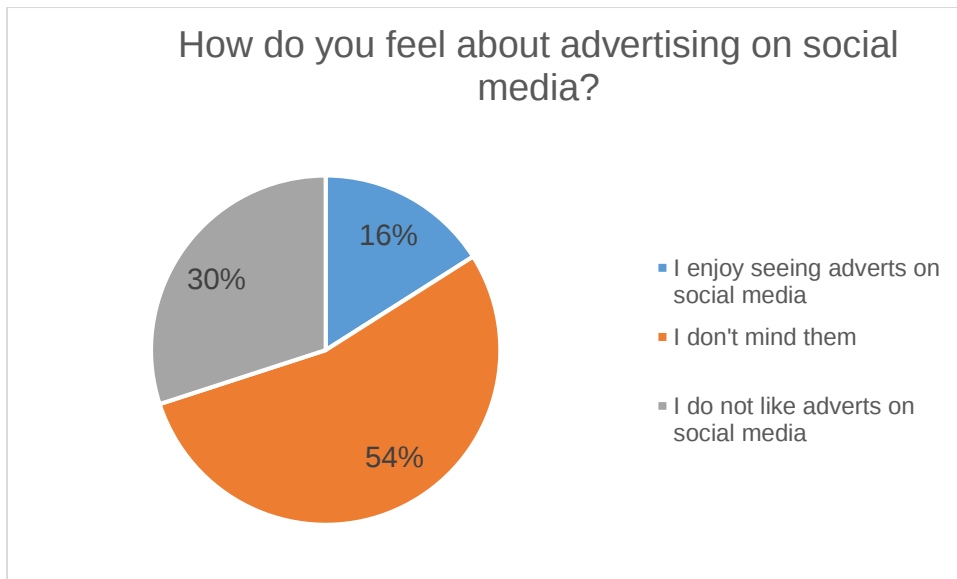


FIGURE 12: How consumers feel about advertisements posted on social media

Figure 12 shows how consumers feel about advertisements posted on social media. Majority of consumers (54%) stated that they do not mind the advertisements, 30% do not enjoy adverts, and 16% enjoy seeing advertisements on social media. A topic for conversation and further research would be that of finding out what type of advertisements on social media consumers did not like, and others that consumers did not mind, and why this is so.

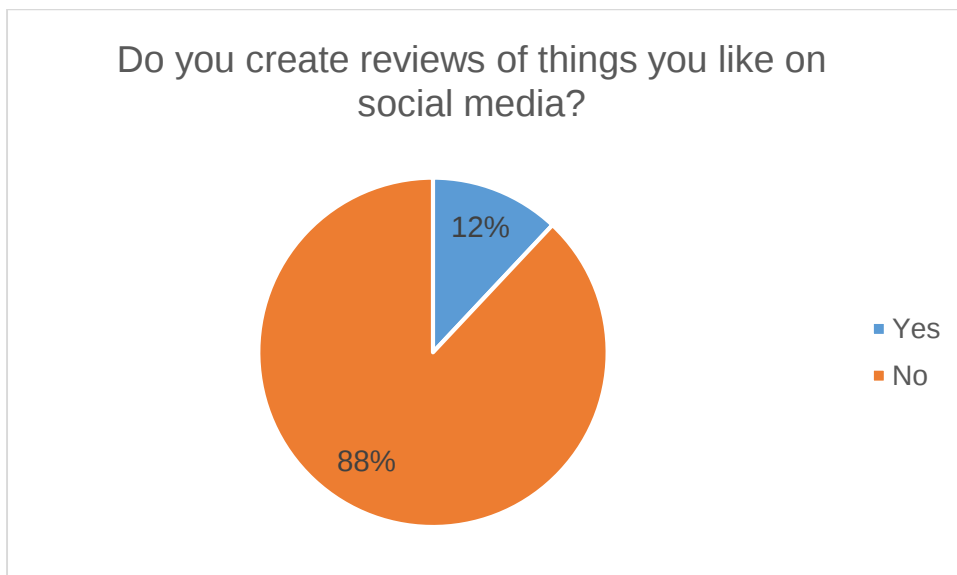


FIGURE 13: Do consumers create reviews of things they like on social media

Figure 13 shows whether consumers create reviews of products and services they like, via social media. This refers to making comments about a product or service, and

creating a post reviewing the product. Majority of consumers (88%) stated they do not create reviews via social media. This links with the use of UGC in terms of brands adapting their strategies to personalise their brand experience and show that they value the opinion of their customers.

