

THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY SMALL BUSINESSES AS A MARKETING TOOL

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DECLARATION

I, Taylor Marks (217373887), hereby declare that the content of this study titled “The use of social media by small business as a marketing tool” is my own work. It has not previously been submitted for assessment of any postgraduate qualification at any other university, and all work which is not my own has been acknowledged or indicated as complete references.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marks". The letters are stylized and cursive, with a large, bold 'M' at the beginning.

MARKS, TA

November 2021.

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Taylor Marks

ABSTRACT

Smaller businesses are faced with making use of limited resources to maintain survival. Social media marketing has been highlighted as a critical tool which, if used correctly, could guide small businesses into being competitively successful. The aim of this study is to explore the use of social media by small businesses in the Nelson Mandela Bay, and to furthermore provide encouraging reasons why social media needs to be taken more seriously as a marketing tool. To obtain this aim, the qualitative research method and a positivistic paradigm approach was deemed most suitable. Five semi-interviews were conducted, and the data was interpreted using content analysis. The main findings correspond with the literature review conducted which emphasises on the fact that although social media has multiple benefits, small business owners do not use the platform features to their full potential. This study has also found that while small business owners must transition into having an omni-social presence to secure future survival, they also need to become more aware of and be educated on what each social media platform can fully offer their business as a marketing tool.

Keywords: social media, social media marketing, social media platform, small businesses, success, online, opportunities, communicate.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

E-commerce and web technologies largely provides advantages to small businesses. E-commerce allows small businesses the opportunity to not only compete with larger organisations, but also assists small businesses to market and launch their product and service offerings in a financial savvy manner. Furthermore, social media gives small businesses the facilities to foster increased profits, and since e-commerce is a globally recognised tool, small businesses are afforded the opportunity to reach customers on an international scale (Jones, Borgman & Ulusoy, 2015:613-615).

Social media and internet technologies can create various new avenues of distribution, communication, and cost-saving methods (DeMers, 2020). Having a social media presence is regarded to be important universally, as this tool allows businesses to influence the attitudes and purchasing decisions of consumers. This tool is especially important for small businesses, not only because of its exponential growth in the business market, but because it can provide small businesses with a direct short cut to customer relations (Sweeney, 2018).

Social media has become a significant part of technology in recent times, being used by billions of individuals around the world. According to Facebook (2019), as of March 31, 2019, there are 2.38 billion active users monthly whilst the number of daily users which are active is approximately 1.56 billion. The growth of social media users in 2022 is estimated to be at 3.29 billion users, which makes up 42.3 per cent of the earth's population (eMarketer 2018).

Considering the massive prospective audience who spends several hours a day across the various social media platforms, it is not surprising that marketers have welcomed

social media as a conventional marketing channel (Jones *et al.* 2015:613). Furthermore, social media has been largely embraced in academics. The role and influence of social media in marketing has also been identified in academia as countless research projects have been undertaken on social media marketing.

A considerable body of research on topics such as marketing, online word of mouth and online networks related to social media has been developed. Irrespective of what practitioners and academics have explored and learned over the past 20 years on social media and its relating topics, the changeable and fast-paced nature of this topic – and the way consumers make use of it – the prospects of social media in a marketing sense could be vastly different from what has been previously seen (Social Factors Principles of Marketing, n.d.).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although it has been found that approximately only 54% of small businesses intend to use social media as a marketing tool, social media should still be deemed as extremely valuable to all small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Incorporating social media into their business will allow enterprises to effectively interact and learn more about their target market, have a means of direct and two-way communication, and stay on top of trends as a strategy to gaining competitive advantage (Sweeney, 2018). Since small businesses are regarded as a key driver in any economy, these enterprises should be safeguarded as such (Oji, Iwu & Haydam, 2017:1).

Social media has become a platform on which small businesses can effectively interact with their customers (Blakely, 2017). Since technology is becoming an integral part of modern society, it is imperative for businesses to implement the use of internet technologies as a form of staying relevant and connected. However, even with these well-known benefits of social media incorporation in small businesses, Sophy (2017) highlights that there still are many enterprises who have no intentions of utilising social media as a

marketing tool. This study therefore aims to emphasise the importance of using social media as a marketing tool in small businesses.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 PRIMARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this study is to explore the use of social media by small businesses as a marketing tool.

1.3.2 SECONDARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To achieve the primary objective of this study, the following secondary objectives have been formulated:

SO¹: To outline the impact of small businesses by using social media as a marketing tool.

SO²: To identify and discuss the successes of small businesses by using social media as a marketing tool.

1.3.3 METHODOLOGICAL OBJECTIVES

The methodological research objectives of this study are:

MO¹: To conduct a literature review on social media being used as a marketing tool by small businesses.

MO²: To select an appropriate research methodology and research methods for the study.

MO³: To collect and analyse primary and secondary data.

MO⁴: To provide pertinent conclusions and recommendations to researchers based on the findings to assist in identifying areas/foci to be researched.

1.3.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the impact of social media use by small businesses as a marketing tool?

1.4 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

This study focuses on small businesses within the Nelson Mandela Bay region and is therefore limited to only conducting semi-structured open-ended interviews with businesses in the said region. The objective of this study is to highlight the importance of social media as a marketing tool in businesses especially for those small businesses who currently do not adopt social media as a marketing tool. As a result, the study will only source information from and consult journals, websites, and articles regarding social media as a marketing tool in small businesses. Search engines such as Google and Google Scholar will be used to collecting credible, relevant, and dated data.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

It is envisioned that the findings of this study will provide small businesses with a general scope of knowledge on the benefits and methods of social media use as a marketing tool. Social media has exponentially grown and continuously grows, and is used as a means of success by multiple businesses. The significance of this study therefore lies in the attempt to encourage all small businesses who have no intention of implementing social media as a marketing tool, to explore this as a route of success.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The structure of this study follows the following layout:

- Chapter one introduces and provides a background to the research topic selected. This chapter discusses the problem statement and research objectives. The research objectives are broken down into primary objectives, secondary objectives, and methodological objectives
- Chapter two comprises of the literature review. An introduction is provided, followed by key definitions mentioned throughout the literature review. Thereafter, the review

discusses previous research conducted on social media as a marketing tool, factors influencing social media as a marketing tool, and the importance of social media as a marketing tool, all pertaining to small businesses.

- Chapter three presents the research design. In this chapter, the research paradigm is discussed, followed by the sample of the study, the research instrument, data collection, and data analysis. Furthermore, research rigour and ethics is discussed by defining and exploring the validity, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability dimensions.
- Chapter four will focus on analysis the data collected by means of the research instrument. The findings will be presented here, with visual aid such as tables. The scope of the research is highlighted.
- Chapter five concludes the study by providing a brief overview and discussing how research objectives have been achieved. This chapter also highlights any suggestions for possible future studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Previous research has highlighted that one of the most eminent causes of failure in small businesses is an overall lack of suitable marketing strategies. In addition, it has been observed that the underpinning reason for the lack of appropriate marketing strategies being employed in developing economies lies within substandard education and comprehension of business management in relation to small businesses. It has been found that in South Africa, the important concept that marketing must be carried out effectively to see growth in a business is not understood or taken seriously, causing small businesses to fail (Oji *et al.* 2017:6).

