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THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO DRIVE THE GROWTH OF SOUTH AFRICAN BRANDS

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Digital Business

Johannesburg, 2023

ABSTRACT

The proliferation of social media usage has coincided with the expansion of social media marketing efforts. However, the mere escalation in social media activity does not uniformly translate into user interaction or engagement with advertisements disseminated through these platforms. Consequently, it becomes imperative to scrutinize the determinants of engagement and discern how such engagement can impact the development of indigenous South African brands. Existing scholarly literature offers limited insights into the factors underpinning social media brand engagement and the resultant effects on the advancement of local brands within the South African market.

This research aims to augment the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model with the aim of delineating the catalysts propelling engagement with social media brands and investigating the ramifications of such engagement on the performance metrics of domestic brands. Employing a quantitative methodology, the study leveraged an online survey to solicit responses from 272 South African social media users.

The findings underscore that the principal determinants of social media brand engagement encompass entertainment value, brand resonance, informativeness, and social influence. Furthermore, the analysis reveals those interactions with brand advertisements on social media platforms bolster purchase intent, thereby fostering an amelioration in brand performance metrics. This emphasizes the pivotal role played by social media platforms in fostering the growth of local brands in South Africa. Consequently, social media engagement emerges as a pivotal determinant shaping the trajectory of growth and performance for local brands, underscoring the imperative of deploying strategic social media marketing initiatives tailored to the specificities of the South African market landscape.

KEYWORDS

Social media marketing, South Africa, local brands, social media engagement, consumer-based brand equity, moments of truth, brand performance, purchase intention

DECLARATION

I, ___Nishanta Reddy_____, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Digital Business at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this university or any other university.



Name: _____Nishanta Reddy ____ Signature: _____

Signed at..... _____ **Blue Hills** ____ .....

On the ..... **30th** ..... day of ..... **April** ..... 20**24** .....

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my parents who have taught me the joy of life, the importance of family, the lessons of hard work and the love of travel. To my dad, my guardian angel, who guides me through life, following my moral compass and whom has instilled in me the importance of education. To my mum, who I am blessed to still have on earth and who keeps me spiritually connected and ensuring my relationship with the higher powers is always prioritised. I appreciate and thank you both.

"My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humour, and some style."

Dr Maya Angelou

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To the MMDB 2023 WhatsApp group, thank you for being the motivators, the cheerleaders, tech support, the information hub and most importantly delivering the humour when the stress levels were high.

To my supervisor, Professor Adheesh Budree, your passion for academia, encouraging robust discussions and taking a different view of things has both challenged my way of thinking and motivated me to remain the course.

I am eternally grateful for my tribe and support system of family and friends. There is no scale that could measure the encouragement that I have received throughout my exams, tests, and assignments, even when I had to miss so many milestone events.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

e-WOM: Electronic word of mouth

CBBE: Consumer-based brand equity/ Customer-based brand equity

MOT: Moments of truth

OBC: Online brand communities

SMM: Social media marketing

SMBE: Social media brand engagement

SNS: Social networking site

UGC: User-generated content

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyse the factors that influence the growth of local brands in South Africa, by investigating consumer engagement on social media marketing platforms, through a quantitative approach in research.

1.2 Background of the study

In the dynamic landscape of the current technological revolution, adaptation should be embraced to thrive in the consumer environment. The consumer of the past, who would be easily persuaded to buy a product simply by reading about the product and watching an advertisement, now adopts a different approach when making purchasing decisions (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Safko & Brake, 2009). Word of mouth (WOM) marketing in the online context has proven to be more impactful than its formal counterpart when it comes to opinions and selection criteria of products (Brown et al., 2007; Moran et al., 2014a).

Marketing or transformation strategies and all their respective components need constant monitoring through a support system with an agile approach to achieve success and be effective. In a South African context, marketers face the different needs and wants of a diverse consumer landscape. It is key that the built strategy is customised accordingly in order to be successful and deliver and positive yield (De Meyer & Petzer, 2013). Amongst the vital components of the strategy is social media and the need to harness the power of this digital platform (De la Roche et al., 2022).

Social media not only serves as a catalyst for global and regional brand recognition, but also exert a profound influence within the South African market Dlamini and Johnston, 2018, Schutte and Wingfield, 2020 and Beneke et al., 2014, looked at social media from an organisational point of view, the importance

of a digital tool was highlighted, specifically in relation to how the selected platforms are not being used to the extent of how they can benefit organisations in their customer building and growth journey. The importance of the custodians within the marketing divisions to get closer to their customers and the intention around where these activities are positioned are other key takeouts of these articles. The two-way interaction through digital channels assists with relationships to develop customer knowledge, awareness, and perceptions. (Alalwan, 2018; Alalwan et al., 2017; Duffett, 2015).

The diversity in the range of content on social media, whether generated by users or through paid means, resonates through the digital interface and is shaping the essence of modern marketing (Duffett, 2015; Rambarun, 2018). According to the Global Web Index report, social media has evolved to become more than just connecting people and an estimated 60% of the sample size surveyed in South Africa use these platforms to research products before making a purchase versus the 43% globally (africanretail.com, 2022; GWI, 2020). The growth of digital marketing has driven a change in advertising expenditure and focus.

The Nielsen Global Annual Marketing Survey for the year 2022 furnished insights into advertising expenditure, with a particular emphasis on expenditure trends adapting to shifts in consumer behaviour. The study revealed that social media emerged as the most perceived effective advertising platform. Engaging 1943 respondents occupying managerial or higher positions within the global marketing domain, the survey encompassed four key regions. The distribution of respondents across these regions was as follows: Asia Pacific (26%), Europe, Middle East, and Africa (24%); North America (27%); and Latin America (23%). Notably, brand awareness, customer acquisition, and customer retention emerged as the top-rated categories across all regions surveyed (Nielsen, 2022).

Figure 1 presents images extracted from the survey, illustrating the overall percentages concerning paid digital channels and marketing metrics.

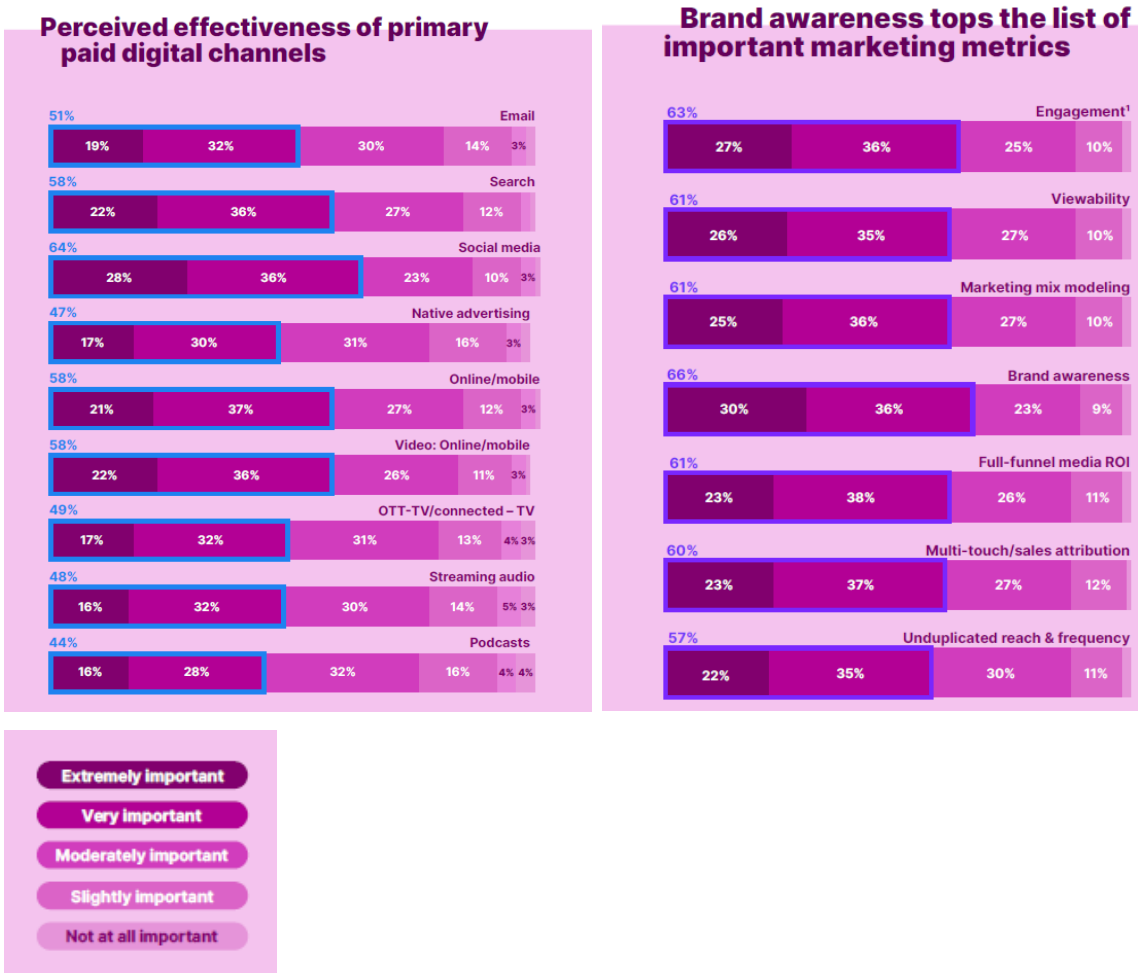


Figure 1: Effectiveness of Digital Channels and Marketing Metrics

(Nielsen, 2022, p. 11,12)

The gradient from dark to light signifies the level of significance attributed by the respondents' respective organizations. Notably, social media platforms emerged as the most perceived effective paid channel, garnering a 64% consensus. Search and online/mobile channels closely followed suit, each registering a 58% effectiveness rating.

In terms of marketing metrics, the spotlight shines on brand awareness, commanding a substantial 66% share of focus, closely trailed by engagement metrics at 63%.

Based on these findings, social media marketing, consumer engagement with brands, and these constructs will be an area of focus of the study.

Brands that have presence globally or in multiple markets are seen to have built a status of excellence and with that a commitment of standards to maintain. The Nielsen report highlights a correlation with consumer hesitation to try a new product or brand of 22% (Nielsen, 2022). This statistic echoes the findings of Holt et al., (2004), in that consumer purchasing decisions have become greatly influenced by these characteristics, which form a set of criteria against which the brand or product is measured (Holt et al., 2004). Global brands can be more competitive due to their outsourcing models of manufacturing and production, which allows them to benefit from economies of scale. (Holt et al., 2004; Iqbal et al., 2013; Kang et al., 2009).

Customisation in different markets, as well as investment in sales generating and marketing activities, provides these multi- and transnational organisations with both buying and trading power (Holt et al., 2004; Iqbal et al., 2013; Kang et al., 2009). As a result, the fight for market share by brands is very competitive and any additional commercial or business backing greatly assists. Considering the nature of power of global brands, a second aspect that will be analysed through the study is in relation to advertising, digital marketing strategies, and how these can be translated into opportunities in a local context.

The localised approach is due to South Africa being a melting pot of entrepreneurs with a number of local brands that have succeeded in beating the odds and creating sustainable businesses with quality products. These startups span industries, from retail, restaurants, suppliers of lifestyle sneakers and apparel to tech solutions, catering, and short-term insurance. Some of these success stories were started during the pandemic and are still thriving businesses (Blyth, 2022; Mathe, 2020; Thompson, 2021; Zwane et al., 2022).

1.3 Research problem

There is a gap in understanding the factors that influence the growth of local brands in South Africa, specifically in relation to the use of social media marketing platforms. By examining online consumer engagement, as well as the marketing approach taken across a selection of platforms, the study aims to determine the key factors that can influence the growth of local brands in the South African market. The topic contains both unique and universal facets, and the research methodology approach that will be selected will assist in gathering information regarding both.

In the current landscape, consumers invest time in thorough research before making a purchase. They actively seek reviews, engage in discussions with family and friends to gather their experiences, look for endorsements from influencers or celebrities, and may even visit physical stores to evaluate products before finalising their purchasing decisions. Digital marketing and the use of social media platforms to drive brand messaging has thus become an essential part in attracting and retaining the informed type of consumer (Constantinides, 2014; Kietzmann et al., 2011).

The research in existence provides a vast amount of information around the topic of social media across industries and the various platforms that make up its core. The importance of this study is the connection to online consumer behaviour and the impact on local brands, which would provide great insight and value to both academia and industry.

1.4 Research questions

The study seeks to understand the influence of social media marketing on consumer engagement with local South African brands through the following research questions.

1. What are the main drivers of social media brand engagement in South Africa?
2. How does social media brand engagement influence purchase intention and brand equity?
3. How does social media marketing influence the growth and performance of local brands in South Africa?

1.5 Rationale to the study

Information accessibility and the growth in Internet penetration have provided customers with the ability to access data on products and services at the click of a button (Moloi et al., 2022; Statista, 2022). According to Ducoffe (1996), the mass scale of organisations who have adopted an online approach to marketing has expedited the speed and convenience of information accessibility. The availability of this information allows research to be done before purchases are made, including comparing competing brands and offers, looking at reviews, and determining the after-sales value adds that could have positive or negative impacts (Bahtar & Muda, 2016; Forrester, 2014; Pfeffer et al., 2014). As a result, brands need to deliver offers that are captivating, competitive, and a differentiator. There are several aspects to achieving this, which begins with understanding the customer and driving personalisation through their customer journey (Ahuja et al., 2022; Kietzmann et al., 2011).

According to the Nielsen report, social media has become an integral part of daily lives. In a 2021 Statista report, it was estimated that over 3.6 billion people are using social media platforms globally and this is expected to grow (Statista,2021). The widespread adoption of social media has had a profound impact on many areas of society and has allowed for increased communication, marketing channels and social engagements (Alves et al., 2016; Maurya et al., 2022). The internet penetration rate at a worldwide spectrum in January 2022 was recorded at 62%, in contrast to the 66% rate for Southern Africa (Statista, 2022), demonstrating the closing of the digital divide, even with small shifts.

When looking at the scholarly research and related studies that have been explored in relation to social media and the influence on purchasing decisions, the majority have been limited to a single platform, specific to a generation or purely industry focused. The limitations and learnings outlined for future research in these studies further drive the need for an extension to the study (Duffett, 2015; Duffett & Wakeham, 2016; Rambarun, 2018; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Schutte & Wingfield, 2020).

In addition to this, it is also important to note that there is a limited contribution and research focused on local brands and the support that should be provided to this sector for the best use of social media platforms as the phenomena of local consumer culture increases (Kim, 2022; Mangolele & Zulu, 2022). For this reason, it becomes necessary to investigate how local brands can increase their presence through marketing initiatives with a skew toward digital and driving strategic communication on social media channels.

From a government point of view, there is support for entrepreneurs and local businesses through the Department of Trade Industry and Competition in terms of funding business guidance, as well as the African Continent Free Trade Area agreement for expansion into Africa with a control on export costs (*The African Continental Free Trade Area_2022*, n.d.). This form of investment and business acumen can assist local brands with their social media strategies.

The pricing and positioning of local sneaker brands as well as leather apparel are seen as luxury items. Some studies have found that there are several consumers who view luxury fashion as an avenue to seek pleasure (Appiah-Nimo et al., 2021; Choo et al., 2012). A number of iconic brands have been produced by South Africa and are the social connection among communities, however due to the gap in advertising communication being relevant to target marketing, these are missed opportunities for impact. (Hubbard, 2015).

The lessons derived from analysing the link between consumer online behaviour and social media platforms would assist industries in developing bespoke and

effective strategies to interact with their target market through these digital platforms. Information collected about local brands would provide an additional layer for suggestions in that sector. Buy local campaigns, if executed well, can have a positive impact on business and the economy. (Darku & Akpan, 2020).

As mentioned above, the study employs a quantitative approach to collect data on factors that impact consumer engagement with social media. The study focuses on the different aspects that drive engagement on different platforms, the information users interact with, and how these aspects relate to brand awareness and impact the purchase of a product.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

The delimitations for this research study are as follows:

i. The study focused on consumers in South Africa.
ii. The study was open to all residents of South Africa.
iii. The focus of the study was on social media marketing alone and no other marketing strategies.
iv. The focus of the study was limited to the most relevant platforms identified in the literature.
v. The target market for the study was all consumers of legal age.
vi. Access to social media was a requirement for the study.
vii. The collection of demographic data and other fields was included in the study to understand if there is a relationship between the variables of the research topic.
viii. The study was limited to local South African brands only.
ix. The research study was delivered in a quantitative format in English to avoid any challenges with translations and data collection delays.
x. The research study was conducted over a specified period of time.

1.7 Definition of terms

- Brand equity
    - Brand equity represents the value and strength of a brand and the association of having the name attached to the brand versus without. In the context of this research paper, it will be from the lens of a customer (Aaker, 1991; Larry, Simon & Elliott, 2015).

- Brand performance
    - Brand performance is described as the extent to which a product or service attempts to fulfil the functional needs of a customer. The concept also involves the evaluation of how effectively the brand delivers against the quality factor of features and characteristics in relation to satisfying customer needs (Keller, 2003).

- Engagement in social media
    - On-line brand communities, user generated, are alternate descriptions that have been developed for social media. The decision to engage in these platforms is influenced by behavioural, cognitive, and affective factors related to information availability (Dessart, 2017; Dessart et al., 2015; Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

- Moments of Truth
    - The concept encompasses significant experiences that occur during the interaction between brands (product or service) and potential customers. Since inception, the model has evolved to incorporate online research, the sharing of reviews, feedback and brand journey bringing in the digital components (Hyken, 2016; Lecinski, 2011; Loftis, 2017; Moran et al., 2014b).

- Social media marketing
    - This concept has been coined for the use of tools developed for a digital format. Social media marketing allows access to a larger audience through on-line channels for the promotion of websites, products, and services. This access may not be available through traditional marketing strategies (Alves et al., 2016; Du Plessis, 2017).

- Social commerce
    - Social commerce as defined by (Becdach et al., 2022a) is the activity of where social media platforms have evolved such that consumers are able to complete an end-to-end journey of product purchase from research to viewing, to online payment.

1.8 Assumptions

The assumptions have been outlined below, based on the nature of the research study carried out:

i. All respondents were assumed to have access to the Internet and mobile data.
ii. All respondents were assumed to be familiar with local brands in South Africa.
iii. All respondents were assumed to have a minimum of one of the selected social media accounts identified in the literature.
iv. It is assumed that the respondent is an active contributor/user of their social media account/s.
v. The age group range will provide a more diverse set of data.
vi. Information collection could be used across industries and sectors.
vii. The respondents would be honest in their responses and without bias.

viii. As the survey was in English, all respondents have English as the first or second language and will be able to complete the survey easily.

ix. The questions in the survey will be interpretable by all respondents.

1.9 Chapter Outline

The research report consists of six chapters in total. Each chapter covers different aspects of the report and is further elaborated on below.

- Chapter 1 covers the introduction of the report and presents the purpose, background, and motivation of the study. This section also gives the reader a summary of the aspects that are included and those that are excluded, as they provide context to the approach and methodology of the report.
  This section also includes the research problem and questions that will be focussed on in the subsequent chapters.

- Chapter 2 provides the literature review and theoretical framework in relation to the discipline of digital business as the topic of the research study. The chapter addressed the areas of social media marketing, digital platforms, the South African landscape, as well as previous research undertaken and the findings of these research studies. The key frameworks used to expand and support the study was discussed in this section.

- Chapter 3 provides details of the approach to the research methodology that was followed in the study. In the case of this study, it was the quantitative research method. The approach, design, methods for collection and analysis, as well as the reasons for the selected approach, was included. In addition to this, Chapter 3 also indicates how the data was collected, possible limitations, timelines, and alignment to ethical requirements.

- Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research study and a detailed description of the results through various graphical, tabular, and statistical representations related to the research objective and questions.