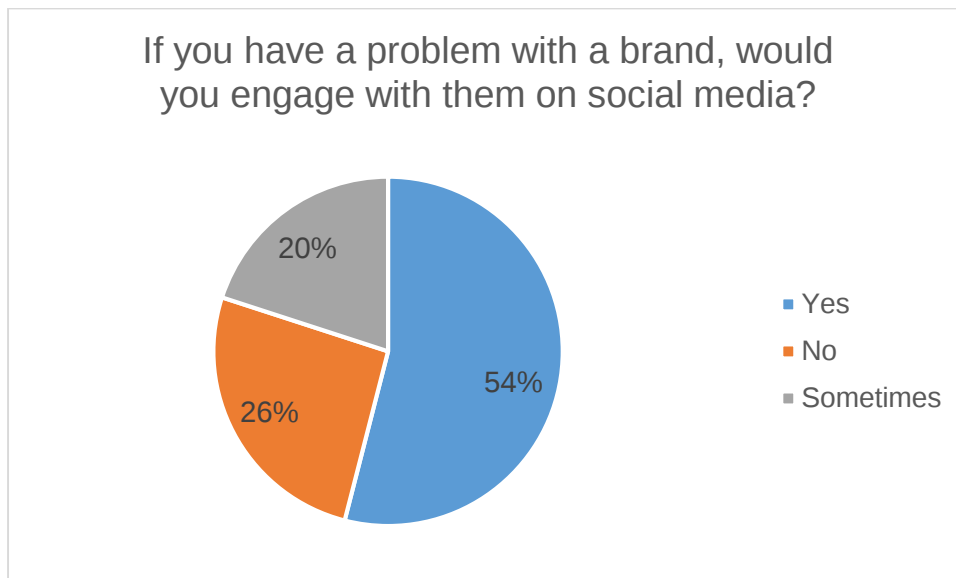


FIGURE 14: Whether consumers engage with brands on social media if they have a problem with the brand

Figure 14 shows whether consumers engage and communicate with brands on social media should they have a problem or issue with the brand. 54% of consumers would engage with brands on social media, while 26% and 20% of consumers would not engage or sometimes engage, respectively. Consumers are more willing to engage with a brand regarding a negative experience than they are regarding a positive experience. This can create implications for the brand when addressing negative issues and therefore much care needs to be taken when doing so.

Conclusion of research findings

The results of the email interviews to social media experts were that Facebook is seen as the most used social media network by brands, allowing conversation between the brand and consumer. The importance of having an online presence allows consumers to easily interact with the brand and build brand ambassadors with high brand equity that will talk positively about the brand without the brand even having to say anything.

Content marketing needs to be relevant to the audience, and the use of external brands as benchmarks is not preferred, rather looking at themselves as benchmarks. Brands need to be careful when responding to negative remarks or news about them, as a social media mishap can damage the reputation of the brand greatly. User generated content can be both useful and useless for the brand, depending on how the brand wants to use them, to further engage with the consumer or to not use UGC at all.

The online survey, sent to the general public that makes use of social media explored consumer preferences on social media.. Facebook is the most used social media platform from the sample of consumers, with the consumers accessing and enjoying social media platforms for Friends, Networking, the Look and Layout, and User Friendliness, indicating what brands need to focus on when developing their social media platforms. Majority of consumers do not mind advertisements on social media, presenting an opportunity for brands to promote themselves, while not being overly invasive on social media. User Generated Content that allows the consumer to communicate with the brand is not widely used from the sample, however is still an effective engagement tool that the brand can use to connect with consumers. More than half of the sample would engage with brands on social media if they have an issue with the brand, which allows the brand to carefully address an issue or situation. However, there is still a lack of engagement when positive aspects of the brand are reflected, therefore brands need to consider their strategies in order to get consumers to talk more about positive aspects of the brand and not only the negatives.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this study, the consumer-brand relationship via social media platforms was explored. Information were gathered on social media platforms and which were being used the most, as well as the relevance of using social media to develop a customer-brand relationship and to further strengthen the brand equity a consumer has with a brand. Other topics explored included the effectiveness of consumer engagement over an online platform, the use of user generated content by the brand to engage with the consumer, online consumer frequencies and behaviour, and the Keller brand equity model. Further information in the form of primary data were then collected, using online questionnaires and email interviews.

The online questionnaires were sent to the general public living in South Africa and make use of social media. Respondents were asked a variety of questions, and the results were as follows: all respondents made use of Facebook, and had a relatively high rate of usage during the day; consumers were attracted to social media platforms mainly for their friends; majority of respondents use social media platforms for personal reasons instead of business reasons; respondents do purchase a product based on advertisements on social media; majority of respondents do not make use of user generated content to communicate with their favourite brands; respondents do not mind advertisements on social media; and majority of respondents would engage with a brand via social media if they had a problem with the brand.