Today, social media in its various platforms has become cutting edge tools for developing and conducting relational and transactional activities in businesses, as well as for overseeing and communicating brands (Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman & Kannan, 2016:8; Ashley & Tuten, 2015:15-17). The adoption of social media in recent times introduces an attractive route for SME competitive capabilities, especially with its aptness to provide cost-effective segmentation and targeting purposes for marketing service brands and products to consumers (Odoom, Anning-Dorson & Acheampong, 2017:385). Social media is not only useful to large firms but also plays a significant role for SMEs. It allows small businesses to manage marketing activities in an effective manner regardless of the challenges they confront. With social media, SMEs are granted a multitude of opportunities wherein they could market their goods, services, or brands internationally through social media (Razak & Latip, 2016:1).

Implementing social media into small businesses is one of the developing solutions to the marketing challenges they experience. Despite restricted finances, absence of expertise and inability to compete with larger enterprises, social media enables small businesses to orchestrate marketing strategies efficiently and effectively. Studies carried out by Small

and Medium Business (SMB) Group shows that one in every five small businesses do not employ a strategy in the use of social media. Therefore, if there is a lack of proper strategies in place, marketing efforts would potentially not be worthwhile. As a result of this small businesses would need to develop a suitable strategy whilst incorporating social media (Hassan, Nadzim & Shiratuddin, 2015:263). A combination of factors including poor market accessibility and inefficient market strategies were found to have been part of the reasons why small businesses in South Africa fail. Moreover, a lack of business knowledge regarding challenges in marketing also contributes toward small business failure in South Africa. Even though several studies have been conducted with the purpose of re-iterating reasons for small and medium enterprises (SME's) failure, there has been a shortage of research on using social media marketing strategies to encourage the growth of small businesses (Oji *et al.* 2017:6).

2.2 DEFINITIONS

SME's

Small and medium enterprises in South Africa can be defined as an entity which has; less than 200 employees, facilitates annual turnovers below R64 million, holds assets to the worth of R10 million and less, and which consists of direct day-to-day management by the owners themselves (Business Tech, 2019).

Social media marketing

Also categorised as a subset of marketing through digital media, media marketing can be defined as employing the various forms of social media to advertise the product and service offering of a business (Etree, 2019). With social media marketing, businesses gain the ability to present their products and services to a broad spectrum of consumers, whilst receiving feedback through these sites which is a function not possible with general advertising (Ahmed & Kahn, 2016:22).

Social media

Social media is an internet-based mechanism which enables consumers to communicate and present ideas on both a domestic and international scale, deriving value from the online content and the engagement with others (Carr & Hayes, 2015:8). Being internet-based, social media is made up of a variety of websites and applications through which consumers create and share content (Hudson, n.d.). Examples of these marketing tools include blogging, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest (Etree, 2019).

Traditional Marketing

Marketing is a business tool used to convince customers to purchase or trade goods and/or services. Unlike modern marketing today which comprises of technologies, traditional marketing was built on a foundation of attracting customers through channels such as word-of-mouth and newspapers (Abyari, Aghaei, Mirzaei, & Salehi, 2012:385).

Marketing tools

Marketing tools are instruments businesses use in attempts to design and advertise their product and service offering. In this context, tools simply refer to the strategies, processes, and resources employed (Market Business News, n.d.). Rather than following the traditional route of marketing which encompasses lengthy procedures to obtain customer information, social media marketing tools has the goal of developing online relationships with customers which are interactive by nature (Etree, 2019).

2.3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING TOOL

Previous studies conducted conclude that social media has extensively been used as a marketing tool by larger organisations. However, the incorporation of social media in small businesses remains at its infancy. Moreover, not much research has been done on the strategic use of marketing through social media, for small businesses. The design and innovation of a social media marketing strategy could easily guide small businesses has and potentially reduce that gap (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016:89). Social media can be seen as the driving force to marketing tools and strategies implemented by businesses to

communicate with customers. Research suggests that the tools provided by social media allows for merging between the traditional communicating marketing tools and word-of-mouth marketing wherein marketing managers experience difficulties with controlling the content of some information. Engagement through social media is a more captivating route for firms since information can be shared in various manners including but not limited to, shared experiences, comments, and videos. A platform where such experiences and information are shared could shape the perception of consumers with regards to products and/or services being offered by brands. This information can also be shared and received swiftly, therefore having a significant impact on branding and product performance (Hassan *et al.* 2015:264).

Another study conducted by Kirtis and Karahan (2011) investigating whether social media, as a marketing strategy tool, is a cost-effective method of marketing. The study revealed that using social media marketing saves businesses extensive costs, since using social media enables the firm to reach millions of customers in a short time span, and information can be communicated and spread at a considerably fast pace.

Moreover, Kim and Ko (2011) investigated whether using social media as a marketing tool could raise the standard of customer equity in high-end fashion brand businesses. Based on the results, it has been concluded that social media marketing affects the purchasing process and intentions of consumers. Using social media to market has the potential to change consumers feelings toward not purchasing a product or service. This discovery is deemed significant because it exhibits the importance of enhancing brand and customer equities through social media marketing.

The literature review of past research papers suggests that investigating the strategic use of social media as a marketing tool for small businesses is worth the effort for three reasons. Firstly, social media has gained exponential popularity in recent years and can be regarded as an extremely effective tool. Secondly, marketing through social media is largely cost-effective, and thirdly, customer and brand equity can be improved through social media marketing (Hassan *et al.* 2015:265).

2.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING TOOL

More than half of today's internet users' purchasing preferences are affected by social media networking sites, hence the utilisation of social media as a marketing tool becoming a marketing strategy deemed effective. For e-retailers, it is extremely critical to understand their consumers and have insight on the strategies used in social media to engage with them (Social Factors Principles of Marketing, n.d). There has been a notable increase in the number of researchers investigating the impact that word-of-mouth has on marketing strategies and product sales, product reviews done by customers, and the role consumer reviews play in forecasting sales. The most prevalent group in an online setting is seen as youth. As a result, studying the social networking patterns of the youth is key as this groups behaviour is more than likely to differ once dealing with different contexts. Generation Y is considered as a group of people who has been exposed to the digital environment for most of their lives, being largely affected by changes in informational technology (Ahmed & Kahn, 2016:22).

Previous studies found that there were common factors influencing social media marketing. They are as follows:

2.4.1 ORGANISATIONAL FACTOR

Under the assumption that organisations have the necessary resources (finances, human capital, and time), adequate marketing of products and services could be carried out via e-commerce activities i.e., social media. The organisational factor has the ability of enduring far enough in social media marketing adoption (Manideep, Reddy, & Reddy, 2019:357). The functionality, variation, and eagerness towards emerging technology would have a positive impact on how managers embrace the concept of social media. Multiple small businesses adopt social media in efforts to largely reduce the costs they carry in marketing activities. Based on empirical support of studies, the organisational

factor purposefully affects the adoption of social media as a marketing tool (Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat, & Fabeil, 2014:124).

2.4.2 END USER

Another study conducted by (El-gohary, n.d) shows that ease of use, as well as utilisation on its own, had a direct and positive effect on how social media is adopted as a marketing tool. It has been found that perceived utility is extremely important for the incorporation of e-commerce. End users, which refers to the people the product or service was intended for, plays a significant role in building desire in consumers so that they are drawn towards purchasing goods and services online through social media. This highlights that the end user factor notably affects the way consumers engage with social media marketing (Dahnil *et al.* 2014:124).

2.4.3 BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

SME's regard technology as a fundamental tool and aspect to remaining competitive (Dahnil *et al.* 2014:119). Once rivals start employing these technologies, small businesses swiftly follow trends to stay ahead. Trends in the market, inclusive of economic climates and globalisation are significant external factors influencing the strategies employed by firms. Businesses have no control over these external factors and are therefore always vulnerable to events which may occur that consequently call for changes in their strategies. Results from previous studies reveals that culture can be regarded as a mediation factor in social media marketing, and due to this the ever-changing business environment affects the way companies choose to employ any strategy regarding social media marketing as consumer inclusivity and sensitivity are fundamental factors to be considerate of (El-gohary, n.d).