- Chapter 5 extensively analyses and interprets the results. It discusses the results in relation to the existing literature.

- Chapter 6 presents recommendations derived from the study's findings, responses to the research questions, and the contributions made to the existing body of knowledge. It serves as the final section of the report and summarises the results of the study. It offers valuable insights for further action and exploration based on the study's results.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The literature for the study provides a broad overview in social media marketing, the specific platforms of the South African landscape, and the consumer and local brand component of the research. The theoretical framework is then incorporated into the discussion to bring the importance of brand equity through the customer-based brand equity model (Aaker, 1995; Keller, 2001). The concept of the moments of truth builds on the relationship between consumers, brands, and their digital journey through social media engagement with the increase in post-use online reviews and feedback (Hyken, 2016; Lecinski, 2011).

2.2 Background discussion of Web 2.0 and social media

2.2.1 Web 2.0

The term Web 2.0 was first introduced by author, user experience and web designer expert Darcy DiNucci in 1999 in relation to content creation and sharing by the users (DiNucci, 1999). Based on this parameter, the platforms were focused on sites that established engagement and created dialogue. Web 2.0 was only popularised in 2004 by Tim O'Reilly and Dale Dougherty during a conference in which they were introducing the term to a broader audience and focused on the concept of the Web being a platform to develop on and one that supported network effects, which would in turn result in an increase in users (Ellison & Boyd, 2013; O'Reilly, 2006). This interconnectivity allowed for accessibility to information, drove collaboration, and built a sense of community which were enabled through technology by providing simple applications based on the Internet that were controlled by users (Ellison & Boyd, 2013; Safko & Brake, 2009, p. 7).

2.2.2 Social media

Although used interchangeably, social media provides a different aspect of the digital experience and journey. According to Constantinides (2014) and Safko and Brake (2009) social media is a means by which an online community has platforms that they use to share information, expertise, experiences, and ideas through conversation. The applications are web-based, which allow content to be transmitted through various digital mediums – images, videos, and audio files.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) stated that Web 2.0 represents the ideological and technological foundation, in essence the 'what' and user generated content (UGC) can be seen as the sum of all ways people make use of social media or how. This commentary further supports the link between these two constructs.

With the advancements in coding, features being developed are more interactive and innovative, resulting in an influx of systems and applications that are available for users to become more creative in their content; these tools have been termed as social software (Pereira et al., 2010).

The conventional engagement by consumers with the Internet was limited to research, watching content, and to purchase products. Subsequently, that has changed with access to a variety of social software options that have been developed to connect people, simplify everyday tasks, and modify or share content with ease. Although this may have provided autonomy to the online community, this has a huge impact on business sustainability if the narrative cannot be controlled or addressed (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Sinclair, 2005).

The '*honeycomb framework'* was developed in 2007 by Gene Smith, an online communications expert with a build-up from industry colleagues. The premise of this framework is to outline the critical elements that underpin the social media ecosystem and all the stakeholders, systems, and users within it, in the form of building blocks (Pereira et al., 2010).

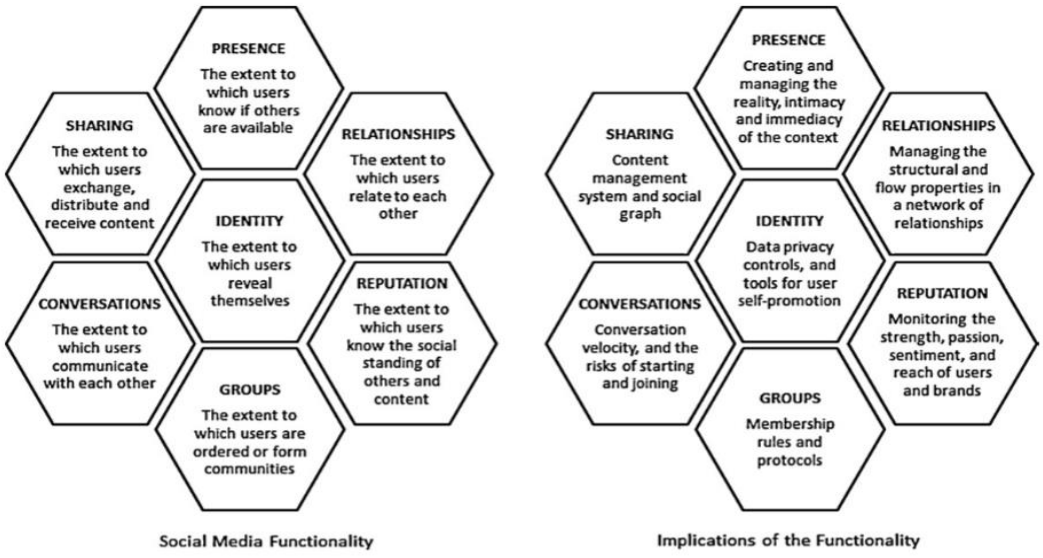


Figure 2: The honeycomb of social media | Functionality and Implications

(Kietzmann et al., 2011)

There are seven building blocks within the framework as outlined in the image on the left in Figure 2 below. Each block represents a different facet of the social media experience for users as collated by Smith and how this can impact organisations. The elements and forces that drive social media are constantly changing, and with that these blocks will evolve (Keegan et al., 2024; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Pereira et al., 2010).

Kietzmann et al. (2011) elaborates further on how these building blocks vary across the different platforms and with those decisions for consumer selection and preference. With new features, services, and options, there is not a hard and fast rule for the criteria used.

2.3 Social media users and marketing

2.3.1 Social media users

The Internet has become the core of creating networks globally to drive connectivity and the sharing of information. The data in Figure 3, which has been extracted from a recent Statista report, indicates that 94.2% of all internet users worldwide are active social media users.

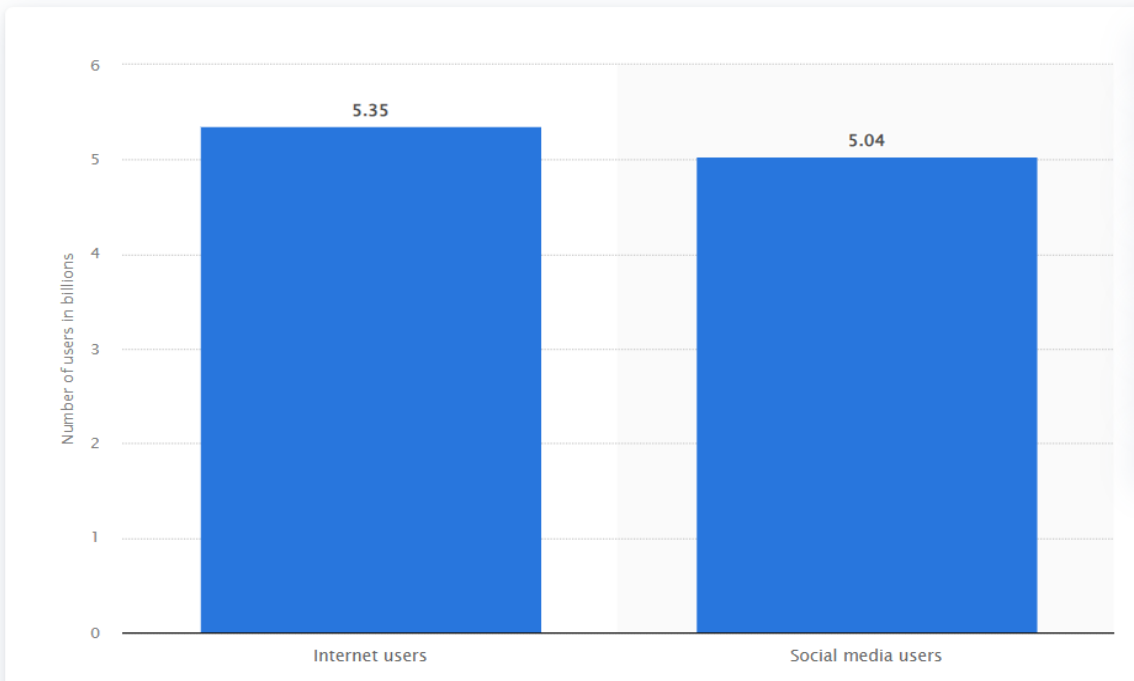


Figure 3: Number of internet and social media users worldwide as of January 2024 *(in billions)*

(Petrosyan, 2024)

Social media users have their choice of platforms to engage on, and each of the social network sites (SNS) provides different unique selling points. Facebook has been placed as a priority platform for organisations to build their strategy around due to the demographic of the adult audience. Similarly, LinkedIn is the leading SNS for business and individual networking to generate leads, create sales opportunities, and identify talent. Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and SnapChat

have all been built around the premise of engagement, user generated content creation, and sharing of information. Twitter (X) has provided the platform for opinion sharing, and the passing of information with access to public accounts (GlobalWebIndex, 2019, 2021; Khoros, 2024) . The value in advertising on social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, and others has become of great interest to organisations, managers, and academics in the consumer access that it provides. As a result, this concept has become an imperative conduit for global marketing communications and is commanding a larger share of advertising budgets (Duffett, 2015; Knoll, 2016; McKinsey and Company, n.d.; Saxena & Khanna, 2013).

2.3.2 Social media marketing

A different view of marketing has been created as it has adapted to the consumer being the cornerstone. The focus has shifted to a 4P model with a twist, that of people, personalities, perceptions, and participation (Jackson & Ahuja, 2016). The exponential growth in content creators who are pushing the agenda in terms of empowerment and driving digital connectedness has both encouraged and supported consumers who rely on peer reviews, searches, and online communities for their decision-making. As a result, a proactive approach to managing online communications and brand reputation crisis control has become an integral part of any successful marketing strategy.

Robert Ducoffe, a professor in the field of marketing, has focused much of his work on the value of advertising, to consumers and on the Web. The research carried out highlights the importance of both components, as well as ensuring that the social and marketing aspects related to each are both considered during communication in order to deliver successful campaigns. Targeting, segmentation, and the shifts in advertising mediums are also learnings from the research. (Ducoffe, 1995, 1996).

Social media marketing and advertising are powerful tools in their ability to create synergy across a brand's online strategy. Benefits can be attained, if applied

correctly, for example, a decrease in costs, the commercial viability of an online solution that will create engagement with users as well as brand credibility. The focussed approach with this form of advertising aides in providing a strategy in the selection, communication, and interaction with the target audience to ensure that the brand and service are kept top of mind and builds loyalty (Bond et al., n.d.; Chang et al., 2014; Maurya et al., 2022).

According to Balaş and Bîja (2014), data provided by Kissmetrics, indicated that 33% of consumers used SNS to obtain new information about a brand, product, or service they were interested in. A further 82% had an increase in brand value and confidence levels if the brand had an active presence online.

A guidebook on a framework of communication tools has been published that organisations and marketers have used to build their go-to-market strategy. This is the integrated marketing communications or IMC. The IMC initially had 7 communication platforms and with the advancement of the digital era, this has moved to 8. The elements range from advertising, events, sales promotions, direct selling, and public relations to online, social media, and mobile marketing. The aim of the IMC is to provide a coordinated approach to the promotional mix that will deliver consistent messaging that is customer focused whilst ensuring the organisational objectives are met (Keller, 2016; Kotler et al., 2016).

The selection of elements that are aligned with the target market and the SNS is important to ensure that advertising spend is allocated correctly and that the return on investment can be measured for the brand, product, or service. In Kudeshia and Kumar (2017), Bahtar and Muda (2016) and Smith et al. (2012), the studies focus on brand related user generated content and the impact it has on consumer purchase intention, as well as brand attitude through its differences in delivery across social media platforms.

From a local context, a report published in 2022 in collaboration between the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) of South Africa and Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) measured the investment in advertising in 2021. The data

showed that internet advertising contributed more than 32% of ad spend to date, which is the highest to date and with a rand value of R12.1billion (Bizcommunity.com, 2022). With the increased accessibility to social media through various platforms and the redirection of budget, the engagement with consumers and brands has grown exponentially.

2.4 The South African landscape

2.4.1 Social media in South Africa

Online communication and community management are a critical part of any brand's strategy. The South African consumer is connected and becomes more aware of the information available. The average consumer is dependent on his network connectivity to the Web, social networks, and any digital space to be able to access information for decision making.

Below is an overlay of data from Statista.com and Data Reportal from a Global and South African context, respectively. When looking at the various platforms, the usage, and related data, there is a correlation between SMM trends globally and in South Africa. The data collated have provided information on the platforms to select for research and guided the methodology that will be selected for the study.

According to the information collected in the SA report, the active social media base is 28.5 million people between the ages of 16 and 64, which is approximately 47% of the population (Data Reportal 2023 South Africa, 2023). The data set has a few variances as some platforms were not part of the selection options of the respondents, in one survey or the other. However, the popularity of the core platforms can be clearly seen. Data also show that on various social media platforms, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok are ranked as the most popular channels with the highest number of users globally.

Although Twitter is ranked 14th globally, from a South African context, it is higher than Pinterest, Snapchat, and Telegram (Dixon & statista.com, 2023).

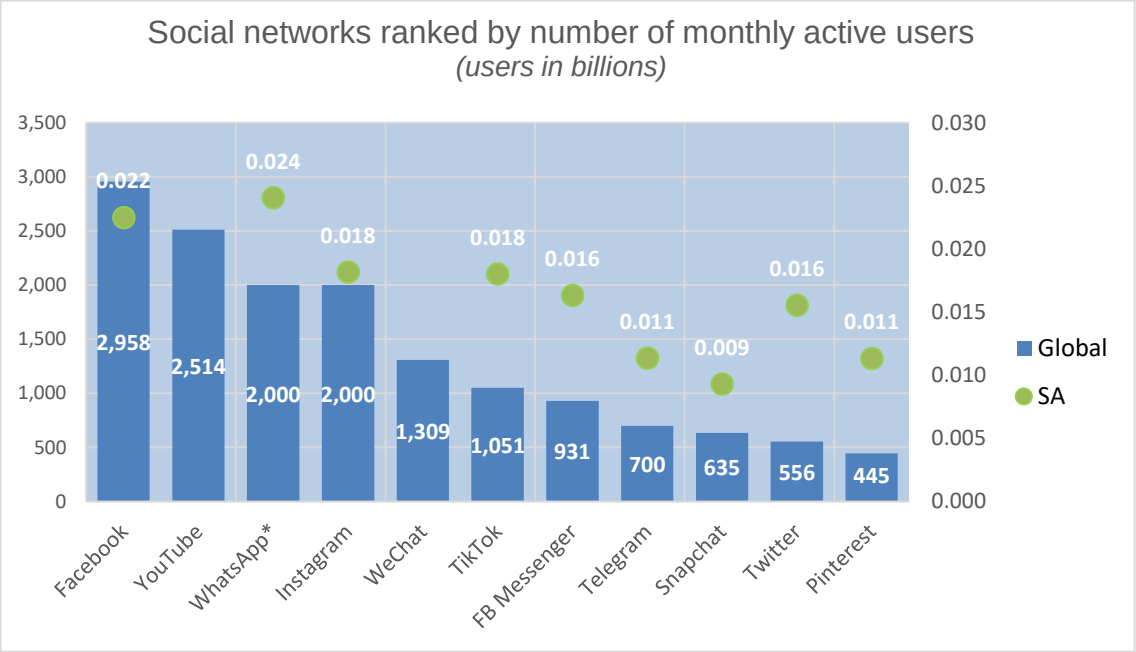


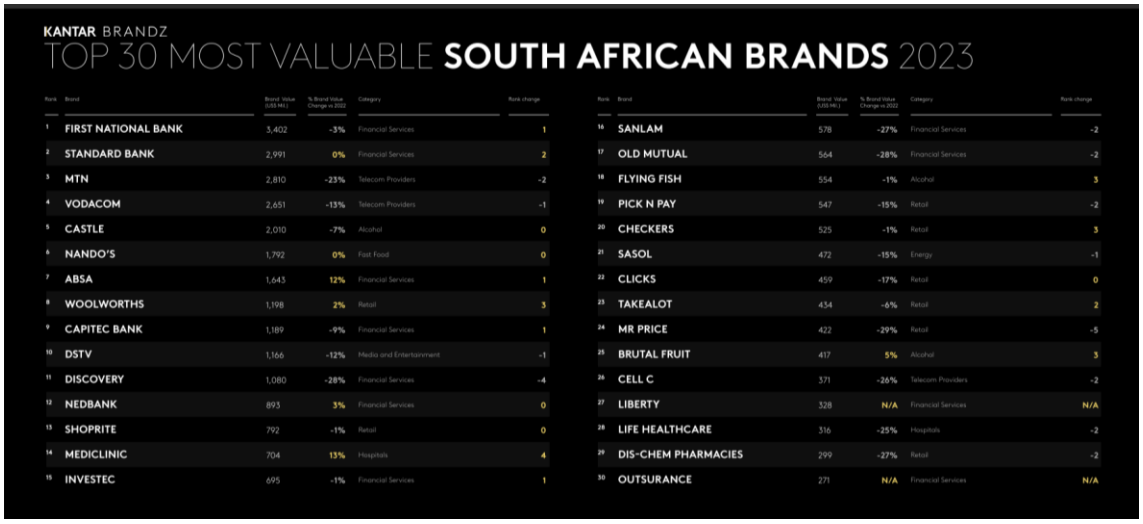
Figure 4: Social Network Users | Global vs South Africa – Q4 2022

(Data Reportal, 2022; Dixon & statista.com, 2023; Saifaddin & statista.com, 2023)

2.5 Local South African Brands

In a 2023 report published by the global data, insights, and consulting firm Kantar on the most valuable South African brands, different aspects related to brand value, advertising, and trends were collected and analysed. Kantar reported a change in the sourcing and promotion of local products in grocery stores and an increase in the use of own brand private label or dealer brands. Changes in advertising spend contribution across the mediums indicated a year-on-year increase by 20.1% for online media with 74% of the spend allocated (Schepter, 2023).

Figure 5 is an extract from the report that highlights the top 30 brands. The list is predominantly driven by financial institutions, retail, telecommunications, healthcare, and alcoholic brands, apart from the Nando's restaurant franchise, which has been recognised time and time again, not only for its offering but also for its tongue-and- cheek approach to marketing (Schepter, 2023).



KANTAR BRANDZ

TOP 30 MOST VALUABLE **SOUTH AFRICAN BRANDS** 2023

Rank	Brand	Brand Value (US$ Mil.)	% Brand Value Change vs 2022	Category	Rank change
1	FIRST NATIONAL BANK	3,402	-3%	Financial Services	1
2	STANDARD BANK	2,991	0%	Financial Services	2
3	MTN	2,810	-23%	Telecom Providers	-2
4	VODACOM	2,651	-13%	Telecom Providers	-1
5	CASTLE	2,010	-7%	Alcohol	0
6	NANDO'S	1,792	0%	Fast Food	0
7	ABSA	1,643	12%	Financial Services	1
8	WOOLWORTHS	1,198	2%	Retail	3
9	CAPITEC BANK	1,189	-9%	Financial Services	1
10	DSTV	1,166	-12%	Media and Entertainment	-1
11	DISCOVERY	1,080	-28%	Financial Services	-4
12	NEDBANK	893	3%	Financial Services	0
13	SHOPRITE	792	-1%	Retail	0
14	MEDICLINIC	704	13%	Hospitals	4
15	INVESTEC	695	-1%	Financial Services	1
16	SANLAM	578	-27%	Financial Services	-2
17	OLD MUTUAL	564	-28%	Financial Services	-2
18	FLYING FISH	554	-1%	Alcohol	3
19	PICK N PAY	547	-15%	Retail	-2
20	CHECKERS	525	-1%	Retail	3
21	SASOL	472	-15%	Energy	-1
22	CLICKS	459	-17%	Retail	0
23	TAKEALOT	434	-6%	Retail	2
24	MR PRICE	422	-29%	Retail	-5
25	BRUTAL FRUIT	417	5%	Alcohol	3
26	CELL C	371	-26%	Telecom Providers	-2
27	LIBERTY	328	N/A	Financial Services	N/A
28	LIFE HEALTHCARE	316	-25%	Hospitals	-2
29	DIS-CHEM PHARMACIES	299	-27%	Retail	-2
30	OUTSURANCE	271	N/A	Financial Services	N/A

Figure 5: Kantar Brandz | Top 30 Most Valuable South African Brands 2023

(Schepter, 2023)

In a separate study conducted by Brand Africa which provides the Top 100 brands across the continent and includes their origin of country, though the retailers, telecommunications, and beverages are present, it is interesting to see brands from the apparel category making an appearance. Bathu, Drip, Loxion Kulca, and MaXhosa, all present in the top 15 across various categories to measure trust in African brands (Ikalafeng, 2023).