The email interviews were sent to brand and social media managers, or experts. Respondents also agreed that Facebook was the most used social media network; having an online presence allows consumers to easily interact with the brand; content marketing needs to be relevant to their audience; brands need to be careful when responding to negative news or remarks; user generated content (UGC) depends on the brand and what they would like to do with it, whether to reply or feature the content on their social media networks.

The consumer-brand relationship is an important relationship every business, brand and organisation needs to have in order to function better. By creating a sense of belonging and community a consumer can engage and connect with the brand and strengthen their familiarity and trust. This can be done through social media networks, as the consumer of today are constantly receiving and giving information, and in the

new digital age, where consumers are connected through some sort of online device. This research paper has explored this relationship, and recommendations will be provided for a brand to operate better on social media networks. Further research will have to be conducted to propose a best practice guide or steps to follow to be successful on social media networks.

Recommendations

Information collected from both the literature review and the primary data, being interviews from brand and social media managers, and questionnaires to the general public were analysed to spot key points of interest and discussion, to identify what is needed when building the consumer-brand relationship. This will enable recommendations to be made as to how social media can best be used in order to strengthen the consumer-brand relationship, creating value for both the brand and the consumer.

The key points include the correlation between brand managers' mixed views towards the use of user generated content and the little usage from consumers themselves of UGC. However, in the literature review, UGC is seen as valuable as it affects perceptions and influences brand communication. This indicates that South African brands may need to critically evaluate the effectiveness of UGC and make more use of it, which may influence South African consumers to make use of UGC and create brands that listen and engage with their consumers., which can result in more positive comments and reviews to be created to strengthen the consumer-brand relationship and less negatives to be commented on by consumers.

Brand experts do not look at other brands as best practices because they feel resources and budgets will not be the same. However, it is recommended that brands can learn and adapt from each other, even if they are not in the same category or industry. Upon looking at best practices such as KFC, Burger King, Lego and Coca-Cola, brands in South Africa can use what other brands are doing and strengthen their brand, placing them in a more advantageous position in their respective industries.

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

networks Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Pinterest. Depending on the type of brand and the message that is desired to be sent, these additional social media networks can be used.

Use of content marketing, which is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience and to drive customer action (Content Marketing Institute, 2015), needs to be relevant to the brand's audience by looking at customer insights on how consumers react on specific platforms, and reacting appropriately.

Brands should make use of social media to address issues should consumers have an issue with the brand. Addressing sensitive topics should be done with caution, and South African brands can look at KFC as a best practice of this, as they have addressed negative issues head on, and providing the consumer with solutions, displaying an important value: transparency.

Brands on social media can also make use of advertisements, whether paid or unpaid, to promote their brand, culture, values, and products. Research collected showed that consumers do not mind advertisements on social media, however, brands need to be careful they are not bombarding the consumer with too much information or too frequent advertising, therefore not being overly invasive on social media. This is a topic of further research, to find out what consumers like and do not like about social media advertisements, and what exactly each platform's advertising models do for the brand and the customer.

The ultimate goal in the consumer-brand relationship on social media is to create brand ambassadors and storytellers (Sukoco & Wu, 2010). These consumers display a high brand resonance, which will communicate to others on behalf of the brand, in a positive light, creating conversation, engagement and publicity for the brand, which can be used very effectively in developing and carrying the consumer-brand relationship. Brands in South Africa can make use of these recommendations in order to create a strong brand and brand presence in their respective markets and industries.

Final Activation

Introduction

A brand activation creates an experience for the consumer with the purpose of inviting the consumer to participate in the brand's communication (Elmqvist, 2014). The activation creates experiences and entertainment for the consumer as well as knowledge and learning of the brand, and brands have the opportunity to create valuable brand ambassadors (Elmqvist, 2014).

There is a rapidly increasing popularity of social media in the digital age. This presents an opportunity for brands to make use of this in order to communicate and create a consumer-brand relationship. For the purpose of this activation, a social media page was created for a mock brand, making use of Facebook and Twitter. Advertising was done in order to create conversation and engagement with brands, creating brand equity on social media to shape perceptions and feelings about the product to encourage loyalty and long-term relationships with the consumer. Consumer wish to be more involved and in conversation and this presents the brand the opportunity to create brand ambassadors.

Message and Audience

The message of the activation needs to deliver the essence of the key insights of the research, being that the future is essentially digital. This means that brands need to leverage this opportunity and create an online relationship via social media that encourages community to further engage with the consumer. The activation will need to be relevant to the consumer and be interactive and social in order for the brand to become storytellers and therefore increase popularity and consequently, sales. Consumer perceptions of the brand need to be shaped in order to form a strong brand equity and lasting relationship with the consumer.