2.4.4 SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media, or social media networking sites refer to online communication platforms or applications that enable the public to freely interact, collaborate, and share differences in opinions (Alhaddad, 2015). In addition to popular social media forms, platforms such as blogs, rating sites, videos, announcements etc., also make active use of social media for

marketing and advertising purposes. The extent to which a business adopts social media for marketing activities is determined by the organisational feature (Manideep *et al.* 2019:358).

2.4.5 CUSTOMS AND CULTURES

Customs can be defined as the traditional behaviour's customers present in certain situations (Social Factors Principles of Marketing, n.d.). Customs differ across the world. An example of customs is Thanksgiving in the United States. This is a holiday on the fourth Thursday in the month of November, celebrated by family reunions and feasting. Another example of a custom or tradition, in South Africa, would be showering your mother with gifts and flowers on Mother's Day (Amann, n.d.). More specifically, a custom in South Africa would be Heritage Day, where families come together and braai.

Having an in-depth understanding of customs is significant to consumers, since marketing strategies used by businesses represents occasions where money is expeditiously spent, and culture determines what needs to be bought to honour customs (Social Factors Principles of Marketing, n.d.). Culture is evident in events such as Valentine's Day, where chocolates and flowers are purchased, Easter where chocolate eggs are bought, Halloween where candy is bought for trick-or-treat, and so forth. As a result, marketers need to have a good comprehension of local cultures and develop a strategy appropriate to those diversifying cultures if they want to target their customers correctly. Deep comprehension of culture importance and appropriation especially in a diverse country such as South Africa would pose as an advantage to any business. Any sense of misspelling or mispronunciation would affect the meaning and affect the way customers perceive a business, its products, services, and brand at large (Culture Vulture, 2014).

2.4.6 SOCIAL CLASS

Social Class is a salient factor which should be considered by small businesses with targeting through social media marketing. Observing social classes reveals how customers view themselves and others, what their expectations of businesses are, what their income levels are, and which challenges they face. For example, if a business plans

to target the upper classes through social media marketing, they need to consider that although this class makes up a small portion of the large population, they require marketing offerings which exhibit high quality and service, to meet their expectations. Furthermore, when targeting the lower, middle, and working classes, businesses need to consider marketing products which are price sensitive, with satisfactory value (Social Factors Principles of Marketing, n.d.).

Africa is largely regarded as one amongst a few of the least digitally advanced countries in the world. The links between income, education, and internet usage is less widespread than that of more developed regions. Since many South Africans only receive primary school as their highest form of education due to inequalities such as poverty or few opportunities, they are less likely to be attracted to using the internet. Another strong link has been discovered between income and internet usage in South Africans. The more people earn, the more likely they are to purchase technological devices, resulting in increased exposure to the internet and social media. To address this prominent issue, in 2012 the country launched a project known as South Africa's National Development Plan to promote the usage of information and communication technologies as key enablers of production, business and individual communication, and economic growth (Bornman, 2015:5).

2.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING TOOL

A fundamental reason to having social media presence and a website is that these marketing tools have a significant impact on the attitudes and purchasing decisions of consumers. Showing exponential growth over the years, social media is essential for small businesses since it could be utilised to declutter data, and help the business connect with customers (Jones *et al.* 2015:614). Critically analysing the marketing strategies and approaches of rivals could provide businesses with a guide to what industry expectations are and help them to gain insight on how to advance their marketing strategy. Making use of social analytic tools enables businesses to identify significant interest points and further identify content gaps between these points in real time (Vinerean, 2017:29).

Having an online presence has indirect benefits for small businesses. Using social media as a marketing tool does not guarantee immediate change in consumer decisions or purchasing behaviour, however it is extremely effective when used as a tool to developing long-term relations with customers (Jones *et al.* 2015:614). The end goal for small businesses is to eventually have customers drawn to their web page, entirely managed by the business itself. Social media also allows intensified brand recognition, allowing an increase in search ranking with regards to search engines. This largely points to the exponential rise in social media's influence on consumer attitudes, also indicating the significance of offering captivating content to the suitable target market. Past research indicates that two-way communication between peers via social media platforms has the potential to heavily influence the purchasing decisions of consumers (Vinerean, 2017:28).

2.5.1 STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING FOR ORGANISATIONS

Social media provides opportunities for both businesses and consumers. By making use of social media, consumers can effectively communicate their different brand experiences, while being able to easily search, find, choose, and buy products and services. Organisations, however, have multiple opportunities to communicate with their target market, gain insight into the industry expectations, and using social media as a marketing tool to grow and gain sales (Vinerean, 2017:31).

2.5.2 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND ITS ADVERTISING POTENTIAL

Marketing employed through social media is highly linked to advertising and its ability to boost businesses and run promotions in attempts to reach and engage with the target market (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi & Algharabat, 2017:1180). Due to the significant role social media plays in advertising, Duffet (2015) conducted a study on the attitudes of millennials towards advertising on Facebook. The effectiveness is further supported by the following statistics presented by Facebook (2016).

Facebook achieved in \$27.6 billion in total revenue in 2016, with \$8.62 billion in the final quarter (Facebook, 2016). Moreover, as reported by Facebook itself (Facebook, 2016), it

had an overall daily active user of 66%, of its total of 1.8 billion users. That means that approximately 1.18 billion people are actively engaging in social media activities on Facebook, providing marketing opportunities for global and local brands that can target this large audience based on various demographics and interests. In June 2017, this highly popular social media platform reached a new milestone as now more than 2 billion people from all around the world use Facebook (Facebook, 2017).

A public social media company developed a more recent application known as Snapchat, which allows photo-sharing (Snapchat, 2017). Within the first three-month period of 2017, the application generated \$149 million through advertisements. In 2019, a photo sharing app called Instagram collected revenue to the total value of \$14 billion. The users on this app grew from a staggering amount of 90 million in January of 2013 to one billion users in September 2018. Instagram is largely used by many business-minded individuals to market and sell many items, personal or professional. The application was launched and acquired by Facebook in 2010 (Statista Research Department, 2021). Another social media application known as Twitter, ranks as one of the biggest networks on a global scale. Money spent on social media advertising is largely increasing, and in 2019, the spend on this application amounted to \$129.1 per internet user. Twitter is regarded as a channel through which businesses can grow their marketing by being entertaining (Statista Research Department, 2021).

2.5.3 IMPACT OF E-WORD-OF-MOUTH ON SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Relative to traditional communication channels between consumers, electronic word of mouth, through social media marketing, is considered more effective as it largely impacts online consumers' perceptions and buying decisions related to brands. Alalwan *et al.* (2017) discovered that compared to custom marketing tools, the various platforms provided by social media leads to an intensified, widespread impact of word of mouth (Vinerean, 2017:31-32).

2.5.4 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM)

Consumers have become proactively involved in the co-creation of their experiences with firms (Wang & Kim, 2017). When it comes to establishing solid, long-term consumer connections, social media can serve as an extremely effective tool by guiding small businesses in their development, maintenance, and sustenance of social and personal relationships with their target market. Once businesses develop, advertise, and share various categories of content across social media platforms, their consumers are guaranteed to interact with their brand in an online setting. This fosters an environment where consumers are more actively involved with the brand, developing an embracing relationship between the business and consumers (Duffett, 2015).