The local sneaker category mentioned above is an example that has been revolutionised of which Bathu and Drip shoes are leading the charge. Both brands create sneakers that cater for all ages and genders and were started by South Africans. Bathu is significant as it offers a customisation lab at selected outlets for customers to have the opportunity to select the colours for their footwear(*About Us – Bathu*, n.d.). These brands require strong marketing and

product strategies to drive sales as they compete with the likes of Nike, Reebok, Adidas, and other established brands. There is an increase in demand for local brands that also supports the drive for local economic empowerment and job creation. However, global brands still cover the larger share of the market, create demand, and drive competitive activity in South Africa (Statista.com, 2023).

2.6 Analytical Framework

In selecting the study framework, it was important to align the theory with the basis of the research problem. Social media platforms play a crucial role in this study because they are the focus of data collection. However, it is important to note that the selection of the theoretical framework will guide the study's approach to the brand component. The resultant factors merged into the conceptual framework will close the loop from a digital point of view. The concept of 'moments of truth' which introduces the digital link will be explained later.

2.6.1 Theoretical Framework

Keller’s CBBE model presents organisations with the steps to achieve brand ‘resonance’. Brand resonance being the thoughts, emotions, and feelings that a consumer associates with their experience (Wei et al., 2023). The first step begins with building identity with the consumer and through various positive outcomes, establishing a relationship with the brand and ultimately becoming an advocate and supporter (Keller, 1993, 2001). The pyramid focuses on building a brand connection to create an ongoing relationship.

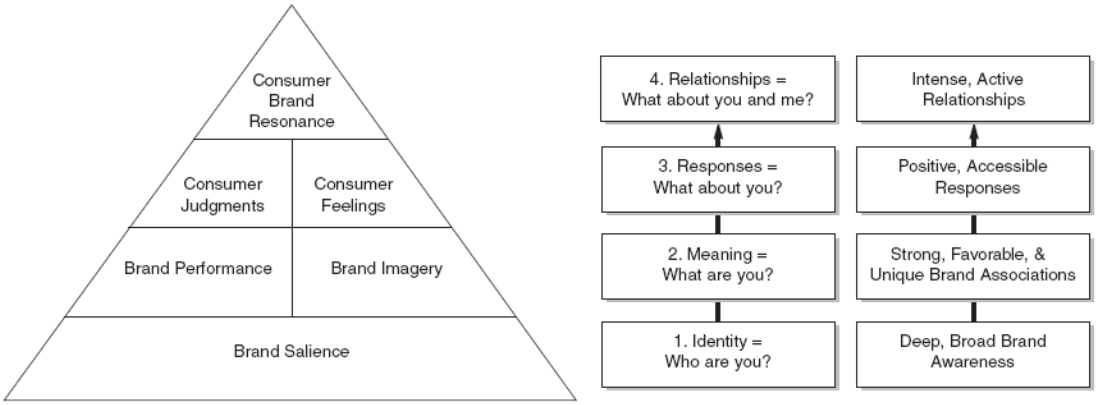


Figure 6: Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model

(Keller, 1993).

During the research process, there were a few aspects within and through the results across the previous studies that spoke to the basis for using this model. In Choo et al. (2012) and Appiah-Nimo et al. (2021) the theme speaks to luxury fashion and the value dimension associated with this as one of pleasure, with the second article focussing this more on a South African context.

Wang and Finn (2014) brought in the psychological component of the model that targets the consumer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural response to the marketing mix. In Keller and Osborn (2009), the research was a case study within the sneaker industry with the measure of the association between marketing communication with brand image and consumer mindsets that would result in positive brand feelings and ultimately build a strong brand. Based on the findings across both studies, it further endorses the usage of the model as the layer of the South African consumer and the link to the local brands is just as important from a cultural aspect as it is from a resonance and association lens.

2.6.2 Moments of Truth (MOT)

The Moment of Truth (MOT) was a concept developed by the president of Scandinavian Airlines in the 1980s. It was built on the assumption that if a customer's engagement with an organisation for the service rendered was positive, it would result in the success of the business. Loftis (2017) referenced an approach by acclaimed marketing strategist Seth Godin, nearly two decades later, that organisations should "date" their customers. In essence, it would entail incentivising the customer to engage further and gather insights, which would then allow the customer to be treated as friends and build relationships with them. This would drive a more personalized approach to communication.

In 2005, the initial MOT was evolved by the global fact-moving consumer goods manufacturer, P&G's former CEO and Chairman to become a series of moments that focused on driving consumer sales. The moments had two parts initially, and then a third was added around feedback as the voice of the customer movement grew legs. The concept has been represented visually below, with the first aspect being the introduction of the product/brand to the consumer, the second being the purchase of the product and the third around the opinion after using the product. The outcome of the third MOT would result in the consumer remaining loyal or finding a replacement. Other factors like price, disposable income, and availability are also considerations (Carpenter, 1985; Hyken, 2016).

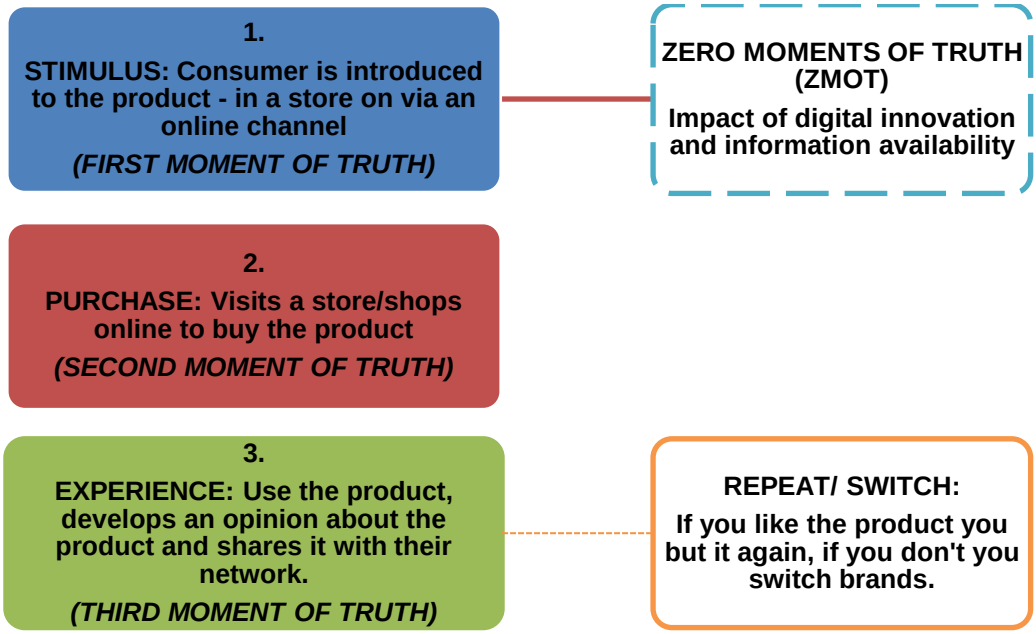


Figure 7: Traditional Moments of Truth Model | A.G Lafley

(Hyken, 2016; Lecinski, 2011)

The concept continued its evolution in 2011, when then Google's managing director, Jim Lecinski, introduced the “Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT)” (Lecinski, 2011). This was viewed as a change in the decision-making process for both consumers and buyers and prior to the first step of the traditional MOT concept discussed earlier and included in the diagram above. The team at Google had seen this as a behaviour adaptation, in that consumers were now researching all items online. Prior to this, it was limited to high-value items. Customer experience has become a talking point in all boardrooms, and the discussion about the net promoter score has moved higher on the agenda than previously, increasing the need for research to continue, and resulting in other MOT being identified. The complete cycle of understanding the initial event that triggered the research and closing the loop across the customer journey is expected to create positive outcomes or manage negative experiences is expected (Agarwal, 2022; Hoffmann & Weithaler, 2015; Moran et al., 2014a).

In the context of this research study, the image below builds on the moments of truth and the stages mentioned above that a consumer goes through during their interaction with social media and the various touch points experienced along the journey. The meeting of physical, emotional, and digital realms in decision making takes place (Moran et al., 2014b; Think Tech, 2011).

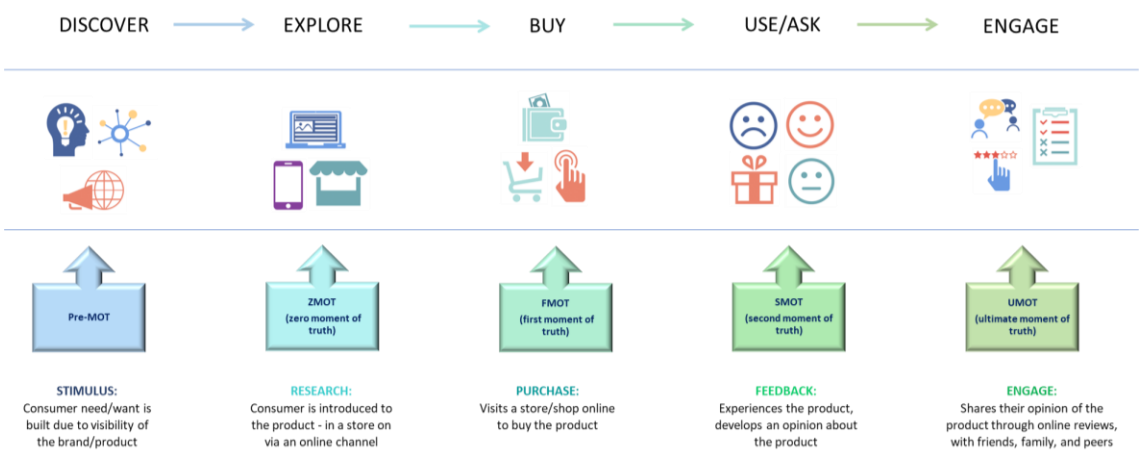


Figure 8: Consumer journey and Moments of Truth

2.6.3 Conceptual Framework

In developing the conceptual framework, a two-phase approach was taken. The process required determining which factors connected the customer-based brand equity CBBE) model (Keller, 1993) and the moments of truth (Hyken, 2016). As a key aspect of the research study is on the use of social media as a driver for local brand growth, constructs identified in the literature needed to be considered in the framework build. The second phase was merging the social media engagement antecedents with those of the CBBE and MOT models in the development of the conceptual framework. The stages of the customer lifecycle have been incorporated to provide additional context around the activity taking place.

The Moments of Truth have four components that have been developed from the literary work of (Hoffmann & Weithaler, 2015; Hyken, 2016; Loftis, 2017; Moran et al., 2014a). ZMOT, FMOT and SMOT are all the same acronyms as explained earlier with different applications in the conceptual framework and follow a sequential order. The additional stage is that of the Ultimate Moments of Truth, which is the process of shared experiences through various mediums and platforms and creating multiple ZMOT's (Staff Writer, 2022). The various stages within the moments of the truth, the constructs from the model and the related literature will be elaborated on futher in outlining the hypotheses for the research study.

Table 1: Summary of framework constructs and links

Hypothesis Reference:	Moment of Truth expanded wording:	Constructs
H1	DISCOVER Pre- Moments of Truth	Entertainment <-> Social Media Engagement
H2	EXPLORE ZMOT - Zero Moment of Truth	Brand Salience <-> Social Media Engagement
H3		Informativeness <-> Social Media Engagement
H4	BUY FMOT - First Moment of Truth	Brand Resonance <-> Social Media Engagement
H8		Purchase Intention <-> Social Media Engagement
H5	USE/ASK SMOT – Second Moment of Truth	Interactivity <-> Social Media Engagement
H6	ENGAGE UMOT – Ultimate Moment of Truth	Credibility <-> Social Media Engagement
H7		Social Influence <-> Social Media Engagement
H9		Brand equity/brand performance <-> Social Media Engagement
H10		Brand equity/brand performance <-> Purchase Intention

a. Entertainment, brand imagery, and social media engagement

Within the MOT consumer lifecycle, the discovery stage in which a brand creates an impression for a consumer to fulfil a psychological need or want through a stimulus (Lecinski, 2011; Moran et al., 2014b). The stimulus of entertainment is the main purpose customers use social media platforms (Bazi et al., 2023). According to Chen et al. (2021), entertainment involves emotional factors such as fun, enjoyment, and pleasure, which directly influence the likelihood that viewers will form a stronger connection to an advertisement. This suggests that entertainment can play a significant role in customer engagement. Hussain et al. (2022) defines advertisement-related entertainment as the ability of an advertisement to satisfy viewers' desires for aesthetic enjoyment, escapism, distraction, or emotional release, reiterating the association with brand imagery.

Chiang et al. (2018), Ducoffe (1996), Liu et al. (2021) observed that when an advertising message is well received, it not only positively affects users' attitudes towards the advertisement, but also enhances their attitude towards the brand. Several studies have shown that when users find advertisements entertaining, they are more likely to engage with the content and develop positive attitudes towards the brand (Ao et al., 2023; Bilal et al., 2021a; Chiang et al., 2018; Hanaysha, 2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Ji et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2021). The authors concluded that the entertainment value of social media influencers has the strongest correlation with customer engagement. According to Bilal et al. (2021a), engaging social media marketing content can offer customers pleasant and captivating information that enhances their connection to a brand. For example, Bilal et al. (2021a) mentions that brand pages featuring interactive and engaging content like games, content and games, stories, contests, videos, and rewards that create excitement and fulfil consumers' need for aesthetic satisfaction and emotional engagement, deepen the brand affinity.

Therefore, based on the review of the literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The entertainment value of social media brand advertisements positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social networks.

b.Brand prominence and social media engagement

Brand saliency refers to how prominent or noticeable the brand is in terms of awareness and being top of mind for the consumer (Keller, 2003). The explore stage within the Moments of Truth is focused on the Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT) whereby the consumer has been introduced to the product online or in a store and begins conducting online research and potential brand engagement (Lecinski, 2011; Moran et al., 2014b).

From a brand saliency aspect, this is when brands have the opportunity to stand out amongst their competitors and create the awareness that is visible during the exploration stage for consumers by leveraging the visibility and engagement that social media platforms provide. If executed brilliantly, it would provide a competitive advantage, the ZMOT will be positive (Hyken, 2016; Keller, 1993, 2001; Lecinski, 2011; Moran et al., 2014a).

In studies by Keller (1993, 2003) and Widyastuti (2023), brand salience is indicated as the starting point in building brand equity and together with the other elements can drive the brand value forward. Saliency is maintained by building strong brand associations, leveraging user-generated content, and increased brand awareness to increase recognition (Hanaysha, 2021; Hanaysha et al., 2021; Hyken, 2016; Moran et al., 2014b; Smith et al., 2012,Gao & Feng, 2016; Liu et al., 2021).

Therefore, based on the review of the literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Brand visibility and salience positively influences the engagement of the customer with the brand on social networks.

c. Informativeness and Social Media Engagement

In the context of social media, informativeness refers to the extent to which brand content provides positive and useful information to the audience that enable them to make choices (Ducoffe, 1996; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Taylor et al., 2011).

When social media content is informative, it attracts more engagement from users who value educational, relevant, and useful information. This information could include product details and usage tips, as well as industry insights and educational content. Informativeness aims to expand the audience's knowledge and help them make informed decisions about the product and brand. At the same time, effective informativeness can foster improved engagement with the advert itself, that is, through a higher percentage of likes, comments, and shares, particularly if the information addresses users' interests or concerns. Informative and high-quality content can also lead to increased time spent on the brand's social media page and can further position the brand as a valuable resource and credible source of information, enhancing loyalty amongst followers (Chahal et al., 2020; Chiang et al., 2018; Gao & Feng, 2016; Hanaysha, 2021; Rahim & Haida, 2015).

In Lou and Yuan (2019), influencer generated content that was delivered through social media platforms was measured as one of the constructs. The content shared is regarded informative, and the results provided a positive impact on brand awareness and trust (Chahal et al., 2020; Rahim & Haida, 2015). The studies added to the importance of information and its impact on consumers and their purchase intention through social media brand engagement.

Therefore, based on the review of the literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Informativeness positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social networks.

d.Brand Resonance and Social Media Engagement

Brand resonance refers to the degree to which a brand meaningfully connects with its customers, creating a strong emotional bond, loyalty, and a sense of community. This is the ultimate goal of brand development, where customers are not only aware of the brand, but are also actively engaged, advocate for it and show a high level of attachment and loyalty (Chakraborty & Bhowmick, 2013; Keller, 2001, 2003; Widyastuti, 2023).

When customers feel a deep connection with a brand, they are more likely to engage with its content, participate in conversations, share their experiences, and promote the brand within their networks, amplifying the engagement and the visibility of the brand. In Keller (2001), if an organisation is able to achieve brand resonance and harness it well, they can benefit from a marketing strategy and the commercial aspect (Widyastuti, 2023). The results showed that by focusing on strengthening the brand association with customers, brand resonance can be achieved and in turn, maintain customer loyalty.

Brand resonance in relation to the consumer journey of the moments of truth is at the purchase stage or the first moment of truth (FMOT) where the consumer has decided after their research that they are ready to purchase the product. They know what they are looking for in terms of product offering and specifications and are ready to place their order and get the product in their hands. This part of the journey is key, especially from a digital perspective, as the consumer would have connected with the brand and the connection is the driver to concluding the purchase (Hyken, 2016; Keller, 1993, 2001; Lecinski, 2011; Moran et al., 2014a). Safeer (2024) further substantiated the positive association between social media engagement and brand resonance was substantiated.

Therefore, based on the review of the literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Brand resonance positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.

e. Interactivity and Social Media Engagement

Interactivity is viewed as "the extent to which users can participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment in real-time" (Sreejesh et al., 2020). Enhanced interactivity can result in a more enriched, personalized, and responsive user experience, which may encourage more frequent and deeper interactions by consumers with brands via the social media platform through which they are engaging through (Kreimer et al., 2022).

Followers are likely to engage more with a brand that responds to their comments, asks for their opinions, and invites them to participate in discussions and events. This not only improves individual engagement metrics but also fosters a stronger sense of community and loyalty among followers, enhancing overall brand resonance on social media platforms, and allowing consumers to actively participate in the marketing process (Becdach et al., 2022b; Ji et al., 2022).

As consumers engage on social media platforms, the interaction with the product or service could potentially be taking place. This is the second moment of truth (SMOT) and where the experience and trial would occur. Here the consumer is open to asking questions, for advice and tips on usage, as well as interacting with eh brand and the on-line community (Hyken, 2016; Keller, 1993, 2001; Lecinski, 2011; Moran et al., 2014a).

Outcomes from both Kreimer et al. (2022) and Sreejesh et al. (2020) have discussed the importance of interactivity with customers, the building of trust, as well as the correct content and visuals for the engagement of social media brand that will develop strong relationships.