The target audience needs to be understood in order to identify the correct way to deliver and write the message (Moon, 2014). According to Moon (2014), the content needs to be specific to the intended audience in order for them to care about it. The audience identified can be placed into personas, seen below in Figure A and B. These two personas encapsulate the audience to be targeted, as they are young individuals that enjoy the use of social media, and will not be hesitant to give their opinion via social media, whether positive or negative.



Figure 15: Persona 1



Figure 16: Persona 2

Execution

The following is the execution of the social media pages, using the brand name “Rockin’ Springrolls” and the Facebook and Twitter pages, as well as the promotional material used to encourage conversation on social media networks.

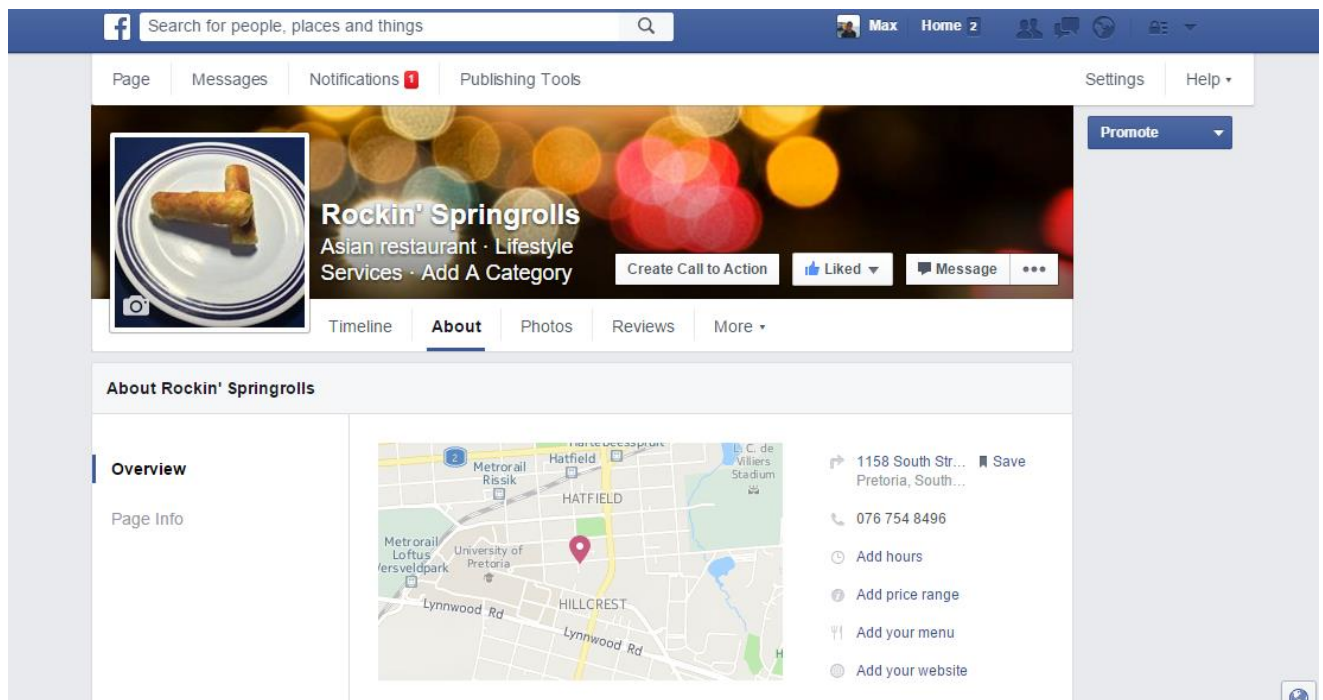


Figure 17: Activation Facebook Page



Figure 18: Activation Twitter Page



Figure 19: Activation promotional material

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Appendices

Appendix A - Questionnaire

Appendix B - Interview Consent Form

Appendix C – Email Interview questions

Appendix A – Questionnaire

Also accessible on https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1kt-Cy07fgsy5Gw9DouShNaUJSkmj45J2tJogxzemxJE/viewform?usp=send_for_m

Social Media Preferences

This survey is to assist in investigating the consumer-brand relationship via social media. The results will be reported in a research paper presented at Vega School of Brand Leadership in Pretoria.

Your assistance is appreciated in completing this quick survey, which should not take longer than 5-10 minutes. Should you not wish to complete this survey, simply close the survey. Responses will be completely anonymous.