Various authors have emphasised the emergence of a “social customer” or “creative consumer” who is actively implicated in creating and propagating value-adding content on social media platforms. As a result of social media platforms, consumers are proactive in the co-creation of their individual experiences with brands (Wang & Kim, 2017). Multiple researchers have addressed the rise in “creative customers” who are actively implicated in developing and designing content which adds value, on social media platforms. With the facilitation of developments in technology, the new roles customers play calls on businesses to reconsider Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in terms of both marketing practitioners and academics (Vinerean, 2017:32).

2.5.5 OMNI-SOCIAL PRESENCE

Apart from being a more cost-effective platform, social media allows the useful expansion of small businesses into collaborative spaces allowing them to share content globally with large numbers of consumers. With traditional media, the costs of reaching consumers on a global scale are much higher. Since platforms such as Facebook and Twitter accumulated over 1 billion social media users, consumers are unconsciously moving away from the traditional methods of obtaining product information. Therefore, small businesses can utilise communication channels which effectively reaches and interacts with various consumers in many ways which does not require the same capacity of

financial resources as other marketing routes (Odoom *et al.* 2017:385-386). Social media through its platforms offer functions to businesses they may previously not had access to, or functions which never existed before. Furthermore, these platforms improve the traditional methods of marketing tools by meeting the needs and preferences of consumers and the market at large (Social Factors Principles of Marketing, n.d.). Through appropriately integrating business operations with social media marketing, small businesses can reach their target consumers by sharing content instantaneously.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section, research design and methodology will be defined and discussed. The research design is split into two parts, data collection and data analysis. Moreover, data collection is further broken down into two topics, namely, primary data collection and secondary data collection. After defining research design and methodology, the sample of the study, the research instrument, data collection and data analysis will be discussed.

According to Yin (2014:14), research methodology is a logical plan which enables researchers to not only investigate but also to conclude and present an answer to a distinct question. Central to research studies, research design has evolved into a critical topic. Once the research topic and questions had been identified and formulated, choosing a design which is suitable to the study being conducted is considered as the most important decision made by a researcher (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018:237).

An example of convergence in describing research design is that research design is a process comprised of decision-making with regards to which topic should be studied pertaining to a population with specific methods of research for a set purpose (Babbie, 2004:112), and research designs can be defined as prototypes for the end research product (O'Sullivan, Rassel & Berner, 2007:26).

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

Secondary research

Secondary research is the use of data which has been previously collected by other research for various purposes. Secondary sources can be found anywhere, but the main and most accurate sources for secondary data are the official data archives. It is important

to collect secondary data mainly for the purpose of teaching and informing oneself and others with regards to a specific topic (Types of Market research: Primary vs Secondary, n.d.). Sources such as journals, books, and websites amongst others will be used to obtain relevant secondary data. The information this study will collect from secondary data is related to the existence of social media as a marketing tool in small businesses, the successes, as well as the implementation thereof, on a larger, general scale.

Primary research

Primary research is data which is collected for the first time specifically for the study and research problem at hand (Types of Market research: Primary vs Secondary, n.d.). This can be carried out by using data collecting methods which best suits answering the research problem. In collecting primary data, new data is added and stored onto the existential store of social knowledge. Primary research is important because it provides unique, accurate and distinctive information based on the research problem (Hox & Boeije, 2005:593). This study will collect information through conducting interviews with five small business owners as a data collection method. Five semi-structured interviews will be conducted. Qualitative research can be used as a flexible method rather than a rigid approach, wherein topics are adjusted to match the study in a manner which provides the best answer to the research problem (Hox & Boeije, 2005:593).

3.2.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Research Paradigm refers to a set of beliefs agreed upon by scientists regarding how problems are comprehended, how the world is perceived and thus how to appropriately conduct research. A paradigm can therefore be loosely defined as assumptions which guides the exploration of a particular research (Rahi, 2017:1). According to Creswell (2014:36), there are four categories of paradigms.

TABLE 3.1: RESEARCH PARADIGMS

| Positivist | Constructivism |
|---|---|
| Determination Reductionism Empirical observation and measurement Theory verification | Understanding Multiple participant meanings Social and Historical construction Theory generation |
| Advocacy/Participatory | Pragmatism |
| Political Empowerment issue-oriented Collaborative Change-oriented | Consequences of actions Problem-centred Pluralistic Real-world practice oriented |

(Source: Cresswell, 2014:36)

Since this study comprises of empirical observation and measurement, a positivistic paradigm approach is used.

3.2.2 SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

Research strategy can be defined as the process wherein data is collected and interpreted, working towards achieving the clear set objectives. A survey strategy is considered most popular with regards to deductive research and can take the form of interviews of questionnaires (Rahi, 2017:2). A population can be described as the individuals or objects one wishes to comprehend while conducting a study. A research sample however can be described as a process whereby certain segments within the population are selected for investigation. The characteristics, attitudes and belief systems of the individuals who form part of the research sample is measured and analysed (Rahi, 2017:3). The qualifying criteria of participants are being a small business with less than 200 employees, facilitating annual turnovers of less than R64 million annually, and residing in the Nelson Mandela Bay Area.

The target population for this study consists of small business owners within the Nelson Mandela Bay region who are exposed to using social media as a potential marketing tool. Sampling methods chosen by a researcher are largely influenced by the

purpose/objectives of the study and the research question (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019:3). Therefore, convenience sampling is best suited for this study. Convenience sampling is a data collecting process where the target population is easily and readily accessible to the researcher, allowing researchers to gain feedback in a manner which is cost effective (Rahi, 2017:3).

3.2.3 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The grounds of a quantitative method is observed in positivist paradigm and can therefore be regarded as a scientific method. This quantitative strategy focuses on objectivity by measuring the opinions and actions of the sample study. This enables the researcher to rather describe the information than to interpret it (Rahi, 2017:2). In quantitative research, the problem is pursued by gathering and processing figures (Chhabra, 2021:25). Although a plethora of research methods exist, the most dominating methods are classified as qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative method is used in majority cases where in-depth information is collected on a distinct topic. This method, unlike the quantitative method, deems the emotions of a person largely important as it operates under the assumption that a single person represents the attitude and feelings of a group of similar individuals (Rahi, 2017:2). Qualitative research commonly consists of a certain degree of direct interaction between the target population/study sample and the researcher (Chhabra, 2021:2).

Measurement scale

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews consists of a blend of open and closed-ended questions, commonly making room for why and/or how follow-up questions. As such, this allows the researcher to dance around the topic of the study, but also remain open to related issues that might arise during interviews. Relaxed and in-person interviews are considerably longer than that of telephonic interviews since they are more engaging (Adams, 2015:493). Using semi structured enables the researcher to utilise data collecting methods such as face-to-face interviews, telephonic interviews, or making use of the internet through channels such as emails (McIntosh & Morse, 2015:7).

The measuring instrument of this study will comprise of an interview schedule on which the interviews will be based. The cover letter will obtain information regarding the study such as: an introduction to the topic; the objectives of the study; and the qualifying criteria of participants. The interview will be made up of two sections. The first section (Section A) will focus on the biographical data of the participants. The second section (Section B) will focus on marketing themed questions regarding social media usage in the business of participants

3.2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The feedback received from these small businesses will be compared to one another and analysed according to the implementation, benefits, or lack thereof experienced through social media a result of an online presence, or absence thereof. Since interviews will be conducted in-person if participants are comfortable, the interaction will be recorded with participants' consent. Once this has successfully taken place, the audio can be transcribed using Microsoft Teams transcription function.

Furthermore, data will be interpreted through content analysis. The use of content analysis is to filter and conclude informational content collected by the researcher after conducting semi-structured interviews. This can be done in two methods. The first method will be deductive, by deriving information from the literature overview of the study.