Therefore, based on the review of the literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Interactivity positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.

f. Credibility and social media engagement

Credibility has been associated with the media and advertising when defining the term. There is a direct correlation with customer trust and any source, media content, or advertising that impacts that (Chiang et al., 2018). It can be strengthened by providing accurate information, admitting mistakes, and being transparent about business practices. Increased credibility therefore not only improves direct user interactions but also potentially expands the brand's reach and influence through shared content and word-of-mouth recommendations, sharing, and advocating for the brand's content.

In Vilčeková (2016), the results of the research outlined that credibility was not related to the type of advertising medium but rather to the honesty, truthfulness and focus on values portrayed in the content. Having more real-life experiences with which customers can resonate provide more credibility (Ao et al., 2023). Balaban and Mustătea (2019) took a different perspective in considering the role of the social media influencers, and whilst the similar themes came through, something that stood out was around attractiveness and where the celebrity versus influencer line crosses over.

Therefore, based on the review of the literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Credibility positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.

g.Social Influence and Social Media Engagement

Social influence, as related to social networks, refers to the impact that people believe their network has on their own beliefs, behaviours, and interactions. This includes the influence exerted by friends, family, peers, and even celebrities or

influencers. Social influence shapes how people perceive brands and their willingness to engage with content based on the approval and actions of others in their social circles. The concept of social influence centres on the idea that it can significantly drive or amplify engagement on social media platforms and essentially serves the same function as an endorsement, thereby making the brand, product, or service appear more trustworthy or appealing.

Social influence from an online media aspect is the final stage in the moments of truth, where engagement occurs. This is the feedback loop in which the consumer reviews the product and provides his opinion, whether positive or negative, the ultimate moment of truth (UMOT. Should reviews be positives, the UMOT is seen as a creation of multiple positive ZMOTs that positively impact the brand and are all driven by social influence (Hyken, 2016; Keller, 1993, 2001; Lecinski, 2011; Moran et al., 2014a; Staff Writer, 2022).

Therefore, based on the review of the literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Social influence positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.

h.Social media engagement and purchase intention

Social media engagement refers to the various interactions between a brand and its audience on social media platforms, such as likes, comments, shares, and views that can now be performed as two-way communication. As consumers interact more frequently with the content of a brand, they become more familiar with and trusting of the brand, which can directly affect their readiness to make a purchase.

Effective social media engagement builds a positive brand image, increases brand awareness, and fosters a sense of loyalty and trust among consumers through exposure to recommendations and reviews. Frequent interactions such as participating in contests, commenting on posts, or sharing brand content can

create emotional bonds and improve consumer trust. These factors are crucial in guiding consumers along the decision-making process toward a purchase (Choedon & Lee, 2020; Bilal et al., 2021; Hanaysha, 2022; Wei et al., 2023; Ntobaki & Buthelezi, Ao et al., 2023).

Therefore, based on the review of the literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 8 (H8): Customer engagement with the brand on social media positively influences purchase intent.

i. Social media engagement and brand equity/performance

Social media engagement plays a critical role in shaping a brand's equity and performance. A higher level of engagement on social media platforms indicates a stronger bond between the brand and its audience, leading to greater brand equity and better brand performance. The relationship is based on the idea that active participation on social media platforms positively impacts various elements of brand equity, such as brand awareness, brand image, brand loyalty, and perceived quality. Furthermore, increased engagement often leads to greater visibility, greater reach, and more effective communication with the target audience, ultimately resulting in improved brand performance. When consumers actively engage with a brand's content on social networks, it enhances brand awareness, strengthens brand image and associations, fosters brand loyalty, and increases perceived quality. All these factors contribute to the overall equity of the brand (Chahal et al., 2020; Doan & Thang, 2020; Keller, 1993; Kreimer et al., 2022; Leckie et al., 2022; Safeer, 2024; Wei et al., 2023).

Therefore, based on the review of the literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 9 (H9): Customer engagement with the brand on social media positively influences brand equity and performance.

j. Brand equity/performance and purchase intention

Brand equity refers to the commercial value that a brand derives from consumers' perceptions and experiences, including its reputation, recognition, and loyalty. On the other hand, brand performance is the assessment of how well a brand meets or exceeds expectations in terms of quality, reliability, and customer satisfaction. The relationship between brand equity, brand performance, and purchase intention is significant, as they directly impact a consumer's willingness to buy from a brand. When a brand has high levels of brand equity and excellent brand performance, it generally leads to increased purchase intentions among consumers (Pappu et al., 2005; Roozy et al., 2014; Tharmi & Senthilnathan, 2012; Wei et al., 2023).

Brand equity includes essential factors such as brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty, which create a favourable impression of the brand in consumers' minds, making them more inclined to purchase its products or services. Similarly, better brand performance, such as improved product quality, reliability, and customer satisfaction, increases consumers' confidence in the brand, further increasing their intention to make a purchase. As a result, brands that have strong brand equity and consistently deliver high brand performance are more likely to see higher purchase intentions from consumers (Keller, 2001; Kgonare & Boitumelo, 2020).

Brand equity and brand performance, as well as purchase intention, are linked to the success of a brand. If the consumer experiences positive moments of truth (MOT's), it will result in strong brand equity and therefore impact performance positively. On the contrary, the opposite will occur (Keller, 1993, 2001, 2003; Keller & Osborn, 2009).

Therefore, based on the review of the literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 10 (H10): Brand equity/performance is positively influenced by purchase intention.

2.6.4 The Conceptual Framework Visual

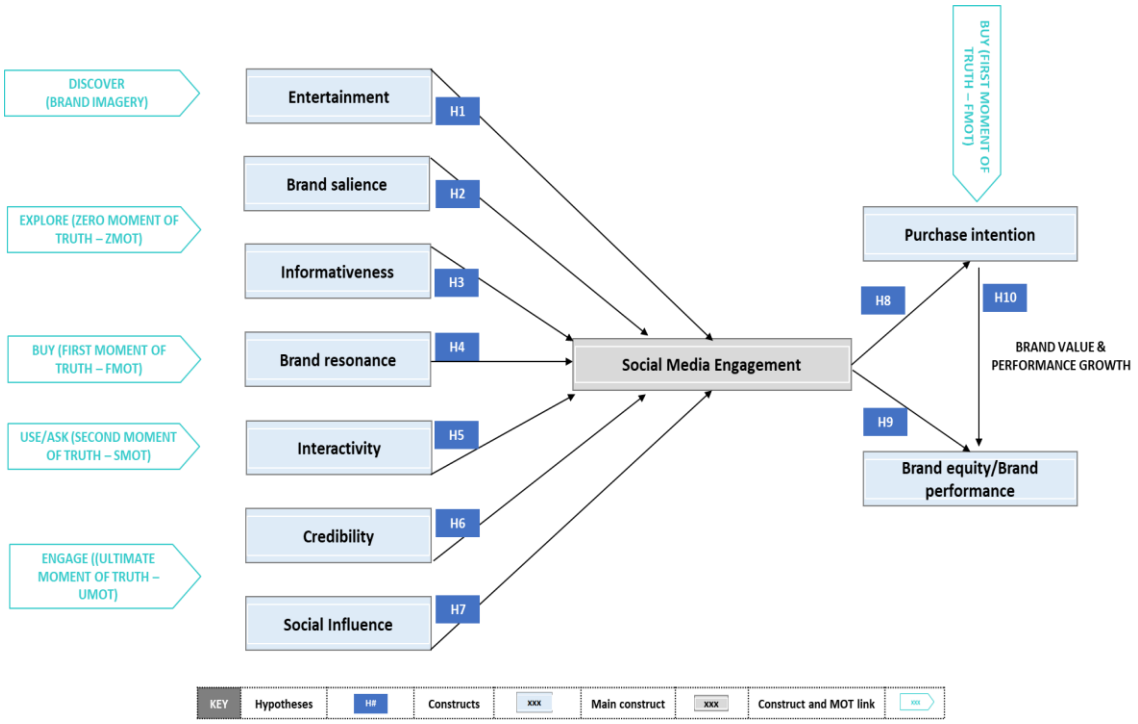


Figure 9: Conceptual Framework | CBBE Model, Social Media Constructs and MOT Concept

(Chiang et al., 2018; Dessart, 2017; Hyken, 2016; Lecinski, 2011; Staff Writer, 2022)

2.7 Conclusion of Literature Review

Local brands across most countries are affected by similar factors when trying to ensure their sustainability versus their global counterparts who are equipped with considerably higher budgets, efficient operations, streamlined processes, and an international footprint. Having a differentiator in the form of a strong proposition, quality product, or uniqueness of the offering and coupled with a strategic approach to targeting consumers through selected social media platforms with a bespoke messaging would deliver a growth plan for brands.

2.7.1 Hypothesis 1 (H1):

The entertainment value of social media brand ads positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.

2.7.2 Hypothesis 2 (H2):

Brand visibility and salience positively influences the engagement of the customer with the brand on social networks.

2.7.3 Hypothesis 3 (H3):

Informativeness positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.

2.7.4 Hypothesis 4 (H4):

Brand resonance positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.

2.7.5 Hypothesis 5 (H5):

Interactivity positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.

2.7.6 Hypothesis 6 (H6):

Credibility positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.

2.7.7 Hypothesis 7 (H7):

Social influence positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.

2.7.8 Hypothesis 8 (H8):

Customer engagement with the brand on social media positively influences purchase intention.

2.7.9 Hypothesis 9 (H9):

Customer engagement with the brand on social media positively influences brand equity and performance.

2.7.10 Hypothesis 10 (H10):

Brand equity/performance is positively influenced by purchase intention.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The chapter will present the methodology chosen to carry out the study along with the relevant literature that supports the selection of these methods. As the focus of this section is on the methodology of the study, key aspects in this section include the research approach and design, the type of data collection method to be used, the calculation and source of the population sample, as well as the sampling method that will be selected. Additionally, the outline of the research instrument will be presented with the data collection process and the data analysis tools that will be used. To ensure a comprehensive study is achieved, possible limitations, quality assurance elements, and ethical considerations are also included.

3.1 Research approach

In the research process, research paradigms are employed to provide a method for theory testing and relationship analysis between variables. Paradigms are an interconnected system of phenomena that is underpinned with assumptions about reality, epistemology, methodology and methods to provide an approach to research across the world (Abdul Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Pandey & Pandey, 2015).

As the study will be taking a quantitative approach, the related philosophy is positivism. The positivist method is defined by scientific processes for data collection. Positivist paradigms follow the theoretical view of individual experiences building the knowledge base and therefore observing relationships between empirical variables that generate numerical data will provide objective results as there is no influence (Abdul Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Collins, 2018; Slevitch, 2011).

In the majority of the social media related literature reviewed, this approach has been selected based on the structured way of collecting data, as well as the

features of being done under controlled parameters to ensure objectivity is maintained. In addition to the attributes of quantitative research, the topic of social networks is broad in nature and the approach and design selected will allow for a larger sample to be selected and data to be gathered for analysis (Duffett, 2015; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Maraimalai et al., 2011; Schutte & Wingfield, 2020).

The quantitative approach enables testing of objective theories as it is linked to observing relationships between variables. To ensure precision in statistical analysis, it is important to correctly align variables by using instruments that produce numerical data when measuring them (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The deductive approach for data analysis will test the hypotheses based on the data collected and provide outcomes on supported or insignificance for each hypothesis (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Neuman, 2014; Slevitch, 2011).

3.2 Research design

The cross-sectional research design was selected for the study. This type of design consists of data that has been gathered from individuals or groups across different industries and sectors for large-scale information collection. A key aspect of this design is that it focuses on representing data that have been collected at a specific point in time to display any relationships or differences between the variables measured (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The advantages and disadvantages of this type of design are listed below.

Advantages: Cross-sectional designs are both time- and cost-efficient to conduct in comparison to other designs. The simplicity of the setup, design, and implementation of this approach makes it a clear choice, especially when resources are limited. The design has been developed so that it can scale to large numbers of people and has resulted in its increased usage to get a snapshot representation of the population for various studies. This type of design allows

multiple sets of variables to be tested and data to be collected simultaneously. As the name suggests, cross-sectional and simultaneous research can be conducted on the measure of relationships and to highlight and trends or patterns that may exist (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kesmodel, 2018).

Disadvantages: The design is structured to collect data at one single point in time as opposed to longitudinal research, which can be tracked over an extended period of time. As a result, this impedes any reengagement with respondents to probe further on response follow-ups to understand changes over a longer period and the patterns that may form from this extended process. As no future data can be considered, the sample size will influence the results of the study, as it may not adequately represent the target population, which could lead to biases in results (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kesmodel, 2018).

3.3 Data collection methods

The data collection method chosen is the cost-effective self-administered survey which is delivered in the format of an online questionnaire through a computer-administered software system - Qualtrics. The benefits of this type of survey are supportive to that of the research design in that it allows for complexity in instruments; provides the accessibility to a computer literate audience through multiple platforms whilst providing anonymity; speed of data collection; viability of information; as well as image inclusion in the instrument. The system provides distribution through the system and links for external sharing to assist with data collection. The software, however, is not without its challenges in respect of potentially low response rates; instructions that need to be directed through the software; as well as security and/or network issues being experienced (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Section 3.9 of this chapter addresses quality assurance, which elaborates on how to mitigate some of these challenges.

3.4 Population and sample

3.4.1 Population

The population will be focused on all adults residing in South Africa over the age of 18 years. Based on the aspects of the study, the parameters for data gathering are:

- Each respondent needs to have access to mobile data.
- Each respondent must fit the profile of a consumer with purchasing ability.
- Each respondent must have a minimum of one account on any of the selected social network sites (SNS) selected for the study and be active on the site.

3.4.2 Sample and sampling method

3.4.2.1 Sample Size

According to Neuman (2014), when calculating the target population, the sample size calculation should consider the following parameters: the level of precision or sampling error, the confidence level, and the sample size. Israel (1992) had begun the discussion before the 20th century and with his research and provided illustrations on the values that should be used as ± 5% for precision and 95% for confidence levels. The input for the response distribution has been calculated at 50%. The literature published more than a decade later by Taherdoost (2017) with similar parameters had adjusted the confidence levels to 99% to test the sampling approach and found that the minimum sample size had increased.

According to Meltwater (2023) there are 22.7 million people over the age of 18 years using a social media platform. When using the sample size calculator and entering the parameters, the recommended sample size is 377. Scenarios are also provided, including an adjusted margin of error and confidence levels for contingency planning.

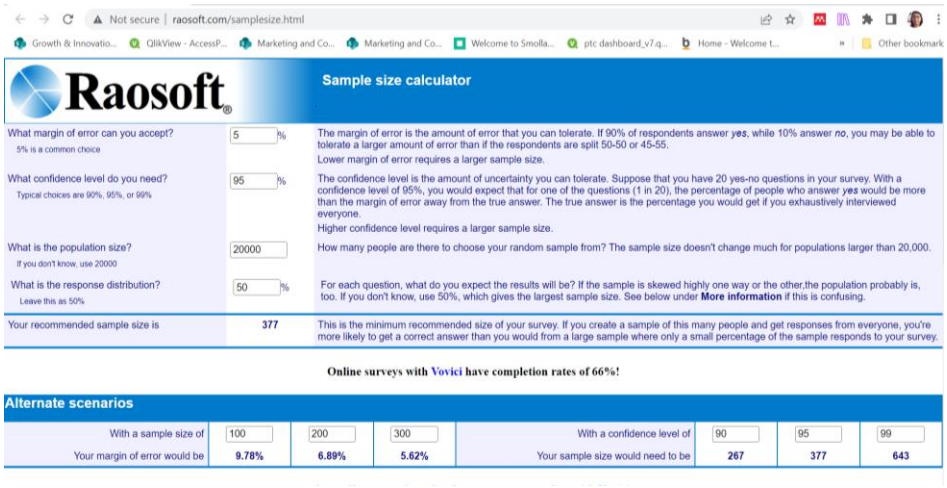


Figure 10: Sample Size Calculator | Social Media Users South Africa

(Raosoft.com, n.d.)

3.4.2.2 Sampling Method

The sampling strategy utilised for the study is the non-probability method. Within this approach, two sampling methods, convenience, and snowball sampling, were implemented. Convenience sampling is selected when there are challenges related to the availability and accessibility of potential respondents. Snowball sampling refers to the reliance on the referral method to expand the sample. As the nature of this survey is related to an understanding of local brand equity, this method would support the study. Both sampling choices are also cost-effective and efficient solutions (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Neuman, 2014).

3.5 The research instrument

The research instrument for the study comprised five sections that measured the different constructs identified from the literature and developed within the conceptual framework. General information was completed by the respondents in Section A to gather biographical data of the sample and limited to age, gender, and location and no personal information. Sections B - F measured responses

according to research questions in relation to social media platform usage, the social media drivers (Chiang et al., 2018; Ducoffe, 1995), social media brand engagement (Gao & Feng, 2016; Kietzmann et al., 2011), and brand equity and performance (Aaker, 1995; Keller, 1993). Section A of the questionnaire provided respondents with multiple choice type questions and the 5-point Likert scale was used as the measure throughout sections B-F.

3.6 Procedure for data collection

The survey was developed on the Qualtrics software system with access provided by the University of the Witwatersrand. As the questionnaire being used is web-based, a link is available to be shared externally as part of the sampling process. Clear communication of the objectives and requirements of the research study is included for potential respondents to review prior to participation. The advantages of this survey format outside of the turnaround time for execution are the visuals, numerical scales that can be used, and the ability to access a larger participant group (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Neuman, 2014).

The survey was shared on multiple social media platforms in addition to the university's email distribution facility to postgraduate students in selected faculties. This approach was taken to collect a sample with a better representation of the population. The survey included a visual at the beginning of the survey to provide context and background to the research.

3.7 Data analysis strategies and interpretation

Once the data has been collected as per the planned time period, the data will be extracted from the system in a Microsoft Excel file, analysed, and formatted before being imported into the approved software for analysis, Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS). The first part of the data analysis method that will be used for the study is descriptive statistics with factor analysis providing the exploratory and confirmatory aspects. Cooper and Schindler (2014)

highlighted the similarity and overlap between these two research types in the correlation around linking new findings to old data, creating context to a situation, and generating new ideas.

To aid in the development of and identifying new relationships between the variables, structural equation modelling will be utilised. The usage of Structured Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques in research has grown. This can be attributed to the dynamic changes in the research sector and the need for improved techniques in data measurements to compare, contrast, analyse, and find trends and patterns (Gefen et al., 2000; Shrestha et al., 2023). Both CFA and SEM will be completed within the SPSS software system.

3.8 Possible limitations and challenges of the study

- The study design is cross-sectional; therefore, the result may not be seen as an accurate representation of the population as no follow-up questions could be posed.
- The study is limited to a selection of social networking sites based on user activity.
- The research study focuses on social media engagement.
- The respondents may not be aware of which brands are South African.

3.9 Quality Assurance

3.9.1 External validity

The possible impact on the research due to external validity would be if the potential respondents were not aware of any local brands on which the research is focused or the engagement between the respondents and social networks was negative. Ensuring that the instrument is clear in the layout, structure, and the sampling method selected is correct, assists to provide the view on the causal associations (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

3.9.2 Internal validity

Internal validity provides the basis for the variables to be measured separately. The impact on this research study is when the instrument meant to measure the study does not provide the results and conclusions as hypothesised and then implies a causal relationship (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Ensuring controls are in place will reduce the threat of internal validity and enhance the external validity.

3.9.3 Reliability

To ensure reliability of the instrument, the wording of the questions and statements must be clear and concise. It is important not to veer away from lengthy questions, but rather maintain uniformity and consistency throughout the instrument with the format to avoid errors. Cooper and Schindler (2014) suggested that when you create a reliable instrument, it then becomes one that can be adapted easily, is robust, and is malleable to various environments. The Qualtrics system has additional tools built in that measures various aspects of the survey and the understandability rate by respondents based on the length, structure, and type of questions asked. The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient will be used as the reliability test in the data analysis chapter (Gefen et al., 2000).