If you have any questions about the survey or would like to know when the research will be presented, please contact Yan Maw at maxmaw1@gmail.com. You may also contact the supervisor for this research, Adrie le Roux, at aleroux@vegaschool.com. Thank you for your help.

Which social media platforms do you use?

Choose all that apply

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Google+
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Pinterest
- ☐ Skype
- ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ Reddit
- ☐ Other:

How often do you use these social media platforms?

	Never	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	More than once a day	Hourly
Facebook	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Twitter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Instagram	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Google+	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
YouTube	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
LinkedIn	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pinterest	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Skype	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tumblr	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reddit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What attracts you to these social media sites?

Choose all that apply

- ☐ Look and layout
- ☐ Job opportunities
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Blogging
- ☐ Games
- ☐ User Friendly
- ☐ Chatting

- ☐ Creativity
- ☐ Networking
- ☐ Other:

Do you use social media primarily for business or personal purposes?

Choose only one

- ☐ Business
- ☐ Personal
- ☐ I do not know

What are your favourite companies(s) you follow on social media?

May list more than one

Do you have a mobile application for at least one of these favourite companies?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know

Have you ever purchased a product based on an advertisement on social media?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you like to post photos and videos to communicate with your favourite brands?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

How do you feel about advertising on social media?

- ☐ I enjoy seeing adverts on social media
☐ I don't mind them
☐ I do not like adverts on social media

Do you create reviews of things that you like on social media?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

If you have a problem with a brand, would you engage with them on social media?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Sometimes

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Appendix B – Interview Consent Form

Consent form for participants of Social Media Engagement Interview

Title of Study:

Social Media Presence and Best Practice: The Consumer-Brand Relationship

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Yan Aung Maw for a Honours in Strategic Brand Communication degree at Vega School of Brand Leadership, Pretoria.

1. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to explore the relationship between the consumer and the brand that uses social media, in order to identify what is important to the consumer

and compare it to brand managers' views on opinions. The study will ultimately propose a best practice steps to follow to build brand equity online.

2. Procedures

Should you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to answer questions about your opinions toward social media and the use and effectiveness thereof.

3. Potential Benefits to Subjects and/or Society

You may not directly benefit from the study. The research may help brands to utilise the online platform and therefore be more effective communicators and engagers online.

4. Payment for Participation

You will not receive payment or gifts for participating.

5. Confidentiality

Any information that is received in connection with the study and that can be identified with you as a participant will stay confidential and will be made known only with your permission or as required by law. You may ask for the notes or listen to your voice recordings at any stage. Should you want to edit any of this information, you will be allowed to.

Your confidentiality will be protected by keeping all written notes and voice recordings safe in a locked cupboard in my house. I am the only person who has access to the keys for the cupboard. I will also not use your name in the study, to protect your identity.

Results will be reported in a presentation and activation at Vega School of Brand Leadership, Pretoria. If you are interested, you will be told about the findings of the research.

If you contribute to the research, you will be given information of how the research will be done. You are free to stop taking part in the research or reading sessions without any negative consequences, or any effect.

6. Participation and Withdrawal

You can decide whether to take part in this study or not. If you do volunteer, you may also leave the study at any time without a negative effect on you. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain part of the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if conditions arise which warrant doing so.

7. Identification of Investigators

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher, Yan Aung Maw, at maxmaw1@gmail.com.

8. Rights Of Research Subjects

You may withdraw your permission at any time and stop participation in the study without penalty. You are not giving up any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

Signature of Research Subject or Legal Representative

The information above was described to me by Yan Aung Maw in English and I am in command of this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction. I am willing to voluntarily participate in the research.

I have been given a copy of this form.

Please fill in the following:

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [name of the participant] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [name of the representative]. [He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix C – Email Interview questions

This email interview is to assist in investigating views towards social media from experts in the social media field. Your assistance is appreciated in completing the questions below.

If you have any additional questions about the interview or would like to know when the research will be presented, please contact me, Yan Maw at maxmaw1@gmail.com. You may also contact the supervisor for this research, Adrielle Roux, at aleroux@vegaschool.com.

Please answer the questions in between them.

1. What social media platforms are you currently using to engage with your consumers?
2. Why are these specific platforms effective?
3. Describe the importance of using social media and online to develop a relationship with consumers?
4. How are you creating content that is engaging and attractive for the consumer?

5. Do you look at any external brands as a benchmark for your brand to perform better on social media and online? If so, which brands and why?
6. Do you use social media to address an issue that is negatively impacting the brand?
7. How effective is the use of user generated content and what, in your opinion, can brands do to leverage conversation and content produced by consumers?

Your assistance is greatly appreciated.