The second method is inductive, by deriving codes from the interviews. The researcher will go according to item by analysing all participants' feedback of the same question. Thereafter, the researcher uses a standard coding process wherein key phrases or words are emphasised on, highlighting the important features in the participants' responses. These different responses can be categorised and tabulated, expressed as percentages (McIntosh & Morse, 2015:9).

3.3 RESEARCH RIGOUR

Validity illustrates the degree to which an instrument does what it is intended to do. For example, does an instrument that screens an individual's temperature do so with heightened sensitivity and specificity? Reliability on the other hand depicts a consistency with which results are acquired (Andrade, 2018:498). In attempts to ensure trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba developed rigid criteria in qualitative research. These criteria are credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Basing a questionnaire on these four dimensions enables robustness in the study (Forero, Nahidi, De Costa, Mohsin, Fitzgerald, Gibson, McCarthy & Aboagye-Sarfo, 2018:2).

Credibility is used to build confidence that the findings, according to participants, are honest and believable. Dependability is used to ascertain that the results of the qualitative experiment are repetitive if the study took place within the same setting of participants and context. Transferability is implemented as a method to allow more room for the findings of the study to be generalised or adaptable to other contexts in research. Lastly, confirmability is used to heighten the confidence that the findings of the study can be corroborated by other researchers (Forero *et al.* 2018:3).

To maintain credibility, the researcher must independently collect, process, and analyse data to prevent any distorting of information which could take place (Korstjens & Moser 2018:121). Another means to maintaining credibility is ensuring that secondary information is extracted from sources not exceeding 7-10 years.

To ensure transferability in this study, the researcher will make use of thick description, where care is taken to not only describe the attitude and experiences, but the context thereof as well, so that these events can be of value to outsiders as well. Thick description comprises of a sizeable amount of descriptive information such as the research sample size, the research setting, the sample strategy, and the research instrument used to conduct the study (Korstjens & Moser 2018:122). To ascertain confirmability and dependability, the researcher will make use of audit trail. Audit trail is the process of

openly describing and discussing the research steps conducted from the start of the study to the collection, process, and analysis of data as well as the reporting of the results. The researcher will keep the records of the research path visible throughout the study (Korstjens & Moser 2018:121).

3.4 ETHICS

In addition to comprehending the conference of academic research, knowing what constitutes ethical research is a critical factor to consider when planning for a research project (Cacciattolo, 2015:55). Conducting research poorly poses harm to both researchers and participants and can result in negative legacies (Brittain, Ibbett, Lange, Dorward, Hoyte, Marino, Milner-Gulland, Newth, Rakotonarivo, Veríssimo & Lewis, 2020:3).

As a result, research ethics demands that researchers safeguard the dignity of their participants and appropriately publish the information that has been explored (Akaranga & Makau, 2016:2). In protecting the participants, the researcher will employ confidentiality by maintaining anonymity and only using the data collected for its intended purpose. The researcher will also seek consent from participants to record the interaction before conducting interviews.

In addition, prior to collecting data, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from their affiliated institution, Nelson Mandela University.

CHAPTER FOUR EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of data collected from five small business owners based in the Nelson Mandela Bay region. A summary of the demographic information of these participants are provided, followed by a report back on the findings which were measured through coding analysis

4.2 PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

In the following table, the profiles of the five participants who partook in this study are summarised. There were five participants selected from the Nelson Mandela Bay region. Of these five participants, three were female and two were male. The life span of these businesses ranged from seven months to three years, with participants' ages ranging from 20 to 39.

TABLE 4.1: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF PARTICIPANTS

| Participant | Age group | Gender | Life of business |
|--------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| A | 20-29 | Female | 1 year and 10 months |
| B | 20-29 | Female | 1 year and 7 months |
| C | 20-29 | Female | 1 year and 3 months |
| D | 20-29 | Male | 7 months |
| E | 30-39 | Male | 3 years and 9 months |

(Source: Researcher's own construct based on interview transcripts).

4.3 REPORT BACK ON FINDINGS

4.3.1 SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING TOOL

Research shows that social media has a history of being used as a marketing tool by larger organisations. However, the implementation of social media in smaller businesses is yet to reach its peak (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016:89). All participants expressed that they acknowledge social media as a marketing tool.

All participants proposed different views on the tool capability of social media. While Participant A explained how they build their brand through social media, *“I’m able to build my brand through the content I post, drive website sales and also run advertisements about my products and new launches”*, Participant D expressed how they see social media to observe and stay up to date with trends. Participant C said that social media is not only a marketing tool but also allows for communication between customers and creating product awareness, *“Although has a lot of negatives to it as people use it for the wrong purposes, it is also a way for customers to communicate, to get a message out to the world, to make money and to create awareness of your offering”*. Participant B stated that social media allows them to directly engage with their target market and Participant E touches on how social media is a platform for engagement and product promotion.

In table 4.2 below, additional quotes expressing the various viewpoints of participants on social media as a marketing tool is presented:

TABLE 4.2: QUOTES RELATING SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING TOOL

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Participant A: | <i>“Social media enables me to control the narrative of my brand. I’m able to build my brand through the content I post, drive website sales and also run advertisements about my products and new launches”.</i> |
| Participant B: | <i>“It allows people the opportunity to see how other people enjoyed their treatments in my salon without having to find out themselves, it builds trust (seeing a friend who posted great lashes they just had done or a review) and direct communication”.</i> |
| Participant C: | <i>“That’s where most people see the news, where most people see adverts, how businesses operate in terms of marketing. All businesses nowadays rely on social media because I’m sure the first thing most people do when they wake up in the morning is go onto their phones and scroll through social media”.</i> |
| Participant D: | <i>“Social media is an awesome business tool. It’s an easy way to stay connected with your clients and keep on trend with where your industry is going”.</i> |
| Participant E: | <i>“Social media marketing creates an interactive platform that enables me to share my product information directly with my target audience, while also providing me with a platform to engage with them”.</i> |

(Source: Researcher’s own construct based on interview transcripts).

4.3.2 SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

Using social media as a marketing tool in modern society introduces a potentially profitable route for small businesses, in the sense that it is cost-effective marketing services or products to consumers (Odoom *et al.*, 2017:385).

Participants A, B and E are among those who make use of social media daily to market their product or service. These participants believe consistency builds relations. Other Participants C and D are among those who make use of social media on a less frequent basis, such as every second or third day. These participants state that they do not want to overwhelm customers with information concerning their product. Participant C states that, *“If I post monotonous content daily, consumers will reach the point where they become bored. I want to be present, but I want to do so in a manner which is solid in approach with relevant and captivating posts, not just content fillers”.*

4.3.3 BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

According to Jones *et al* (2015:614) a social media online presence does not only allow for direct two-way communication which builds long-term customer relations, but it also largely affects the way customers perceive products and alters their purchasing

behaviour. Social media also benefits small businesses by allowing a more magnified, controlled narrative of the brand, while simultaneously building credible brand recognition (Vinerean, 2017:28). All participants expressed that social media platforms have benefited their businesses in terms of increased customer engagement, brand, and product awareness, and created an evident difference in sales and profit made. Participant C said that *“Both Facebook and Instagram contributed to increased customer engagement as they offer many interactive features that drives customer engagement”*. Participant B explains how using social media promotes customer engagement, *“People often message me because they saw my Instagram, or someone shared a post I did that day”*.

4.3.4 MAXIMISING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL

Previous research conducted found that out of every five small businesses, there is one which does not implement a suitable strategy when utilising social media. As a result of the lack of strategy, marketing activities would not contribute to the growth of the business (Hassan *et al.* 2015:264). In South Africa, the lack of knowledge regarding marketing challenges plays a role in the failures of small businesses (Oji *et al.* 2017:6).