3.9.4 Objectivity

The maintenance of objectivity in research is linked to a few areas. Cooper and Schindler (2014) speaks to the deductive approach that is taken in quantitative methods, as in the case of this study, which was linked to variables and hypotheses being tested through the research and then analysed.

All participants received the same set of questions in the research gathering stage of the study which provided a level of standardisation and the first step of objectivity.

The other activities considered are a pilot test of the instrument that was completed to ensure that the questionnaire was easily understood and that no personal biases were present. The pilot provided a test platform for feedback from the sample of the survey instructions, outline of the nature of the study, and all the necessary information to encourage participation.

In addition to those outlined above, the software used for statistical analysis helped to maintain impartiality.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Ensuring that the research is conducted in an ethical manner is critical to the efficacy of the study. Ethics are regarded as the measure of behaviour and integrity that guide moral choices from a personal and professional aspect and that holds everyone accountable to align to a certain standard. Ensuring that no one was hurt, harmed, or suffered in any way or form as a result of any research activities is the main goal of ethics (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

The WBS ethics clearance and declaration provided the researcher's commitment to ensure that the study was carried out in a format that respected the privacy of the respondents who participated *(Appendix D).* The research collected will only be used for the purpose of the study and the data and all information will be stored according to the information provided in the ethics submission. Consent was requested for participation from all respondents when providing the instructions, voluntary nature of the study, as well as anonymity. Compliance with all aspects of the ethics protocols and process was followed during each step of the research study, including university approval to administer the research instrument to the postgraduate student population *(Appendix E).*

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This study focuses on investigating the factors that drive the growth of local brands in South Africa, with a particular emphasis on the engagement of social media and its influence on the performance of local brands. This chapter aims to present the results of data collected from social media users in South Africa. The first section of this chapter presents the characteristics of the sample and demographic information of the respondents. Subsequently, the focus will shift to descriptive statistical analysis, followed by reliability and validity analysis. Structural equation modelling is then conducted to test the various hypotheses formulated in the study. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings in relation to the hypotheses.

4.2 Sample characteristics

The study used an online survey to collect data from social media users who resided in South Africa. The survey, which was distributed on Qualtrics, returned 365 responses over the period it was active. The responses were downloaded in an Excel spreadsheet format for further analysis so that only valid responses could be analysed. From the 365 responses received, it was found that 93 responses were incomplete, as respondents only engaged in the initial section of the survey, focusing on demographic details. Consequently, the remaining questions were left unanswered. Incomplete responses were excluded, resulting in 272 valid responses. Therefore, the final sample size of this study was 272.

Different demographic information was collected to gain a deeper understanding of the sample at the beginning of the survey. This study included data collected on the age group, gender, province, time spent on social media and the primary social media platform used. The examination of these demographic patterns will be detailed in the subsequent sections.

4.2.1 Age group

The distribution of the sample in this study across different age groups is as follows:

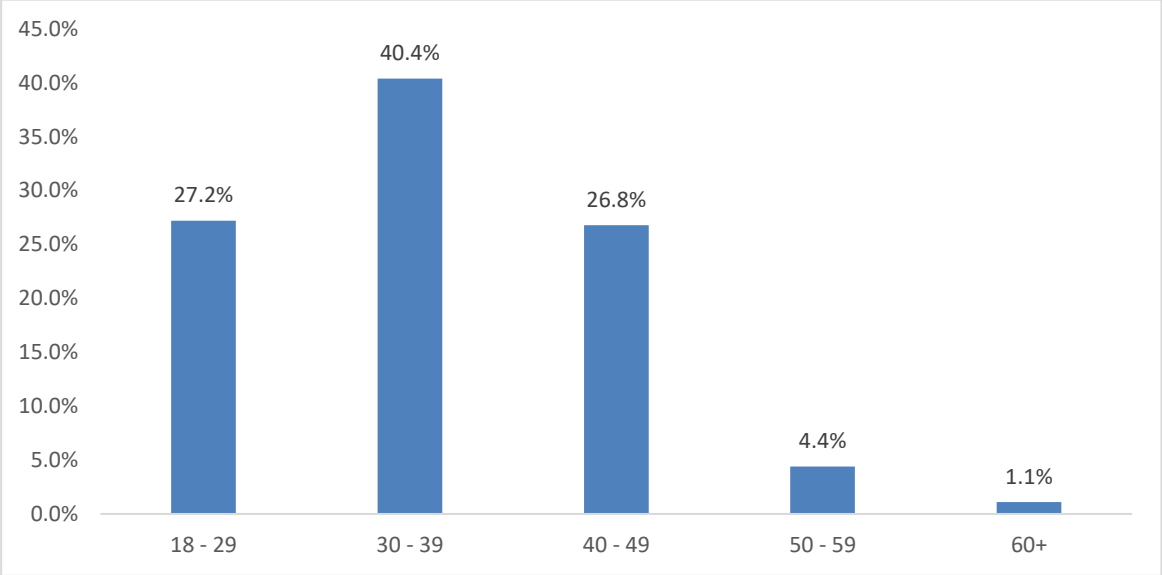


Figure 11: Response % by Age range

This distribution in Figure 8 indicates that the majority of the sample falls within the age range of 30 to 39, comprising 40.4% of the respondents. The age group of 18 to 29 follows with 27.2%, while the age groups of 40 to 49, 50 to 59, and 60+ represent 26.8%, 4.4%, and 1.1% of the sample, respectively. The results align with current research, which indicates that Millennials (aged 25-34) and Gen Z (aged 11-26) are the age groups that use social media the most (Khoros, 2024).

4.2.2 Gender

The sample distribution of this study according to gender is as follows:

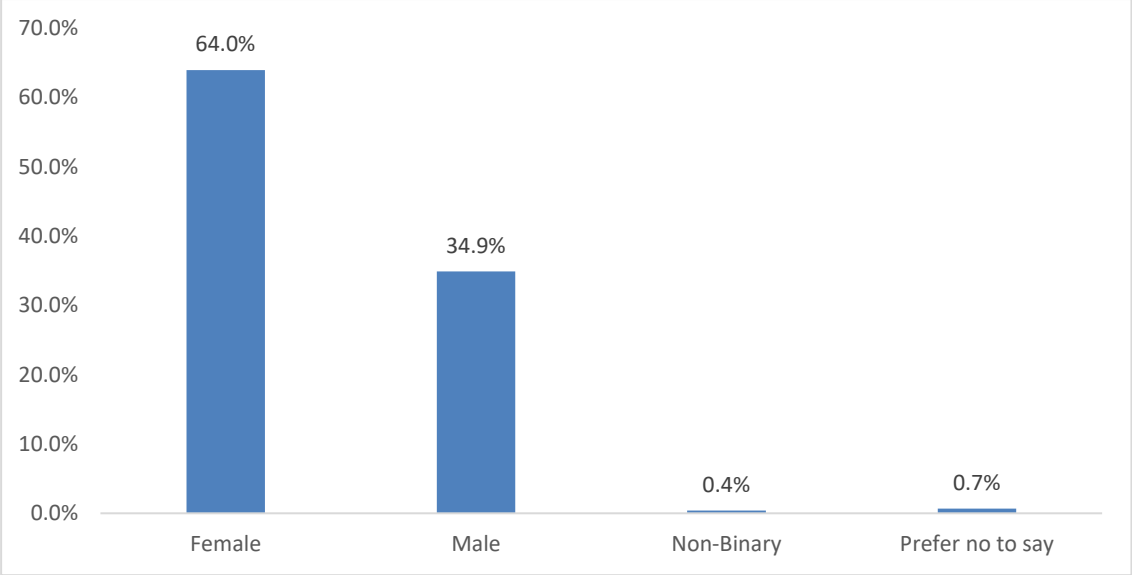


Figure 12: Response % by Gender

As Figure 9 shows, the sample is predominantly composed of women, representing 64.0% of the respondents, while men make up 34.9% of the sample. Nonbinary individuals account for 0.4%, and those who prefer not to disclose their gender make up 0.7% of the sample. This result is consistent with Mayiya et al., (2017) who found that women in South Africa comprise the majority of internet users, accounting for 71% of users, and they are the most prominent gender group that uses social media, making up 76% of social media users.

4.2.3 Province

The distribution of the sample in this study according to the province of the respondent is as follows.

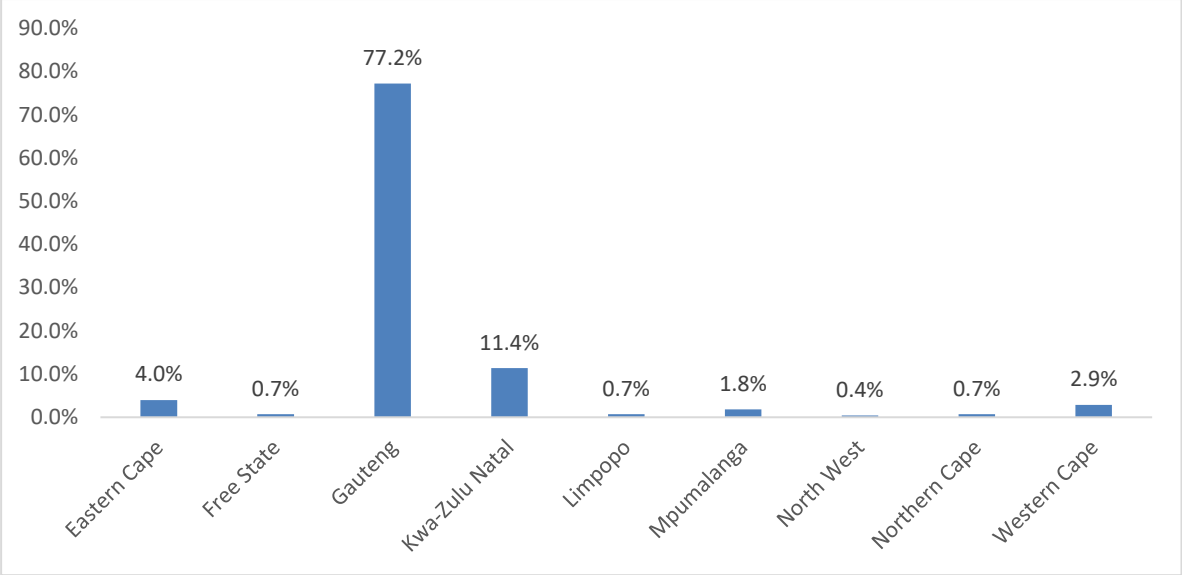


Figure 13: Response % by region

The sample is heavily skewed towards Gauteng, which represents 77.2% of the respondents, indicating a significant overrepresentation of this province in the study. On the contrary, provinces such as Free State, Limpopo, the North West, and the Northern Cape have a very low representation in the sample, each accounting for less than 1% of the respondents. Kwa-Zulu Natal province had 11.4% of the respondents, Mpumalanga had 1.8%, and the Western Cape had 2.9%. The results indicate that although most of the respondents were from Gauteng province, the sample consisted of respondents from all provinces of South Africa.

4.2.4 Social media platform

Respondents were asked to indicate the social media platform they frequently use.

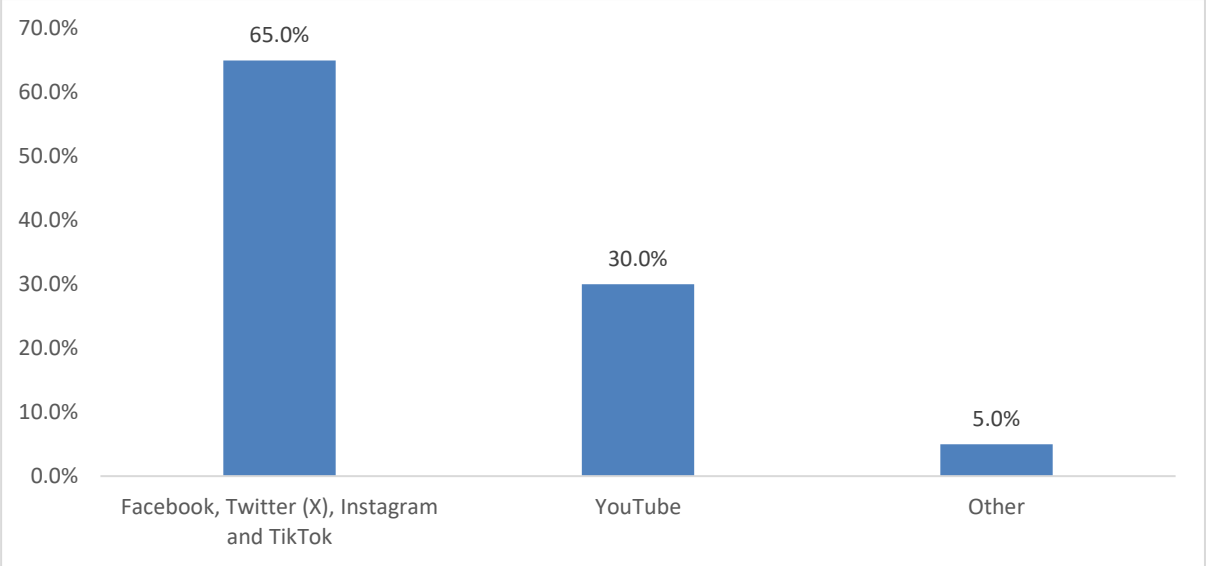


Figure 14: Response % by Social media platform

The results in Figure 11 show that most respondents use Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram and TikTok, accounting for 65% of the sample. Furthermore, 30% of the respondents indicated that they frequently use YouTube, and only 5% of the respondents indicated that they use other social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Snapchat.

4.2.5 Time on social media

Respondents were also asked to indicate how often they use social networks in a day. The distribution of the sample in this study according to the time a respondent spends on social media is as follows:

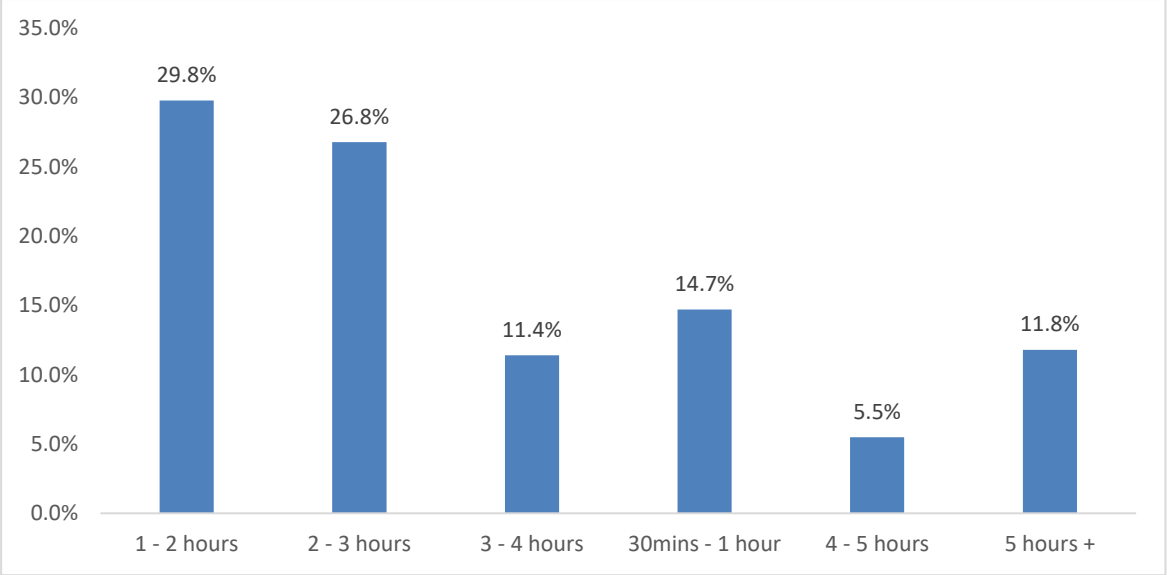


Figure 15: Response % by time spent on social media

The data in Figure 12 reveal that most respondents spend 1 to 2 hours on social media, representing 29.8% of the sample. This is closely followed by those who spend 2 to 3 hours (26.8%) and 30 minutes to 1 hour (14.7%). On the other hand, fewer respondents spend longer periods on social media, with only 5.5% spending 4 to 5 hours and 11.8% spending 5 hours or more. It is important to note that the distribution of time spent on social media among respondents provides insight into their social media habits and levels of engagement. Understanding these patterns can help tailor social media strategies and content to effectively reach and engage with the target audience based on their usage habits.

4.3 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics are used to summarise the characteristics of the data set. In this study, responses to the questions were evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale, with strongly disagree denoted as 1 and strongly agree assigned a value of 5. The midpoint of the scale, represented by 3, signifies a neutral response. Scores below 3 indicate a tendency towards disagreement with the provided statements, while scores between 3 and 3.5 suggest a more neutral stance. Mean

scores greater than 3.5 indicate a propensity for respondents to agree or strongly agree with the statements. Additionally, the standard deviation was used to measure variability within the dataset, while skewness and kurtosis statistics were used to assess normality in the distribution of the data. The table below provides a concise overview of descriptive statistics for the composite constructs used in this study. The constructs include entertainment (ENT), brand salience (BS), informativeness (INF), brand resonance (BR), interactivity (INT), credibility (CR), social influence (SI), purchase intention (PI), social media brand engagement (SBE) and brand equity/performance (BP).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
ENT	272	3.36	1.037	-.670	.148	-.237	.294
BS	272	4.11	.774	-1.556	.148	4.057	.294
INF	272	3.30	.813	-.445	.148	.359	.294
BR	272	3.46	.917	-.579	.148	.314	.294
INT	272	3.28	.867	-.552	.148	.008	.294
PI	272	3.80	.817	-.922	.148	1.495	.294
CR	272	2.88	.832	-.005	.148	-.111	.294
SI	272	3.50	1.046	-.812	.148	.050	.294
SBE	272	3.18	.906	-.461	.148	-.379	.294
BP	272	3.90	.658	-1.270	.148	3.951	.294

The table shows that there were 272 observations for each construct. Mean scores indicate the average response among participants, providing a measure of central tendency. For example, the mean score for entertainment (ENT) is 3.36, suggesting that, on average, respondents agreed with statements measuring perceived entertainment. Similarly, the mean score for credibility (CR) is 2.88, indicating that, on average, respondents tended to disagree with the statement measuring the credibility of social media advertising. Furthermore, respondents largely responded 'neutral' in the statement related to interactivity (INT) (mean= 3.28), information (INF) (mean=3.30) and social media brand engagement (SBE) (mean= 3.18).

Standard deviations represent the extent of variability or dispersion in the responses around the mean. For example, a larger standard deviation indicates greater variability in responses, suggesting that opinions or perceptions are more diverse within the sample. In this study, constructs like ENT, SI, BR and SBE exhibit relatively higher standard deviations, implying greater variability in perceptions among respondents.

Skewness and kurtosis statistics show the distributional characteristics of the data. Skewness measures the symmetry of the distribution, with negative skewness indicating a left-skewed distribution where the tail extends towards lower values (Anderson et al., 2010). Kurtosis, on the other hand, measures the peakedness or flatness of the distribution. In this study, the skewness values range from -2 to +2, while the kurtosis values are also within the range -7 to +7. Thus, all data distributions for each construct approximates a normal distribution (Anderson et al., 2010). Therefore, with normally distributed data, subsequent analysis can be conducted using parametric statistical tests such as the maximum likelihood approach in Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) (Anderson et al., 2010).

4.4 Reliability analysis

The study used Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of the scales for the constructs used in the study. A summary of the analysis of the Cronbach alpha coefficient is shown in the table below.