All participants make use of social media, however none of them believe that they use social media to its maximum capacity. There are participants who make use of social media daily, exhausting the platform itself for marketing purposes however they acknowledge that they do not utilise social media as a marketing tool to its entirety. Participant A states that, *“While I try my best to generate authentic and interesting content, I’m not educated on how to use social media platforms to its maximum potential”*. Participant D and B touch on the financial limitations of using social media to its maximum capacity, where Participant B states, *“I don’t use the paid promotions and other features, just the basics”*. Participants C and E shares that not every business owner has the capability of running multiple platforms daily, and owners often stick to what they know. Participant C claims that, *“I in general am not a huge social media person so I became comfortable with my 2 platforms and did not really venture out further”*. In table 4.3 below,

additional quotes expressing the various viewpoints of participants on maximising the use of social media as a marketing tool is presented:

TABLE 4.3: QUOTES RELATING MAXIMISING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Participant A: | <i>"While I try my best to generate authentic and interesting content, I'm not educated on how to use Social media platforms to its maximum potential".</i> |
| Participant B: | <i>"Probably not – I don't use the paid promotions and other features, just the basics".</i> |
| Participant C: | <i>"I in general am not a huge social media person so I became comfortable with my 2 platforms and did not really venture out further"</i> |
| Participant D: | <i>"I do think I should do paid advertising on treatments I would like to do more often to get my reach further".</i> |
| Participant E: | <i>"I do not feel like I am utilising it to its maximum output as there are many more popular platforms besides that which I am using and where I could probably grow my business more, but I am only one person and I do not always have the time or mental capacity".</i> |

(Source: Researcher's own construct based on interview transcripts).

4.3.5 AWARENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING TOOL

While Hassan *et al* (2015:265) states that social media has exponentially grown and popularised itself in modern society, there are still many demographical factors related to the user-population which needs to be considered in terms of knowledge and awareness when it comes to social media.

Every participant has expressed that there is a lack of awareness when it comes to social media, even in such a technology inclined era. Participant C and E simultaneously state that while older generations who have had businesses for many years try to transition to the online space, they struggle to maintain relevance by capturing consumers, Participant E states, *"When it comes to more older people owning small businesses, they lack awareness of the tools and features that allow them to be more creative with marketing"*. Participant A explains that while small businesses are aware of social media, they still lack knowledge, *"I think all small businesses lack awareness of how to market effectively and using social media to its full potential"*. Other participants agree that there is a lack of creativity and small business owners often lack awareness of social media in a sense that not all platforms are employed.

4.3.6 FUTURE SURVIVAL OF BUSINESSES IN RELATION TO SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

The most prominent feature of failure in small businesses can be credited to a lack of appropriate marketing strategies. In South Africa, small business does not grasp the seriousness of carrying out effective strategies to experience visible, sustainable, long-term growth (Oji *et al.* 2017:6).

The participants were all in agreement with the fact that there is no future survival for a small business in modern society if there is no transition into the virtual, online market. Participant C agrees with Participant A which states that, *“I believe that the future is digital. If we look at previous businesses such as magazine companies, those who didn’t effectively make the transition to social media have since closed down”*. Participant B explains how they cannot see a future for small businesses who do not have an online presence, *“if you are selling a product or service nowadays, everyone wants to follow you on Instagram or Facebook to see your work and a lot of them make a choice based on how your feed looks. Especially the younger generation”*. Participant D states that word of mouth has been overpowered by online reviews, while Participant E says that small businesses will not survive in a competitive environment where they cannot gain an advantage over other firms who have a deep, far online reach. In table 4.4 which follows, additional quotes expressing the various viewpoints of participants on the future survival of small businesses in relation to social media usage is presented:

TABLE 4.4: QUOTES RELATING THE FUTURE SURVIVAL OF SMALL BUSINESSES IN RELATION TO SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Participant A: | <i>"I believe that the future is digital. If we look at previous businesses such as magazine companies, those who didn't effectively make the transition to social media have since closed down. I think it's important as a business, to evolve with modern society and to monopolise on the latest developments in technology".</i> |
| Participant B: | <i>"If you are selling a product or service nowadays, everyone wants to follow you on Instagram or Facebook to see your work and a lot of them make a choice based on how your feed looks. Especially the younger generation".</i> |
| Participant C: | <i>"In my personal opinion the future is going to be digital. Therefore, the only possible alternative lies in which social media platform you choose to make use of".</i> |
| Participant D: | <i>"I do not think they have a chance of surviving, as more and more people of all ages are hopping into social media. Word of mouth or paper adverts, etc are slowly fading away. Nowadays with a click of a button you can send out 1 message or 1 advert to thousands of people around the world. Social media has no limits".</i> |
| Participant E: | <i>"They will simply not survive since online businesses have a competitive advantage with a better reach on more consumers, which is key to a businesses' survival".</i> |

(Source: Researcher's own construct based on interview transcripts).

The factor which mostly emerged throughout the interviews is the idea that small business owners are not knowledgeable enough when it comes to using social media to its full potential. Since social media is readily available to just anyone, small business owners choose to strategically use these platforms as marketing tools. However, if they are not able to fully comprehend the efficient marketing functions social media provides, having such a powerful tool could still be powerless in their hands.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, a brief overview of all previous chapters will be presented. This is followed by a discussion of the empirical results, with a summary of the contribution to the study. Recommendations for future research will be highlighted, along with the limitations experienced by the researcher of this study.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the usage of social media as a marketing tool by small business owners in the Nelson Mandela Bay region. When exploring the usage of social media as a marketing tool, the researcher interviewed five participants. The data collected was analysed by means of a content analysis. The findings of this study will provide other small business owners with encouraging reasons as to why social media is becoming a largely important marketing tool.

As the introductory chapter, Chapter one presented the problem statement followed by the research objectives. The chosen research design and methodology were put forth and discussed. Lastly, the scope and significance of the study was highlighted, and key definitions were outlined. As stated in Chapter one, the primary objective of this study was to explore the use of social media by small businesses as a marketing tool. To address this objective, the following secondary objectives were formulated:

SO¹: To outline the impact of small businesses by using social media as a marketing tool.

SO²: To identify and discuss the successes of small businesses by using social media as a marketing tool.

Furthermore, to achieve the above-mentioned objectives of the study, the following methodological objectives were formulated:

MO¹: To conduct a literature review on social media being used as a marketing tool by small businesses.

MO²: To select an appropriate research methodology and research methods for the study.

MO³: To collect and analyse primary and secondary data.

MO⁴: To provide pertinent conclusions and recommendations to researchers based on the findings to assist in identifying areas/foci to be researched.

Chapter two commenced with an overview of social media being used and perceived as a marketing tool. The researcher defined social media, highlights previous research done on social media usage as a marketing tool, and discussed factors which influences the use of social media as a marketing tool. The following themes were covered: Organisational factor; End-user factor; Business environment factor; Social Media factor; Customs and culture factor; Social class factors. Thereafter, the Importance of social media as a marketing tool is presented through topics such as: Strategic opportunities of social media marketing for organisations; Social media and its advertising potential; Impact of e-word-of-mouth on social media marketing; Social media marketing and Customer Relationship Management (CRM); Omni-social presence. Based on the literature overview presented in Chapter two, both secondary objectives and the first methodological objective was achieved.

Chapter three is where the researcher formulated and discussed the research design and methodology of the study. Given the aim of this study, the methods and suitability of both qualitative research and a positivistic research paradigm were analysed and discussed. This chapter also elaborate on the secondary and primary data collection methods. Secondary research was done through conducting a comprehensive literature review using information from credible sources inclusive of Google Scholar amongst others. Thereafter, a description of primary collection methods was presented.

Primary data was sampled and collected through five semi-structured interviews. The population sample and sampling techniques were discussed. The population of this study is made up of small business owners in the Nelson Mandela Bay region. The sample consisted of five small business owners between the ages of 20 to 39 years. This study made use of a non-probability sampling technique known as convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a data collecting process where the target population is easily and readily accessible to the researcher, allowing researchers to gain feedback in a manner which is cost effective (Rahi, 2017:3). The method of data analysis was also described in Chapter three. For the purpose of this study, inductive and deductive coding was used. Based on the data presented in this chapter, methodological objectives two and three were achieved.

Chapter four presents the findings of the content analysis done on the interview transcripts. This chapter commenced with a summary of the demographic information collected from the participants who partook in the study. The interpreted data was reported in this chapter. With this being done, the fourth methodological objective was achieved.

TABLE 5.1: STUDY OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED IN RELATIVE CHAPTERS

| Objective | Chapter(s) |
|---|-------------------|
| Primary objective | Achieved |
| The primary objective of this study is to explore the use of social media by small businesses as a marketing tool. | Chapters 1-4 |
| Secondary objectives: | Achieved |
| SO¹: To outline the impact of small businesses by using social media as a marketing tool. | Chapter 2 |
| SO²: To identify and discuss the successes of small businesses by using social media as a marketing tool. | Chapter 2 |
| Methodological objectives | Achieved |
| MO¹: To conduct a literature review on social media being used as a marketing tool by small businesses | Chapter 2 |
| MO²: To select an appropriate research methodology and research methods for the study | Chapter 3 |
| MO³: To collect and analyse primary and secondary data | Chapter 3 |
| MO⁴: To provide pertinent conclusions and recommendations to researchers based on the findings to assist in identifying areas/foci to be researched | Chapter 4 |

(Source: Researcher's own construct).

5.3 MAIN LITERATURE AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING FOR ORGANISATIONS

According to Vinerean (2017:31), social media grants both consumers and small business owners the opportunity to effectively communicate the brand offering and experiences. Furthermore, owners can also gain deeper insight into the market and grow their sales by using social media as a marketing tool. Empirical findings of this study support these claims since participants expressed that social media not only allows them to build their brand, but it also allows for the ease of product, sales, and customer engagement. Some

participants highlighted that social media is sometimes misused by individuals, however the communication it provides between customers and businesses is irreplaceable.

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations are made:

- For social media opportunities, it is suggested that businesses regularly and thoroughly scan the market segment they find themselves in so they can capitalise on any advantage they may potentially come across, such as new untouched consumer segments which they could dominate in.

5.3.2 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND ITS ADVERTISING POTENTIAL

There is a strong link between social media marketing and its advertising feature which gives small businesses the boosts they need in running promotions to draw customers and engage with a large target market (Alalwan *et al.*, 2017:1180). A social media platform such as Facebook which is frequently used for advertising purposes, shows that of its total 1.8 billion users, 66% are active daily. This provides a huge array of marketing opportunities to organisations where they can target this large audience based on their various interests (Facebook, 2017).

The empirical findings suggest that small business owners agree on the fact that social media builds their customer engagement daily and being consistent in advertising has a visible effect on the growth of customer range, as well as the profit and sales made by the business. Findings further suggested that businesses owners found that the direct communication social media allows grants them the opportunity to directly engage and promote their products instantaneously. However, participants have indicated that they still do not use social media to its full potential as they are not educated on how to use certain features or do not have the funds to pay for additional features.

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations are made:

- For the advertising potential of social media to be fully experienced, it is suggested that small business owners take time to grasp the features of the platform they are

using, so that they can fully control their marketing, and have direct customer engagement.

- It is also suggested that small businesses run frequent and attractive promotions so that customers look forward to campaigns which will promote product purchasing.

5.3.3 IMPACT OF E-WORD-OF-MOUTH ON SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

When referring to traditional communication methods, electronic word of mouth is considered largely effective as it influences the perceptions and buying decisions of all consumers. Using social media to market a brand intensifies the impact of word of mouth (Vinerean, 2017:31-32).

The empirical findings of this study highlighted the intensified impact of e-Word-Of-Mouth (eWOM), since owners suggest that the more people share information about their brand experience, the more opportunities are created. Since people see how others have enjoyed their experience without having to find out themselves, it builds an invisible sense of trust and reassurance. Negative reviews and brand experiences have the opposite effect of course since the impact of word-of-mouth is determined by the consumers' experience themselves.

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations are made:

- For eWOM, it is suggested that all online operating organisations have a feedback or review section on their website which allows customers to share their experience or give their testimony.
- It is also suggested that organisations seriously consider the reviews made by customers and use this feedback to improve their current product or service offering.

5.3.4 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM)

When it comes to the establishment of long-term beneficial customer relations, social media is an effective tool to make use of. It allows small businesses to advertise, share, and communicate with their target market on personal levels, building a sense of understanding and loyalty (Duffett, 2015). Consumers have become imperative to the process of product and service creation to businesses who wish to experience long-term success (Wang & Kim, 2017).

Empirical findings support the literature regarding the longevity social media creates in customer relationship management. This study found that owners experienced more loyal customers if their advertising is effective and consistent enough. These small businesses are granted the opportunity to break into large markets but need the appropriate advertising strategies to do so. Participants expressed that they are not knowledgeable enough to maximise social media as a marketing tool to the extent where they can successfully compete with larger firms in terms of marketing.

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations are made:

- Since customers are now much more involved in the creation of products or services, it is recommended that organisations have an official channel of communication between customers and marketing departments, since this will guarantee a more accepted or successful product or service launch.
- For market segment expansion, it is no use organisations have the intention of growing their target market but cannot effectively reach that market. Business owners need to have efficient knowledge on how to devise an appropriate marketing strategy when using social media.

5.3.5 OMNI-SOCIAL PRESENCE

Social media allows small business to break into global spaces and have access to the same number of consumers as any other brand. Using social media as a marketing tool is also deemed as cost-effective, allowing small businesses to utilise their funds in an efficient and productive manner (Odoom *et al.* 2017:385-386). Small businesses can share content instantaneously and reach massive target markets if they appropriately merge their business strategies with social media marketing (Social Factors Principles of Marketing, n.d.).

The empirical findings of this study suggest that having an online presence allows small business owners to control the narrative of their brands. It is cost-effective; however, these business owners are looking into splurging a bit more on social media features in attempts to have a deeper and further reach on consumers. Participants also suggest large concern for those small businesses who have no intentions of moving over to having an omni-social presence. They suggest that since everything in modern society is moving to a technology landscape, the traditional methods of advertising will no longer be feasible methods of business continuation.

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations are made:

- It is suggested that although omni-social presence is encouraged for small businesses, owners need to analyse whether they have sufficient funds to make use of the features which may unlock greater marketing potential before selecting a platform or avenue of social media marketing.
- It is also suggested that any small business which has no intention of utilising social media as a marketing tool, starts gradually transitioning into an online space over time, before it is too late, and competition becomes too rife for future survival.