Table 3: Reliability tests

Scale	Original number of items	Number of items after adjustment	Deleted items	Cronbach's alpha
Entertainment	3	3	None	0.912
Brand salience	4	4	None	0.862
Informativeness	3	3	None	0.768
Brand resonance	4	4	None	0.864
Purchase intention	3	3	None	0.878
Interactivity	3	3	None	0.847
Credibility	3	3	None	0.878
Social influence	3	2	SI3	0.876

Brand engagement	6	6	None	0.871
Brand performance	12	12	None	0.918

As reported in Table 3 the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the 10 measurement scales was above the 0.7 cutoff for good internal consistency (Field, 2018). One item was deleted for the social influence scale to improve reliability. After deleting the item, Cronbach's alpha improved, which implies that removing the SI3 item was necessary. Further tests were employed to confirm the factor structure of the data using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which is presented in the following section.

4.5 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is a technique that aims to uncover the underlying factors shaping observed variables (Field, 2018). EFA finds application in scenarios where there are no prior hypotheses regarding these factors. EFA operates on the common factor model, assuming that each observed variable is influenced by a blend of common factors, unique factors, and measurement errors (Watkins, 2018) . Factor patterns are analysed with the objective of discerning which items significantly load onto particular factors, subsequently inferring the meaning of these factors through item commonalities. The primary objective lies in pinpointing the latent factors responsible for inter-variable relationships (Field, 2018).

Determining sample adequacy is the first and crucial step before proceeding with EFA (Field, 2018). Sample adequacy tests, such as the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity, are

essential in assessing whether the data are suitable for factor analysis. The KMO statistic measures the proportion of variance among observed variables that might be common variance, with values closer to 1 indicating high adequacy for factor analysis (Taherdoost et al., 2022) . On the other hand, Bartlett's test of sphericity evaluates whether the correlation matrix significantly differs from an identity matrix, which is crucial for identifying if the variables are correlated enough to be summarised by a smaller set of factors (Watkins, 2018) . These tests help researchers determine whether the data are appropriate for EFA, ensuring that the factors extracted are meaningful and reliable for further analysis and interpretation. As shown in Table 4.3, the KMO is closer to 1 (KMO= 0.905), suggesting a high sample adequacy for EFA. Furthermore, the Bartlett test is statistically significant (Chi-square = 6209.713, p<.001), suggesting that the correlation matrix differs significantly from an identity matrix. Therefore, there is enough evidence to conclude that the sample size of this study was adequate for EFA to be performed.

Table 4: Sample adequacy tests

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of the sampling adequacy.		.905
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6209.713
	Df	561
	Sig.	.000

Factor extraction followed, which confirmed sample adequacy. The extraction method employed in this study was Principal Component Analysis (PCA). PCA aims to maximise the variance of the data along the principal components, allowing for a reduction in dimensionality while retaining the most critical information (Field, 2018). The Eigenvalue criterion was used to decide on the number of factors/components to extract. The eigenvalue criterion is that components with eigenvalue above 1 are retained, making sure that only factors

which explain the largest variance in the dataset are extracted (Auerswald & Moshagen, 2019). Consequently, 9 factors/components were extracted, and the total variance explained was approximately 75%, as shown in the following table.

Table 5: Total variance explained

Component	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative %**
1	3.970	11.676	11.676
2	3.594	10.571	22.247
3	3.162	9.300	31.547
4	3.101	9.119	40.666
5	2.890	8.501	49.167
6	2.698	7.936	57.103
7	2.327	6.843	63.946
8	1.960	5.765	69.711
9	1.818	5.348	**75.060**
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.			

After determining the number of extracted factors, it was important to perform a factor rotation. Factor rotation is essential to simplify and interpret the factor structure of the data. The primary purpose of factor rotation is to enhance the interpretability of factors by adjusting factor loadings to achieve a clearer and more meaningful pattern of relationships between variables and factors (Auerswald & Moshagen, 2019). In this study, Varimax rotation method was used, and the results are presented in the rotated component matrix in Table 6.

Table 6: Factor rotation

Rotated Component Matrix[a]									
	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
ENT1					.799				
ENT2					.808				
ENT3					.814				
BS1			.806						
BS2			.763						
BS3			.825						
BS4			.668						
INF1								.716	
INF2								.697	
INF3								.682	
BR1				.677					
BR2				.716					
BR3				.718					
BR4				.707					
PI1							.695		
PI2							.773		
PI3							.758		
CR1						.853			

CR2						.843			
CR3						.819			
SI1									.852
SI2									.834
SBE2		.731							
SBE3		.715							
SBE4		.635							
SBE5		.770							
SBE6		.631							
PQ1	.817								
PQ2	.760								
BL1	.776								
BL2	.695								
BL3	.718								
BL4	.743								
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.									
a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.									

The results show the extraction of 9 factors based on the rotated component matrix in Table 6, adhering to the criterion of retaining items with factor loadings equal to or greater than 0.4 (Watkins, 2018). Subsequent analysis of the initial solution revealed that items associated with factor 'interactivity' (INT) had factor loadings below 0.5 and exhibited cross-loading onto other factors. Consequently,

the decision was made to exclude this factor from further analysis. Additionally, items BA1, BA2, BA3, BI1, BI2, and BI3 exhibited factor loadings lower than 0.4, leading to their elimination from consideration. Furthermore, an item, SBE1, demonstrated cross-loading behaviour, prompting its removal from the data set as well.

Following the conclusion of EFA, it is evident in Table 6 that entertainment (ENT) was eventually measured through 3 items, brand salience (BS) had 4 items, informativeness (INF) was measured through 3 items, brand resonance (BR) was measured through 4 items, purchase intention (PI) had 3 items, credibility (CR) was measured through 3 items, social influence (SI) had 2 remaining items, social media brand engagement (SBE) was ultimately measured through 5 items, and lastly, brand performance (BP) was measured through 6 items (2 items for perceived quality (PQ) and 4 items for brand loyalty (BL). Brand awareness (BA) and brand image (BI) items were all removed due to cross-loadings and low factor loadings below 0.4. Therefore, the factor structure of the data set was confirmed. Subsequent sections focus on composite reliability analysis and validity analysis (convergent and discriminant).

4.5.1 Convergent validity and composite reliability

Convergent validity was evaluated using the average variance extracted (AVE), a measure evaluating the extent to which latent variables explain the variance in their corresponding observed variables (Cheung et al., 2023) . Calculated by squaring the standardised factor loadings and averaging them across all elements within a construct, the AVE represents the proportion of variance captured by the construct relative to measurement error (Anderson et al., 2010). It is generally accepted that for convergent validity to be established, the AVE for each construct should ideally surpass 0.5 (Anderson et al., 2010; Cheung et al., 2023). Furthermore, composite reliability (CR) was used to gauge the overall reliability of the measurement scale. In this study, the composite reliability was calculated taking the sum of the squared standardised factor loadings and

dividing it by the sum of the squared standardised factor loadings plus the sum of the error variances of the indicator variables. The results are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: Convergent validity and composite reliability

Construct	Number of items	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Composite relaibility
Entertainment	3	0.78	0.91
Brand salience	4	0.63	0.87
Informativeness	3	0.53	0.77
Brand resonance	4	0.62	0.87
Purchase intention	3	0.72	0.88
Credibility	3	0.71	0.88
Social influence	2	0.78	0.88
Brand engagement	5	0.54	0.86
Brand performance	6	0.58	0.89

The results in Table 7 show that the AVE for all constructs was greater than the 0.5 cut-off, confirming that there was convergent validity. Furthermore, the

composite reliability is above the 0.7 cutoff for all constructs, confirming that all the measurement scales were reliable.

4.5.2 Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which distinct constructs measured in a study are truly different from one another (Field, 2018). The AVE and the Pearson correlation matrix were used to assess discriminant validity. The square root of the AVE for each construct was compared with the correlations between that construct and other constructs in the study (Cheung et al., 2023). If the square root of the AVE for a particular construct is greater than the correlations between that construct and other constructs, the discriminant validity is confirmed. This is because the AVE represents the amount of variance captured by the construct relative to measurement error, and if this value is greater than the correlations between constructs, it indicates that the construct shares more variance with its own measures than with measures of other constructs (Cheung et al., 2023) . Thus, if a construct is strongly correlated with its own measures than with measures of other constructs, it suggests that the construct is distinct from others, thus confirming discriminant validity.

Table 8: Discriminant validity analysis

	SBE	**ENT**	**BS**	**INF**	**BR**	**PI**	**CR**	**SI**	**BP**
SBE	**0.74**								
ENT	.582	**0.88**							
BS	.318	.270	**0.79**						
INF	.507	.549	.307	**0.73**					
BR	.490	.412	.535	.358	**0.79**				

PI	.419	.332	.504	.411	.659	**0.85**			
CR	.373	.390	.197	.450	.331	.338	**0.84**		
SI	.501	.383	.290	.356	.379	.313	.227	**0.88**	
BP	.378	.306	.458	.294	.446	.478	.244	.363	**0.76**

It is shown in Table 8 shows that in each column, the square root of AVE, shown on the diagonal of the matrix, is greater than each correlation coefficient. This shows evidence of discriminant validity, which confirms that each construct is distinct from each other. As such, the constructs were deemed suitable to use in subsequent analysis, focusing on model testing.

4.6 Results of model testing

Following the identification of the underlying factor structure through EFA and subsequent confirmation of construct reliability and validity, the next step involved presenting the results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). CFA was vital in verifying the factor structures identified in EFA, providing a robust foundation for subsequent analysis. This procedure involved assessing how well the observed variables loaded onto the identified factors, thereby confirming the hypothesised relationships among the variables. Following the confirmation of factor structures through CFA, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test hypotheses. SEM allowed for the examination of the proposed theoretical model, which incorporated the confirmed factor structures, to assess the relationships among latent variables and test the proposed hypotheses. Statistical software AMOS 29 was used for CFA and SEM.

4.6.1 CFA model testing

A CFA was conducted to assess the relationships between the constructs outlined in the theoretical model and their respective measurement items. Unlike in structural equation modelling, where exogenous and endogenous constructs are differentiated, CFA evaluation focused solely on the measurement model. Figure 13 illustrates all variables correlated, with rectangular shapes representing the observable variables (construct items), large circles are latent constructs, and small circles are error terms. The two-headed arrows denote covariance among variables, while the one-headed arrows indicate causal relationships. Figure 13 shows the model with the main effects exclusively between the constructs (entertainment, brand salience, informativeness, brand resonance, purchase intention, credibility, social influence, brand engagement, brand performance) and measurement items. This delineation allowed for a focused assessment of how well the proposed constructs were reflected in the observed data, providing clarity in evaluating the structural relationships within the theoretical framework.

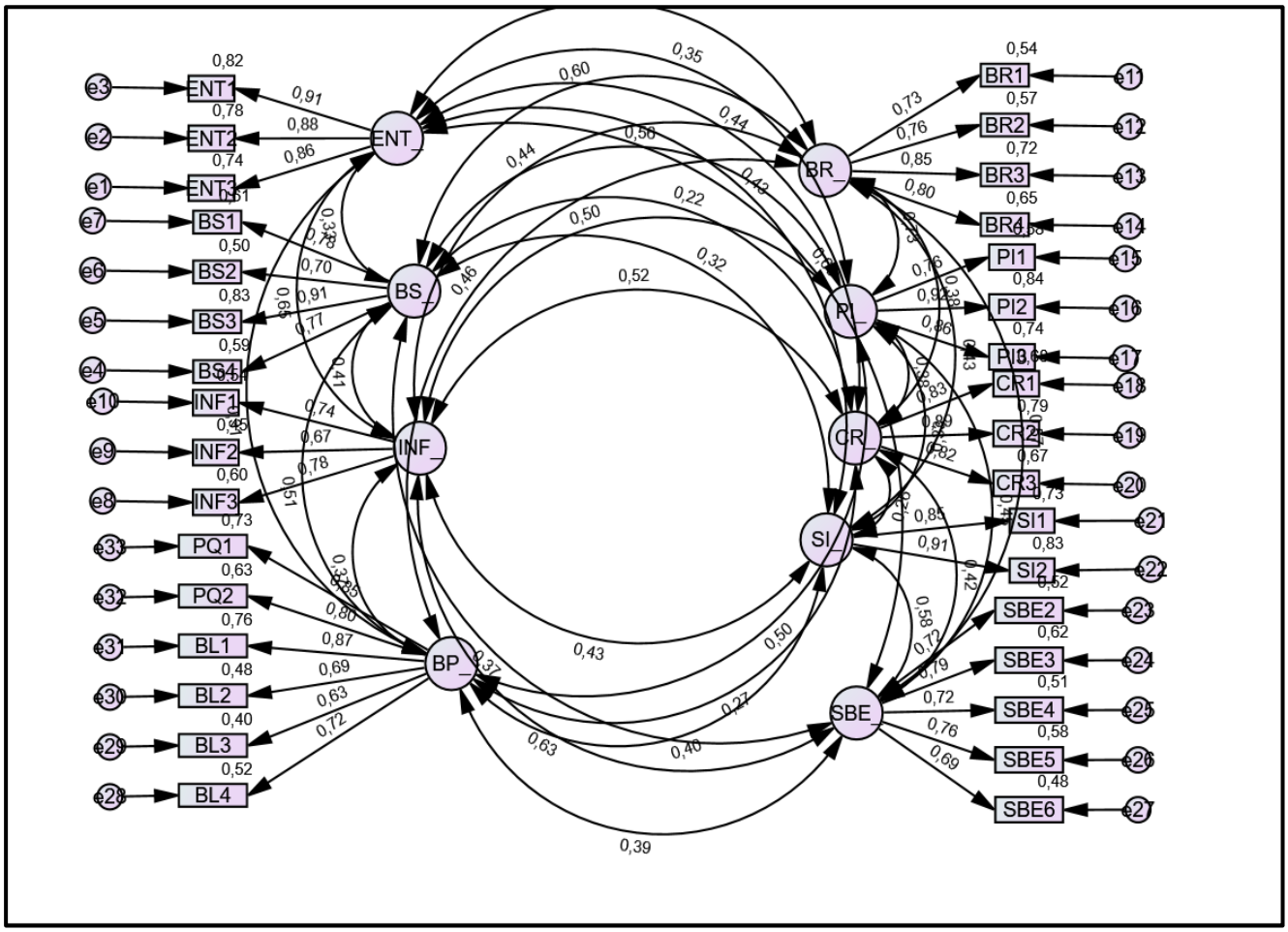


Figure 16: CFA measurement model

4.6.2 Model fitness tests

The CFA and structural equation models were evaluated using various fit indices to ascertain the fitness of the models to the data. Initially, the Chi-square (χ^2) test (2) was performed, recognising that although a significant result indicates potential fit issues, this test can be sensitive to large sample sizes. To address this, the CMIN/DF ratio was examined, with a value less than 3 indicating good fit (Anderson et al., 2010). Additionally, several other fit indices were considered, including the Goodness of Fit (GFI), the Normed Fit Index (NFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and Relative Fit

Index (RFI). Lastly, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was examined, where values less than 0.05 suggest good fit, between 0.06 and 1 indicate acceptable fit, and values above 1 signified poor fit. The fitness of the model is summarised in Table 9 showing the fit of the CFA model, the fit of the original structural model, and the fitness of the estimated final structural model.

Table 9: Model fit summary

Fit Index	Recommended Value	CFA Results	Original Structural Model	Final model
Goodness-of-fit (GFI)	Less than 0.80 (No fit)	0.816	0.724	0.832
	Between [0.80-0.90] (acceptable)			
	Above 0.90 (Perfect fit)			
Normed fit index (NFI)	Less than .80 (poor)	0.843	0.756	0.855
	Between [0.80-0.90] (acceptable)			
	Above 0.90 (good)			
Comparative fit index (CFI)	Less than 0.90 (poor)	0.909	0.818	0.923
	Above 0.90 (good)			
Incremental fit index (IFI)	Less than 0.90 (poor)	0.91	0.82	0.924
	Above 0.90 (good)			
	Less than 0.05 (good)	0.065	0.089	0.059

Fit Index	Recommended Value	CFA Results	Original Structural Model	Final model
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	Between [0.06-1] (acceptable)			
	Above 1 (poor)			
Chi-square (χ2 /DF)	Less than 3 (good)	2.134	3.134	1.939
	Between [3-5] (acceptable)			
	Above 5 (poor)			
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	Less than 0.80 (poor)	0.895	0.803	0.913
	Between [0.80-0.90] (acceptable)			
	Above 0.90 (good)			
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	Less than 0.80 (poor)	0.819	0.735	0.836
	Between [.80-.90] (acceptable)			
	Above .90 (good)			

The results in Table 9 reveal that the measurement model exhibited acceptable to good fit, as evidenced by all the fit indices that exceeded their respective acceptable thresholds. This indicates that the observed data closely align with the hypothesised theoretical model, demonstrating that the relationships between

the latent constructs and their respective measurement items are adequately captured. Consequently, the CFA measurement model can be considered to have a good fit, providing confidence in the validity and reliability of the constructs assessed within the study.

After confirming the fitness of the CFA model, a structural equation model was constructed to test the hypotheses outlined in Chapter 2 of the study. Initially, the model was estimated without alterations and as indicated in Table 9, the resulting fit indices indicated poor fit, with most falling below the recommended acceptability thresholds. To enhance the fitness of the model, modification indices were employed to identify potential adjustments. Consequently, specific variables and error terms were permitted to co-exist based on the modification indices, facilitating refinements aimed at improving the overall fitness of the model. The adjustments made are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Model fit improvement

BS_	<-->	BR_
INF_	<-->	CR_
ENT_	<-->	INF_
ENT_	<-->	SI_
ENT_	<-->	BR_
ENT_	<-->	CR_
BR_	<-->	CR_
BR_	<-->	SI_

e36	<-->	BR_
e36	<-->	BS_

Eventually, the final structural model had all the fit indices above the recommended thresholds, demonstrating that the model was a good fit. Therefore, the SEM estimates were presented and interpreted in the following section.

4.6.3 Final structural equation model

The final hypothesised model is as follows:

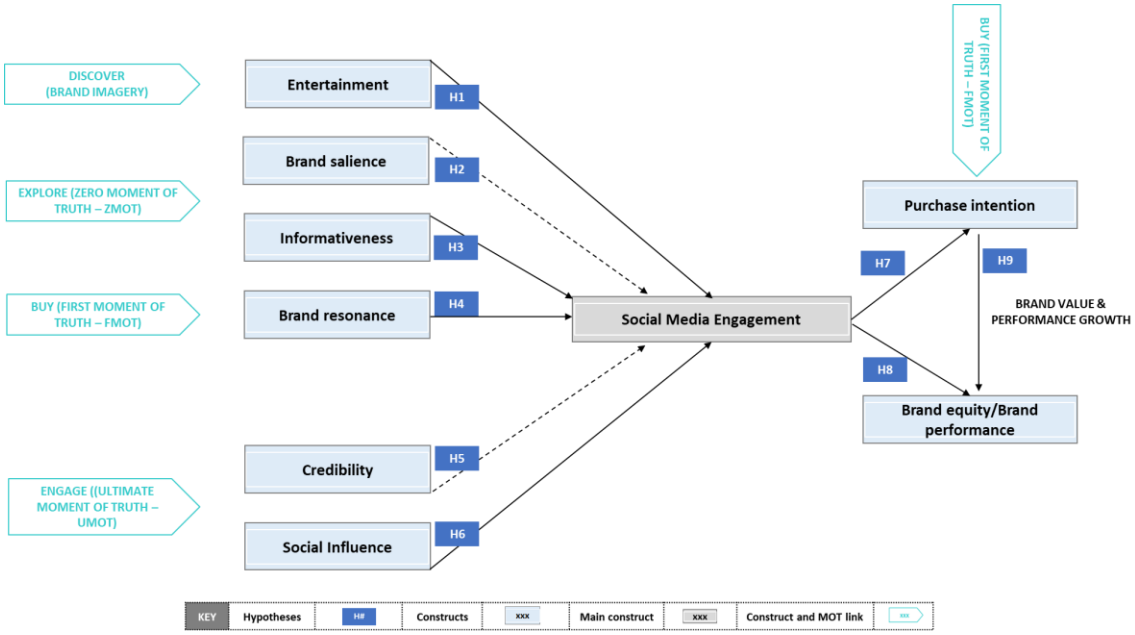


Figure 17: Final Hypothesised Model

The solid arrows show that the relationship was statistically significant, and the broken arrows show that the relationship was insignificant. Therefore, the final hypothesised model shows that engagement with brand advertisements on social

media is significantly influenced by entertainment, informativeness of the advertisements, brand resonance, and social influence. Additionally, the model shows that engagement with social media ads significantly influences purchase intention and the overall performance of the brand. Detailed results of the structural equation model are presented in the following section.

4.7 Results pertaining to hypotheses

The following table summarises the estimates from the SEM.

Table 11: Summary of results

Hypothesis				Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Supported
H1	SBE_	<---	ENT_	0.253	0.066	3.841	***	Yes
H2	SBE_	<---	BS_	0.022	0.079	0.279	0.78	No
H3	SBE_	<---	INF_	0.29	0.109	2.658	0.008	Yes
H4	SBE_	<---	BR_	0.215	0.08	2.698	0.007	Yes
H5	SBE_	<---	CR_	0.056	0.064	0.879	0.379	No
H6	SBE_	<---	SI_	0.285	0.054	5.258	***	Yes
H7	PI_	<---	SBE_	0.15	0.05	2.986	0.003	Yes
H8	BP_	<---	SBE_	0.123	0.045	2.726	0.006	Yes
H9	BP_	<---	PI_	0.336	0.057	5.842	***	Yes

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The entertainment value of social media brand adverts positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.

This study hypothesised that the entertainment value of social media brand adverts positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media. The results indicate a significant positive relationship between entertainment (ENT) and social media brand engagement (SBE) *(B = 0.253, p < .001*). This finding suggests that when brand advertisements are entertaining, customers are more likely to be captivated and engaged, leading to increased interaction with the brand's content. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported in this study.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The brand visibility and salience of the brand positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.

The hypothesis posited that the presence of the brand (BS) positively influences the engagement of the customer with the brand on social networks. However, the results revealed an insignificant relationship between brand prominence and brand engagement on social media *(B = 0.022, p = 0.78).* Consequently, Hypothesis 2 was not supported in this study.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The informativeness of the ad positively influences the engagement of the customer with the brand on social networks.

Results indicate a significant positive relationship between the informativeness of the ad (INF) and the engagement of the social media brand (SBE) (*B = 0.29, p = 0.008*). This finding suggests that when brand advertisements provide valuable and relevant information to customers, they are more likely to engage with the content, supporting Hypothesis 3 in this study.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Resonance of the brand positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social networks.

The study hypothesised that brand resonance (BR) positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social networks. The results reveal a significant positive relationship between brand resonance and social media brand engagement *(B = 0.215, p = 0.007).* Thus, it suggests that when the brand's message resonates with customers' values and beliefs, they are more likely to engage with the content, supporting Hypothesis 4 in this study.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): The credibility of the ad positively influences the engagement of the customer with the brand on social media.

Contrary to the hypothesis, the relationship between the credibility of the advert (CR) and the engagement of the social media brand was not significant (*B = 0.056, p = 0.379*). Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was not supported in this study.

***Hypothesis 6 (H6): Social influence positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media*.**

Results indicate a significant positive relationship between social influence (SI) and the engagement of the social media brand *(B = 0.285, p < .001).* This finding suggests that when brand advertisements leverage social influence, customers are more likely to engage with the content due to perceived social validation, supporting Hypothesis 6 in this study.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Positive social media brand engagement positively influences customer purchase intention.

The study hypothesised a positive relationship between positive social media brand engagement and customer purchase intention (PI). The results show a significant positive relationship between SBE and PI (*B = 0.15, p = 0.003),* indicating that when customers engage positively with a brand on social media, they are more likely to express an intention to purchase the advertised product or service, supporting Hypothesis 7 in this study.

Hypothesis 8 (H8): Positive social media brand engagement positively influences brand performance.

Results indicate a significant positive relationship between positive Engagement and brand performance (BP) (*B = 0.123, p = 0.006).* This suggests that active engagement with a brand on social networks contributes positively to improving the brand's overall performance and equity in the market, supporting Hypothesis 8 in this study.

Hypothesis 9 (H9): Purchase intention positively influences the performance of the brand.

The hypothesis proposed a positive relationship between the intention to purchase (PI) resulting from the engagement of the social media brand and the performance of the brand (BP). Results reveal a significant positive relationship between PI and BP *(B = 0.336, p < .001)*, indicating that the intention of customers to purchase a brand as a result of their engagement with social media advertisements positively impacts the brand's performance and success in the market, supporting hypothesis 9 in this study.

4.8 Summary of the findings

In this section, the results related to the role of social media marketing in driving the growth of local brands were presented and interpreted. The initial sections presented the characteristics of the sample, revealing that 272 responses were valid, making up the final sample for this study. Demographic information was analysed to understand the characteristics of the sample that was used. Furthermore, descriptive statistics were presented, focusing on understanding the characteristics of the data set used, providing insight on the normality of the data distribution. The chapter also presented results on the validity and reliability of the measurement scales employed, ensuring that only reliable and valid constructs were used for hypothesis testing. CFA and SEM were then presented in the final sections of the chapter, and the results revealed that the key drivers

of social media brand engagement were entertainment, brand resonance, informativeness, and social influence. Additionally, the results revealed that engagement with brand ads on social networks improves the intent to buy, which in turn results in improved brand performance. Therefore, social media platforms are instrumental in driving the growth of local brands in South Africa. Further discussion of the results is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS AND FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 focused on the presentation of results on the influence of social media marketing on the growth of South African brands. Specifically, Chapter 4 presented results on the factors that influence social media brand engagement, and how this social media brand engagement influences purchase intention and brand performance. Therefore, this chapter focuses on discussing the results. The results were obtained using SEM as presented in Table 10, and in this chapter the results are discussed for each hypothesis. The first section of this chapter discusses results as they pertain to the factors influencing the engagement of the social media brand. This is followed by a discussion of the impact of social media brand engagement on brand performance.

5.2 Drivers of social media brand engagement

The empirical results, presented in Table 10, provided answers on the key factors that influence the engagement of consumers with local brands on various social media platforms. The results revealed that the key drivers of social media brand engagement were entertainment, brand resonance, informativeness, and social influence. The following subsections provide a detailed discussion of these factors.

5.2.1 Hypothesis 1 (H1): Entertainment

This study found entertainment to be one of the factors that influence the engagement of consumer brands on social networks. Entertainment in this study was constructed to measure the extent to which the content of a social media ad is designed to enhance user experience, provide enjoyment, and captivate an audience. This is the pre-MOT stage where consumers initially encounter a brand through social media. In this study, it was found that most of the respondents

agreed with statements reflecting the entertainment value of social media advertising. The SEM results show that entertainment has a significant positive influence on the engagement of the social media brand. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 which states that the entertainment value of social media brand ads positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media was accepted. This result was expected in this study as previous studies (Ao et al., 2023; Chiang et al., 2018; Hanaysha, 2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Ji et al., 2022) indicate that entertainment is associated with increased engagement with social media advertisements of particular brands.

The significant positive influence of entertainment on the engagement of social media brand suggests that brands can drive consumer interaction by creating content that is enjoyable, captivating, and designed to enhance the user experience. In essence, when social media advertisements are entertaining, they are more likely to catch the audience's attention, fostering a deeper connection with the brand. This deeper connection leads to higher levels of engagement, as consumers are more inclined to like, share, comment, and even take additional actions such as visiting a website or making a purchase (Hanaysha, 2021). The result indicate that entertainment serves as an effective vehicle for local brands to resonate with their target audience and stimulate engagement, which can ultimately translate into greater brand visibility, customer loyalty, and potential revenue growth.

5.2.2 Hypothesis 2 (H2): Brand Salience

In this study, brand prestige measured how brands are remembered and recognised by consumers. Most of the respondents agreed with the statements reflecting how they can easily remember and recognise their favourite local brands. However, the SEM results show that brand salience has no significant effect on social media brand engagement. As a result, Hypothesis 2 which states that the visibility of the brand positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media, was not supported in this study. The result was not

expected as previous studies (Hanaysha, 2021; Hyken, 2016; Lecinski, 2011; Loftis, 2017; Moran et al., 2014b) indicate that brand salience is associated with positive engagement with social media ads.

The result suggests that, in the context of local South African brands, factors other than brand recognition are more crucial in driving consumer interaction on social media platforms. Although most respondents admit that they can easily remember and recognise their favourite local brands, this recognition does not necessarily translate into active engagement, such as liking, commenting, or sharing social media content. The result contradicts earlier studies (Hanaysha, 2021; Hyken, 2016; Lecinski, 2011; Moran et al., 2014a) that established a positive link between brand exposure and social media engagement, indicating that other elements such as entertainment could be more critical in the context of the South African market. This unexpected result implies that while brand prominence remains valuable for general brand awareness, it may not be a reliable driver for increasing social media engagement. Brands seeking to boost engagement should therefore focus on other strategies, such as creating engaging and interactive content, to connect with their audience and foster deeper social media interactions.

5.2.3 Hypothesis 3 (H3): Informativeness

Informativeness was found to be a significant factor in influencing customer engagement with local brands on social media. In this study, information refers to the quality, quantity, and relevance of information provided about products, services, and brands in social media advertisements. This factor plays a crucial role in Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT), which is the point where consumers gather information online before making purchase decisions or engaging further with a brand (Lecinski, 2011). The study revealed that most of the respondents found social media ads informative. The results of SEM show that informativeness has a significant positive influence on social media brand engagement. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported in this study. This result was expected as evidence

from previous studies suggests that the informativeness of a social media ad result in more engagement with the advert (Chahal et al., 2020; Chiang et al., 2018; Hanaysha, 2021; Rahim & Haida, 2015). This result indicates that when social media ads provide relevant and high-quality information about products, services, or brands, they tend to generate more interaction from consumers, such as likes, comments, shares, or click-throughs. The implication is that consumers are more likely to engage with advertisements that offer useful information, helping them make informed decisions about their purchases or further interaction with a brand. Therefore, for local brands that want to increase their social media engagement, prioritising information in their advertisements can be a highly effective strategy.

5.2.4 Hypothesis 4 (H4): Brand resonance

The study also revealed that brand resonance is a significant driver of social media brand engagement in South Africa. Brand resonance refers to the depth of emotional connection and interaction between consumers and brands, leading to customer loyalty and advocacy (Widyastuti, 2023). Within the context of the customer journey, brand resonance aligns with the First Moment of Truth (FMOT), the stage at which a consumer develops a deeper relationship with a brand, usually after experiencing the product or service for the first time. The study found that the majority of the respondents agreed with statements indicating a strong sense of connection with their favourite brands, highlighting that brands that resonate with consumers are likely to enjoy higher levels of engagement on social media, as well as greater customer loyalty and positive word of mouth advocacy. The results of SEM reveal that brand resonance has a significant positive influence on social media brand engagement, suggesting that Hypothesis 4 was supported in this study. This result confirms the expectations of this study and aligns with the findings from earlier research (Chakraborty & Bhowmick, 2013; Leckie et al., 2022; Ntobaki & Buthelezi, 2023; Safeer, 2024), which stress the role of brand resonance in fostering customer loyalty and advocacy through social media platforms. This result suggests that when

consumers feel a strong connection to a brand, they are more likely to engage with its content on social media, leading to enhanced interaction and customer participation. The implication is that brands should focus on building meaningful relationships with consumers, cultivating a sense of loyalty, and belonging, which, in turn, drives greater engagement across social media channels.

5.2.5 Hypothesis 5 (H5): Credibility

Credibility was constructed in this study to measure the perceptions of respondents about the trustworthiness, reliability, and quality of social media advertisement content. However, most of the respondents disagreed with statements indicating that social media ads are credible and trustworthy, suggesting a general scepticism towards such content. Consequently, the SEM results showed that credibility has no significant impact on social media brand engagement, indicating that Hypothesis 5 was not supported. This finding was unexpected, given that prior studies (Ao et al., 2023; Balaban & Mustătea, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Vilčeková, 2016) had established credibility as a significant factor in driving customer engagement with social media advertising. The lack of support for this hypothesis could be attributed to broader trends of distrust in digital advertising or a specific disconnect between social media content and consumers' expectations of credibility (Chiang et al., 2018; Lou & Yuan, 2019). This result underscores the importance of addressing concerns about transparency and authenticity in social media advertising to build consumer trust and potentially improve engagement.

5.2.6 Hypothesis 6 (H6): Social influence

The study identified social influence as one of the key factors that significantly drives the engagement of the social media brand. Social influence, in this context, refers to the extent to which respondents believe that opinions and attitudes shared by other social media users can shape consumer behaviour and impact purchasing decisions. Regarding the customer engagement journey, social

influence aligns with the Ultimate Moment of Truth (UMOT), where consumers not only make decisions, but also share their experiences and opinions, further influencing others in their network. The study found that most of the respondents agreed with statements reflecting the role of social influence, suggesting that peer opinions and shared experiences on social media play a significant role in shaping consumer engagement with brands. This finding emphasizes the importance of creating social proof and leveraging user-generated content to drive brand engagement on social media platforms.

The results of this study show that social influence has a significant and positive influence on the engagement of the social media brand, suggesting that Hypothesis 6 was supported. This result was expected as evidence from previous studies indicates a positive relationship between social influence and social medial brand engagement (Chahal et al., 2020; Doan & Thang, 2020; Mariani, 2017). The result implies that when consumers observe favourable opinions or behaviours from other social media users regarding a brand, they are more likely to engage with that brand's content, whether through likes, comments, shares, or other forms of interaction. Social influence operates through a kind of peer pressure or social proof, where individuals are influenced by the behaviours and recommendations of their social circles (Mariani, 2017). Consequently, brands that can harness this dynamic by encouraging user-generated content, testimonials, or social sharing are likely to see increased engagement on social media platforms. This highlights the importance of cultivating a strong online community and facilitating interactions among users to amplify the impact of social influence on brand engagement.

5.3 Social media brand engagement and performance

The study also investigated the relationship between social media brand engagement and brand performance or brand equity. The relationship between social media brand engagement and purchase intention was also empirically tested. These results are discussed in this section.

5.3.1 Hypothesis 7 (H7): Social media brand engagement and purchase intention

The engagement of the social media brand assessed how much consumers interact with the ads of local brands on social media platforms. This included actions such as liking, commenting, sharing, or following brand-related content. Meanwhile, the intention of buying evaluated the probability or willingness of consumers to buy a product or service in the future. The study revealed that most of the respondents showed a high level of engagement with their favourite local brands on social media and also expressed a strong intention to make purchases. This suggests that consumers who engage more with brands on social networks are also more inclined to consider purchasing from those brands. Results from the SEM results reveal that social media brand engagement has a significant positive influence on purchase intention, supporting hypothesis 7. This result was expected in this study, as previous studies also found that high levels of engagement with brands on social media are associated with increased purchase intention (Ao et al., 2023; Bilal et al., 2021a; Choedon & Lee, 2020; Hanaysha, 2021; Ntobaki & Buthelezi, 2023; Wei et al., 2023).

The result suggests that when consumers interact with a brand's social media content, they are more likely to consider buying from that brand. As consumers engage with local brands through likes, comments, or shares, they build familiarity and trust, reinforcing the idea that these brands are relevant to their needs and interests (Ao et al., 2023). This engagement likely leads to a higher degree of brand loyalty, which in turn increases the likelihood of purchasing. The implication for South African brands is that investing in social media marketing not only fosters a more engaged customer base but also translates into tangible outcomes, such as increased sales and customer retention.

5.3.2 Hypothesis 8 (H8): Social media brand engagement and brand equity

Brand equity in this study was constructed to measure the overall perceived performance of local brands considering aspects such as brand image, awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. The results revealed that the engagement of the social media brand has a positive influence on the equity of the brand. The positive relationship between social media brand engagement and brand equity indicates that when consumers actively interact with a brand on social media, it enhances the brand's overall perceived performance and market value. This result supports Hypothesis 8 and is consistent with previous studies suggesting that high levels of social media engagement are correlated with improved brand growth and performance (Chahal et al., 2020; Leckie et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2023). As more people see and engage with the brand, it builds a positive brand image, which is a crucial aspect of brand equity. This involvement also fosters a sense of community and connection, reinforcing brand loyalty (Safeer, 2024). When consumers feel a personal connection to a brand, they are more likely to return for repeat purchases, which directly increases brand performance. Furthermore, the increased engagement on social media often serves as a form of social proof. When others see consumers engaging with a brand positively, it can influence their perception, leading them to view the brand as trustworthy and reliable (Doan & Thang, 2020). This perceived quality further enhances brand equity. Therefore, the result that social media brand engagement drives the performance of local brands is now accepted in the context of South Africa.

5.3.3 Hypothesis 9 (H9): Purchase intention and brand equity

The study examined the relationship between purchase intention and brand equity to determine whether the likelihood of purchasing from a brand contributes to improved brand performance. The results confirmed that the intention to purchase has a significant and positive correlation with brand equity, supporting

hypothesis 9. This result aligns with previous research, which found a similar positive relationship between purchase intention and brand equity (Roozy et al., 2014; Tharmi & Senthilnathan, 2012). The result suggests that when consumers are inclined to buy a product or service from a brand, it enhances the overall market value and standing of the brand. Purchase intention is an indicator of consumer interest and willingness to invest in a brand, implying that these consumers are likely to become repeat customers. This behaviour directly contributes to brand loyalty, an essential component of brand equity.

In addition, high purchase intent among consumers can also lead to increased word of mouth recommendations and advocacy, further boosting brand equity (Tharmi & Senthilnathan, 2012). When consumers express an intention to purchase from a brand, they are not only likely to follow through with the purchase, but also share their positive experiences with others. This organic promotion can increase brand awareness and improve the perceived quality of the brand, improving its image and equity.

5.4 Chapter Conclusion

The chapter focused on discussing the results from the study of the drivers of the role of social media marketing in driving the growth of South African brands. The study considered the customer's journey from discovering a brand to ultimately purchasing it and experiencing it. Specifically, this chapter discusses results related to factors that influence social media brand engagement. The study found that the main factors driving brand engagement on social networks are entertainment, brand resonance, informativeness, and social influence. In addition, results revealed that engagement with brand advertisements on social media enhance purchase intention which in turn results in improved brand performance. Thus, the discussion revealed that these results are consistent with previous studies; hence the results are now accepted in the South African context. Conclusions based on the results are provided in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 presented a discussion of how social media marketing influences the growth of local brands in South Africa. This chapter outlines the conclusions of the study, organised according to each research question. The chapter addresses the questions posed at the beginning of the study and draws conclusions relevant to the South African context. Furthermore, the chapter provides recommendations based on the results of the study. The chapter also suggests areas for further research, taking into account the limitations identified in this study.

6.2 Conclusions regarding the main drivers of social media brand engagement in South Africa.

The first research objective was to identify the main drivers of the engagement of social media brands in South Africa. To achieve this objective, data were collected from South African social media users, and this was analysed using structural equation modelling. The results of this analysis highlighted four main factors driving social media brand engagement: entertainment, brand resonance, informativeness, and social influence. When comparing these findings with previous studies, there is consistency in the factors identified as key drivers of the engagement of social media brand engagement. Studies point to the importance of entertainment, social influence, brand resonance, and informativeness in engaging customers on social media platforms. However, what distinguishes this current study from previous research is that this study adopted a comprehensive approach to the customer journey examining Moments of Truth (MOTs), to explore how various factors drive social media brand engagement and, ultimately, contribute to the growth of local brands in South Africa.