5.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study attempts to contribute to the promotion of small businesses using social media as a marketing tool. An overview of the important factors, benefits, and methods of social media usage is discussed to give small business owners a deeper insight into the marketing abilities of social media. Social media has exponentially grown in its use by both individuals and organisations. However, it has been found that not only do all small businesses not have the intention of using social media as a marketing tool, but also that social media is not being utilised to its full potential. Additionally, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in the topic of social media and marketing. The significance in this study therefore lies in its attempt to provide small business owners with sufficient and salient reasoning to explore social media marketing as a route of current and future success.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As a result of the time restraints, only a limited amount of information could be collected in both the literature review and empirical findings of this study. The time constraints also limited the number of participants which could be interviewed. For future studies it is recommended that an increased amount of time is allocated so that researchers can gather more information and gain a broader understanding by consulting more individuals regarding their uses of social media in a marketing sense.

This study was conducted on participants residing in the Nelson Mandela Bay. As a result, the information found in the study is limited to this geographic area. The convenience sampling method is a limitation as the results of this study cannot be generalised. For future studies it is recommended that researchers explore and study different geographic areas. This would allow researchers to gain a broader perspective of the study itself by not having to limit their findings to individuals in a region who have potentially been conditioned into having similar beliefs or opinions.

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, a smaller sample size was selected. As a result, it is limited to much smaller findings. For future studies, it is recommended that researchers extend the study to include quantitative analysis, which would allow for a broader scope of findings and for statistical representation on the usage of social media among small businesses.

During the entirety of this study, Covid-19 caused many complications. Interaction between researcher and participants were limited, time was constrained due to the different levels of lockdown provinces were experiencing, and researchers could not travel and extend the study to be inclusive of more regions. For future studies, it is recommended that researchers conduct their investigations and explorations in a time where the vaccination has reached majority of the population and freedom is allowed, or a time where the pandemic is a factor of the past.

5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite all the above-mentioned limitations, this study has been instrumental in providing a well-rounded overview on the unmasked marketing benefits which social media could potentially provide to small businesses if used to its full potential. The findings can still prove to be beneficial as they contribute to the encouraging reasons as to why it is imperative for small businesses to transition to social media for future survival and success.

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ANNEXURE A: LEARNING AGREEMENT

LEARNING AGREEMENT

EBML410 LEARNING AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT(S) AND STUDY LEADER(S)

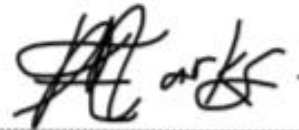
| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Specific responsibilities of the study leader and co-study leader for research supervision.</p> | <p>RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDY LEADER(S)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To advise the student(s) on the proposed research • To critically scrutinise work and suggest improvements • To suggest and advise student(s) on research in general |
| <p>Research support required for the successful completion of the study.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student(s) would need some research methodology support • Student(s) would need statistical support (see lecture on Statistica presented) • Student(s) would need language editing support • (list of language editors could be supplied if available from service providers) |
| <p>Research training needs on the part of the student(s) and process to address them.</p> | <p>Student(s) to do EBMR420 Business Research modules will prepare the student(s) to conduct the research and write the treatise</p> |
| <p>Frequency and nature of consultation sessions.</p> | <p>Student(s) will keep regular contact with study leader(s) via e-mail on progress, etc. Reply to emails is crucial.</p> <p>Student(s) will meet study leader(s) in person at least 1 x per month (and as deems necessary based on progress).</p> |
| <p>Research schedule/plan to be adhered to by the student(s).</p> | <p>As discussed in meeting, and as communicated per email</p> |
| <p>Reviews of the students' work (for example, the format in which feedback will be given, the time taken to provide feedback).</p> | <p>Feedback to be received within 14 days. Comments hand-written on document(s) or electronic review comments.</p> |
| <p>Availability of study leader during period of research and/or ordinary leave.</p> | <p>The study leader(s) will only be available on e-mail during normal leave – student is informed of the dates that the study leader will take leave. Study leader(s) will not work on the treatise during the Christmas period in December 2020 and student(s) should NOT expect assistance during this time. If due dates are not adhered to in 2020, the student(s) should register for EBML410 in 2021 again.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| Remedial action if schedule is not adhered to | <p>Student(s) need to provide acceptable reasons for not adhering to a schedule and negotiate a new time frame with the study leader(s). The student(s) need to know that the study leader(s) may not be able to fit in a new time schedule on short notice when the student(s) has failed to stick to the schedule. Study leader(s) will determine what action is needed to continue with studies or will recommend the discontinuation of the study.</p> |
| Remedial action if feedback agreement is not adhered to | <p>Student(s) need to inform the study leader(s) that he/she is in disagreement/not satisfied about the feedback within 2 weeks after receiving such feedback. A discussion on the disagreements must take place. If student(s) do not implement recommendations, study leader(s) will request a full explanation of the reasons for not doing so.</p> |

This Learning Agreement is signed on 6 May 2021
(date) between the Postgraduate student(s) and Study leader(s).



.....
Signed by the study leader



.....
Signed by student

| | | YES | NO |
|-------|---|-----|----|
| 1. | Is there any risk of harm, embarrassment of offence, however slight or temporary, to the participant, third parties or to the communities at large? | | X |
| 2. | Is the study based on a research population defined as 'vulnerable' in terms of age, physical characteristics and/or disease status? | | X |
| 2.1 | Are subjects/participants/respondents of your study: | | |
| 2.1.1 | Children under the age of 18? | | X |
| 2.1.2 | NMMU staff? | | X |
| 2.1.3 | NMMU students? | | X |
| 2.1.4 | The elderly/persons over the age of 60? | | X |
| 2.1.5 | A sample from an institution (e.g. hospital/school)? | | X |
| 2.1.6 | Handicapped (e.g. mentally or physically)? | | |
| 3. | Does the data that will be collected require consent of an institutional authority for this study? (An institutional authority refers to an organisation that is established by government to protect vulnerable people) | | X |
| 3.1 | Are you intending to access participant data from an existing, stored repository (e.g. school, institutional or university records)? | | X |
| 4. | Will the participant's privacy, anonymity or confidentiality be compromised? | | X |
| 4.1 | Are you administering a questionnaire/survey that: | | |
| 4.1.1 | Collects sensitive/identifiable data from participants? | | X |
| 4.1.2 | Does not guarantee the anonymity of the participant? | | X |
| 4.1.3 | Does not guarantee the confidentiality of the participant and the data? | | X |
| 4.1.4 | Will offer an incentive to respondents to participate, i.e. a lucky draw or any other prize? | | X |
| 4.1.5 | Will create doubt whether sample control measures are in place? | | X |
| 4.1.5 | Will be distributed electronically via email (and requesting an email response)? | | |
| | <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your questionnaire DOES NOT request respondents' identification, is distributed electronically and you request respondents to return it <i>manually</i> (print out and deliver/mail); AND respondent anonymity can be guaranteed, your answer will be NO. • If your questionnaire DOES NOT request respondents' identification, is <i>distributed via an email link and works through a web response system (e.g. the university survey system)</i>; AND respondent anonymity can be guaranteed, your answer will be NO. | | |
| 5. | Do you wish to publish an article from this study and submit to an accredited Journal? | | X |

ANNEXURE 2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE TEMPLATE

Please note that if ANY of the questions above have been answered in the affirmative (YES) the student will need to complete the full ethics clearance form (REC-H application) and submit it with the relevant documentation to the Faculty RECH (Ethics) representative.

and hereby certify that the student has given his/her research ethical consideration and full ethics approval is not required.



STUDY LEADER(S)

04 May 2021

DATE



HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

17 May 2021

DATE



STUDENT

06 May 2021

DATE

STUDENT

DATE

ANNEXURE C: TURNITIN REPORT

Marks TA Final Treatise

ORIGINALITY REPORT

| | | | |
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| 12% SIMILARITY INDEX | 9% INTERNET SOURCES | 5% PUBLICATIONS | 5% STUDENT PAPERS |
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