The MOT framework allows for a detailed analysis of key interaction points where consumers engage with brands on social media. Entertainment is crucial at the ZMOT, where initial brand discovery occurs, while brand resonance and social influence are integral to the FMOT and UMOT, as they facilitate deeper connections and peer validation, respectively. Informativeness is essential throughout the journey, providing consumers with important information to guide their purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, this study went one step further by examining the impact of social media brand engagement on overall performance and growth of local brands in South Africa. There is limited evidence on how social media marketing contributes to brand growth and performance. This study added to the existing literature by first identifying the drivers of social media engagement and then examining the relationship between engagement and brand performance. This comprehensive approach allows for a detailed understanding of the dynamics involved in social media marketing and brand growth.

Therefore, this study concludes that entertainment, brand resonance, informativeness, and social influence are critical factors in driving social media brand engagement in South Africa. This means that local brands aiming to increase engagement on social media should focus on creating captivating content, fostering a sense of connection with customers, providing valuable information, and encouraging social interactions.

6.3 Conclusions on the influence of social media brand engagement influence on purchase intention and brand equity.

The second research objective was to understand how the engagement of the social media brand influences the intention to purchase and the equity of the brand. The results of this study indicate a significant positive relationship between the engagement of the social media brand and both the intention to purchase and

the equity of the brand. These findings are consistent with previous studies that suggest a strong connection between consumer engagement with social media advertising and an increased propensity to buy from the brand, leading to improved brand equity and overall brand performance.

However, this study differs from the existing body of literature in that the current study extended the Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model to include the role of social media marketing in driving purchase intention and improving brand equity, with a focus on local South African brands. This extension highlights the importance of social media engagement as a critical component in shaping consumer behaviour and brand perception. This study emphasised that when consumers actively engage with brands on social media, it creates a pathway for greater purchase intent and ultimately contributes to stronger brand equity.

The results suggest that local South African brands can use social media marketing to promote consumer engagement, which in turn can drive greater purchase intention and improve brand equity. The conclusion of this study reinforces the importance of social media marketing in building a robust brand presence and provides practical implications for local brands seeking to capitalise on the potential of social media to drive growth and success.

6.4 Conclusions on the influence of social media marketing on the growth of local brands in South Africa.

The overarching objective of this study was to assess the impact of social media marketing on the growth of local brands in South Africa. This was examined by analysing the degree of consumer engagement with social media advertisements from local brands and evaluating brand equity to measure growth. Additionally, the study tested the relationship between purchase intention and brand equity, finding that purchase intention also has a positive influence on brand performance. This study shows that social media marketing is a powerful tool for local brands in South Africa to drive growth and achieve greater brand equity.

These findings have practical implications for local brands that seek to leverage social media to expand their market presence and strengthen their competitive advantage.

6.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and considering the South African context, this study made the following recommendations for local brands to use social media marketing effectively to continuously grow their brands:

- Entertainment was found to be one of the key drivers of engagement. Therefore, this study recommends that local brand producers focus on creating engaging and entertaining content that captures the attention of their target audience on social media platforms. By incorporating elements such as humour, storytelling, and interactive features into their content, brands can increase consumer engagement and encourage sharing, ultimately expanding their reach and attracting new customers. This can be achieved by collaborating with local influencers or content creators who resonate with the brand's target audience, thereby leveraging their existing following and credibility to enhance brand engagement.

- Brand resonance was another factor found to drive engagement. Therefore, this study recommends that local brands should prioritise authenticity in their social media marketing efforts to build a strong brand resonance with their audience. Brands can establish emotional connections with consumers, fostering loyalty and advocacy. This can be achieved by sharing behind-the-scenes glimpses of the brand's production process, highlighting local partnerships and community initiatives, and actively engaging with followers through personalised responses and conversations.

- Informativeness was also found to positively influence engagement. Therefore, this study recommends that producers focus on providing informative and educational content that adds value to their audience's lives and addresses their needs and interests. Adverts should share useful tips, tutorials, product demonstrations, and industry insights relevant to their target audience. This results in brands positioning themselves as trusted authorities in their niche, enhancing brand credibility, and attracting loyal followers. This can be achieved through the creation of blog posts, videos, infographics, and how-to guides that educate and inspire consumers, ultimately driving brand engagement and loyalty.

- Another key factor found to be influence engagement is social influence. This result implies that local brands must harness the power of social influence and user-generated content to amplify their social media marketing efforts. Local brands should collaborate with satisfied customers, brand ambassadors, and local influencers to create authentic and relatable content. This helps existing networks and communities increase brand visibility and credibility. Encourage user-generated content through contests, challenges, and branded hashtags can also generate excitement around the brand, driving organic engagement, and fostering a sense of community among followers.

- This study also recommends that local brands continuously monitor and optimise their social media marketing efforts to drive purchase intention and improve brand performance. This can be achieved by tracking key performance indicators such as engagement rates, click-through rates, conversion rates, and customer feedback to identify areas for improvement and refinement.

6.6 Suggestions for further research

This study highlighted the factors driving social media brand engagement and its influence on purchase intention and brand equity. However, it is important to explore the long-term effects of the engagement of social media brand on customer loyalty and retention. Future research could focus on assessing whether social media participation results in sustained loyalty and repeat purchases over time and how brands can maintain this involvement to foster long-term customer relationships.

Social media platforms are constantly evolving, with new features, trends and user behaviours emerging over time (Safeer, 2024). Future research could examine the impact of these emerging trends, such as short-form video content (TikTok, Instagram Reels), live streaming, and social commerce, on the engagement and intention of the social media brand. This can provide information on how local brands can adapt and take advantage of the latest social media developments to improve their marketing effectiveness and drive brand growth.

A mixed-method study would improve the current research on social media marketing and its impact on the growth of local brands in South Africa by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. This integration allows for a comprehensive understanding of the factors driving social media brand engagement. Quantitative methods can quantify relationships and trends, such as the impact of social media participation on purchase intention, while qualitative methods explore the reasons behind these patterns, revealing consumer motivations and contextual factors.

Table 12: Consistency Matrix

RQ #	Literature Review	State Research Question	State Hypothesis	Data collection detail	Data analysis method
1	Lecinski, 2011; Moran et al., 2014b; Bazi et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Chiang et al., 2018; Ducoffe, 1996; Liu et al., 2021; Ao et al., 2023; Hanaysha, 2021; Ji et al; Widyastuti, 2023; Smith et al., 2012, Gao & Feng, 2016; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Taylor et al.,	What are the main drivers of social media brand engagement in South Africa?	H1: The entertainment value of social media brand ads positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media. H2: Brand visibility and salience positively influences the engagement of the customer with the brand on social networks. H3: Informativeness positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.	A cross-sectional online survey was utilised as the research instrument to gather data. A 5-point Likert was selected as the measurement scale for the questionnaire.	Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

RQ #	Literature Review	State Research Question	State Hypothesis	Data collection detail	Data analysis method
	2011; (Hyken, 2016; Keller, 1993, 2001 2003; Rahim & Haida, 2015; Chakraborty & Bhowmick, 2013; Safeer, 2024; Sreejesh et al., 2020; Kreimer et al., 2022; Becdach et al., 2022b; Vilčeková, 2016; Balaban & Mustătea, 2019		H4: Brand resonance positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media. H5: Interactivity positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media. H6: Credibility positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media. H7: Social influence positively influences customer engagement with the brand on social media.		
2	Choedon & Lee, 2020; Ntobaki & Buthelezi, Ao et al., 2023; Chahal	How does social media brand engagement influence purchase	H8: Customer engagement with the brand on social media	A cross-sectional online survey was utilised as the research instrument to gather data.	Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Exploratory Factor Analysis

RQ #	Literature Review	State Research Question	State Hypothesis	Data collection detail	Data analysis method
	et al., 2020; Doan & Thang, 2020; Keller, 1993; Kreimer et al., 2022; Leckie et al., 2022; Safeer, 2024; Wei et al., 2023	intention and brand equity?	positively influences purchase intention. H9: Customer engagement with the brand on social media positively influences brand equity and performance.	A 5-point Likert was selected as the measurement scale for the questionnaire.	(EFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)
3	Pappu et al., 2005; Roozy et al., 2014; Tharmi & Senthilnathan, 2012; Wei et al., 2023; Kgonare & Boitumelo, 2020; Keller, 1993, 2001, 2003; Keller & Osborn, 2009	How does social media marketing influence the growth and performance of local brands in South Africa?	H10: Brand equity/performance is positively influenced by purchase intention	A cross-sectional online survey was utilised as the research instrument to gather data. A 5-point Likert was selected as the measurement scale for the questionnaire.	Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

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APPENDIX (A) Participant Information Sheet



Good day,

My name is Nishanta Reddy. I am a master's student in the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Professor Adheesh Budree and as a component of my qualification, I am conducting a research study about the use of social media to drive the growth South African brands.

I am inviting you to take part in the research by responding to an online questionnaire. Should you decide to take part in this research study, the time taken for the completion of the online questionnaire will be approximately 10 minutes. The questionnaire will be sent out digitally on the 6th of March 2024.

During the research activity, you will be requested to provide some general information related to your age range, gender and location in addition to questions specific to the study. Your participation in this research study and any information collected will remain confidential through the research study process.

If you decide to take part in the research study, it is strictly on a voluntary basis, and you can stop at any point during the questionnaire should you not want to participate any further. It is important to note that you will not get any direct benefits, or payment should you agree to participate in the research study. There will also be no cost for you to take part in the research study.

Other researchers may use the data collected and findings from this research study, this would exclude any personal information collected from you. This data will be stored with password protected access in the university database and be destroyed after a period of five years.

Upon completion of the study, no names or any identifiers will be included in the findings and final report. This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to share this with you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Researcher:
Nishanta Reddy 2514977@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor:
Professor Adheesh Budree adheesh.budree@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX (B) Participant Agreement Form

Title of project: The use of social media to drive the growth of South African brands

Name of researcher: Nishanta Reddy

I, ..., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me, and I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I agree that the data I provide in the questionnaire I complete will be analysed may be used by the researcher in their research report/ manuscript/book chapter.	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my questionnaire may be used by the researcher in their research report/ manuscript/book chapter.	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report/manuscript/book chapter)	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my questionnaire response for other activity (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.	YES	NO

..... (signature)
..... (name of participant)
..... (date)

..... (signature)
..... (name of researcher/person seeking consent)
..... (date)

APPENDIX (C) Research Instrument (questionnaire)

MOT and Social Media | Local Brands

Thank you for participating in this survey and contributing to the research on "The use of social media to drive the growth of South African brands."
The survey has 5 short sections to complete:

1) General demographic data
2) General social media usage
3) Drivers of social media consumer brand engagement
4) Social media brand engagement
5) Brand Equity and Brand Performance

General Information:

This is an anonymous and strictly confidential survey which will take approximately *8-10 minutes* to complete. There are no costs for participating and no incentives will be given to participants. Demographic information will be requested but no personal data will be required. The information required from this survey will be used solely for academic purposes.

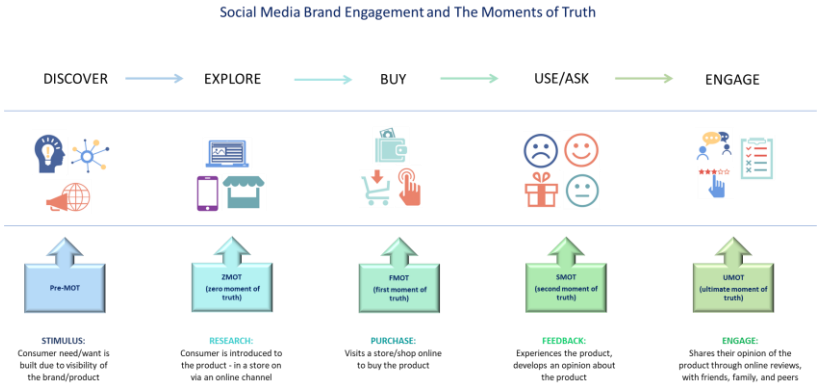
This research study will be written up as a research report and will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Participation is entirely voluntarily, therefore in clicking the arrow to CONTINUE below to complete the survey, this will be considered as consent to participate. You are free to withdraw from the survey at any point.

Research Study Information:

Social media has interconnected various aspects of our day to day lives through its different platforms. There has been a shift in how we engage with, across and on these mediums as users. The “Moments of Truth” (MOT) is a concept that describes the interaction across different touchpoints between a customer and a brand. These can occur in the digital and/or the physical space where social media engagement plays a critical part. The below diagram provides a visualisation of this concept.

As you proceed through the survey, a reminder to please respond in the context of South African brands for those specific questions.



SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Q1 **Please select your age group**

- 18 - 29 (1)
- 30 - 39 (2)
- 40 - 49 (3)
- 50 - 59 (4)
- 60+ (5)

Q2 **Please select your gender**

- Female (1)
- Male (2)
- Non-Binary (3)
- Prefer not to say (4)

Q3 **Please select the region/province you currently reside in**

- Gauteng (1)
- Kwa-Zulu Natal (2)
- Western Cape (3)
- Eastern Cape (4)
- Free State (5)
- Northern Cape (6)
- Mpumalanga (7)
- North West (8)
- Limpopo (9)
- I do not reside in South Africa (10)

SECTION 2: GENERAL SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

Q1 **Do you have access to social media or social commerce platforms?**

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q2 **Are you active on social media or social commerce platforms?**

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q3 **Please select the social media platforms that you frequently use** *(you can select more than one)*

- Facebook (1)
- YouTube (2)
- Instagram (3)
- X (Twitter) (4)
- TikTok (5)
- Other (6) _____

Q4 **On average, how much time do you spend on social media per day?**

- 30mins - 1 hour (1)
- 1 - 2 hours (2)
- 2 - 3 hours (3)
- 3 - 4 hours (4)
- 4 - 5 hours (5)
- 5 hours + (6)

INSTRUCTIONS

For sections 3 and 4, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements as they relate to your interaction or engagement with local (South African) brand/s on social media, or through social media marketing.

SECTION 3: DRIVERS OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

Q1 **ENTERTAINMENT** - *content designed to enhance user experience, provide enjoyment. and captivate an audience*. **Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the below statements on ENTERTAINMENT by selecting an appropriate response**.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
The content of social media advertising is attractive to me (1)					
The content of social media advertising is interesting (2)					
Social media advertising content is enjoyable (3)					

Q2 **BRAND SALIENCE** - *how brands are remembered and recognised by consumers*.
Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the below statements on BRAND SALIENCE by selecting an appropriate response.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I know how the symbol/logo of my favourite brand looks like (1)					
I have no difficulties in imagining my favourite brand in my mind (2)					
I can recognize my favourite brand among other competing brands (3)					
I associate my favourite brand with specific attributes that distinguishes it from each other. (4)					

Q3 **INFORMATIVENESS** - *the quality, amount, and value of information available for products, services and brands.* **Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the below statements on INFORMATIVENESS by selecting an appropriate response.**

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Social media advertising provides information on products (1)					
Social media advertising provides the complete information on products (2)					
Social media advertising can let me know more about products (3)					

Q4 **BRAND RESONANCE** - *the connection and engagement between a consumer and a brand that drives loyalty, advocacy*

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the below statements on BRAND RESONANCE by selecting an appropriate response.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I feel a strong emotional connection to a particular brand (1)					
I frequently recommend a brand to others (2)					
My favourite brand reflects my personal values and lifestyle (3)					
Being associated with a particular brand enhances my self-image (4)					

Q5 **PURCHASE INTENTION** - *Brand/product engagement resulting in the likelihood or willingness to purchase a product/service in the future***. Please indicate to what extent you**

agree or disagree with the below statements on PURCHASE INTENTION by selecting an appropriate response.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I will seriously consider purchasing a particular brand (1)					
I intend to buy a particular brand (2)					
My willingness to purchase a particular brand is high (3)					

Q6 **INTERACTIVITY** - *level of engagement between individuals and platforms driving two-way communication*. **Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the below statements for INTERACTIVITY by selecting an appropriate response.**

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
The content of social media advertising is similar to my interests. (1)					
Social media advertising can meet my demand. (2)					
The type of merchandise in the social media advertising is similar to my purchase preference (3)					

Q7 **CREDIBILITY** - *trustworthiness, reliability and quality that is linked to expertise through social media content.* **Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the below statements for CREDIBILITY by selecting an appropriate response.**

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
The content of social media advertising is trustworthy (1)					
The source of social media advertising is reliable. (2)					
The content of social media advertising is correct (3)					

Q8 **SOCIAL INFLUENCE** - *ability to shape opinions and attitudes of users to impact decisions, preferences, and actions.* **Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the below statements for SOCIAL INFLUENCE by selecting an appropriate response.**

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I pay attention to the opinions from social media users. (1)					
I pay attention to the interactions with social media users (2)					
Friends on social media are very important to me (3)					

SECTION 4: SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND ENGAGEMENT

Q1 **SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND ENGAGEMENT -**

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements for SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND ENGAGEMENT by selecting an appropriate response.

SECTION 5: BRAND EQUITY AND BRAND PERFORMANCE

BRAND EQUITY AND BRAND PERFORMANCE - ***brand equity is the commercial value and strength of a brand; brand performance is based on brand effectiveness and delivery against various criteria.***
For section 5, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements as they relate to your interaction or engagement with local (South African) brand/s and the measures - Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Perceived Quality, and Brand Quality

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I am interested in receiving company's communications about products via social media (1)					
I follow regular updates of product launches on social media (2)					
I like to browse social media to extract product information (3)					
Social media is useful for gathering information about a product or service (4)					
I like to talk and learn about products on social media (5)					
I like to share my opinions about product with others in the social media community (6)					

Q1 **BRAND AWARENESS - Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements for BRAND AWARENESS by selecting an appropriate response.**

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I easily recognise my favourite brand among other brands (1)					
I easily recall the logo of the brand (2)					
I pay attention to what other members share about this brand (3)					

Q2 **BRAND IMAGE - Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements for BRAND IMAGE by selecting an appropriate response.**

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
The brand is reliable (1)					
The brand has a good image amongst its customers (2)					
The brand provides more products and services than its competitors (3)					

Q3 **PERCEIVED QUALITY - Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements for PERCEIVED QUALITY by selecting an appropriate response.**

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
The quality of its product is extremely high (1)					
The likelihood that its products would be functional is very high (2)					

Q4 **BRAND QUALITY - Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements for BRAND QUALITY by selecting an appropriate response.**

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I will continue to buy the products of this brand (1)					
If my favourite brand is not available in one store, I would buy it from another store (2)					
I am willing to wait if the brand is not immediately available (3)					
I prefer this brand over the other brand (4)					

APPENDIX (D) Ethics Approval notification

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/DB2514977/676

This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below).
This certificate is only valid if permission has been granted by the Registrar's Office of Wits University.

Project title	The use of social media to drive the growth of South African brands
Investigator / Researcher	Miss Nishanta Reddy
Nature of Project	MM (Digital Business)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality.
Issue Date of Certificate	8/29/2023
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Dr Pius Oba ☎ +27 11 717 3976 +27 82 733 6587 pius.oba@wits.ac.za

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Et Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research a guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

30/08/2023
Date:

APPENDIX (E) Research Permission Letter

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY REGISTRAR

15 March 2024

Nishanta Reddy
Student Number (2514977)
Master of Management
Wits Business School

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

"The use of social media to drive the growth of South African brands."

This letter serves to confirm that the above project has received permission to be conducted on University premises, and/or involving staff and/or students of the University as research participants. In undertaking this research, you agree to abide by all University regulations for conducting research on campus and to respect participants' rights to withdraw from participation at any time.

If you are conducting research on certain student cohorts, year groups or courses within specific Schools and within the teaching term, permission must be sought from Heads of School or individual academics.

Ethical clearance has been obtained. (Protocol number: WBS/DB2514977/676)

Research Expiration: (Research submission date)

Nicoleen Potgieter
University Deputy Registrar