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The influence of mobile marketing on small to medium enterprise performance

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THE INFLUENCE OF MOBILE MARKETING ON SMALL TO MEDIUM ENTERPRISE PERFORMANCE

A research report submitted by

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Abstract

Given the ubiquity of digital marketing techniques and increasing mobile adoption rates, this research was aimed at investigating the influence of mobile marketing on small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) performance by considering its influence on brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales. Online and paper-based questionnaire surveys were conducted, and 254 South African SMEs were obtained from the identified sample. The study tested three hypotheses using structural equation modeling. All hypotheses displayed significant relationships per testing, as findings revealed that mobile marketing has a positive effect on brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales. Mobile marketing appears to have an even stronger influence on sales, which is insightful for managers and marketers within SMEs looking to employ digital marketing techniques that will aid the improvement of overall business performance. Managerial implications highlight that managers within the SME sector are now in a better position to make decisions on how to invest their limited resources on specific (or a combination of) digital marketing technologies that can assist them in enhancing their digital marketing/business objectives that are geared towards increasing performance. This study is particularly important in the local South African context, where a lack of marketing skills is one of the reasons for SME failure in the country. Ultimately, the study contributes to the literature and theoretical knowledge on the influence of digital marketing technologies on marketing/business objectives of small to medium enterprises.

DECLARATION

I, _Lorraine Abena Larbi-Odam____ _____, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgments. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Strategic Marketing at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Signed at ……CENTURION…… On the ……15TH…….. day

of …APRIL…… 2020…..

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is dedicated to the Almighty, All knowing, and Everpresent God. He has been faithful in walking this journey with me, giving me the financial means, the strength, and the courage to start and finish.

uThixo ulungile,ufanelwe kukubongwa, ufanelwe kukudunyiswa, ngoba uthembekile ezintweni zonke, ngoba Yena unguYehova, uThixo wam. Enkosi Bawo!

To my late grandfathers, Samuel Larbi-Odam, Mnyamezeli Hargreaves Dontsa, medaase and enkosi ngayo yonke into.

To my late grandmother Victoria Adwoa Adomaa Ofosu, after whom I am also named, medaase. You all continue to live on in our hearts. I am because you were.

To my grandmother Majokonea Nonyathikazi Isabella Dontsa, kea leboha Ma Mofokeng.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of mobile marketing on the performance of South African SMEs. Three constructs (brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales) denote performance, and the report seeks to understand the influence of mobile marketing on these three constructs to determine the effect of mobile marketing on SME performance. The constructs were selected based on them having been used in previous studies that explored their effects on firm/business performance (Homburg, Klarmann, & Schimdt, 2010; Kim & Kim, 2005; Livne, Simpson, & Talmor, 2011; Thome et al 2012; Tsai, Cheung, Lo, 2010). This report focusses on SMEs because around the world, SMEs play a significant role in GDP growth and job creation. A considerable amount of research shows that this is true for economies in emerging markets as well as some stagnant, negative growth, mature economies in more developed countries. (Harvie & Lee, 2003; Katua, 2014; Madanchian et al, 2016; Saleh & Ndubisi, 2006). However, with SMEs sometimes bringing similar offerings into the markets in which they operate, the ability to make use of marketing to differentiate themselves can be a key determinant for success. Marketing, when implemented correctly, plays a vital role in determining business performance (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick, 2013). Having said this, marketing is evolving as we enter the technological age, and a plethora of digital marketing technologies and strategies have become available for use by SMEs. Digital marketing has become a buzz term, with very few people being able to properly articulate its value or understanding what digital marketing techniques yield best results. While most studies (Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat, & Fabeil, 2014; Karjaluoto & Taiminen, 2015; Mokhtar, 2015) have looked into the factors impacting the adoption of digital marketing technologies, insufficient research exists on each of the digital marketing technologies/techniques and the results they can yield for SMEs (Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlströmc & Freundt, 2014).

Therefore, this study seeks to primarily isolate a digital marketing technology/technique (mobile marketing) in an effort to understand its influence on the performance of SMEs, considering its effect on brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales. This is important because SMEs, unlike large corporations, generally do not have the wherewithal to invest in traditional marketing efforts on multiple channels (Jain, 2014). Digital marketing often presents cheaper alternatives to traditional marketing (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016); however, these alternatives should be explored and understood to realize their value add. Secondly, this research intends to contribute to the body of research on digital marketing technologies in relation to SMEs.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

South African SMEs have become increasingly important to the South African government as it tries to implement efforts to grow the economy. These efforts are evidenced by the creation of the ministry of small business development, which aims to create an enabling environment for SMEs through different policies and programs (Bureau of economic research, 2016). Accounting for 91% of formal business, SMEs in South Africa made up more than half of the contributions to national gross domestic product (GPD) and employed 60% of the labour force in 2010 (Kongolo, 2010). Although the contributions remain substantial, these figures had dropped slightly as at Q3 of 2017, with the decrease being attributed to a contraction in SME profits (SMME quarterly update, 2018). Furthermore, South African SMEs, having been commended for their contribution to employment, remain underdeveloped when compared to SMEs across the world (TIPS, 2016). At 75%, South African SMEs have the highest failure rate by international standards (Olawale & Garwe, 2010).

To better understand the reasons for failure, Cant and Wiid (2013) conducted a study on challenges facing South African SMEs. Their findings revealed various macro and micro environmental issues facing SMEs, with crime being the most significant within the macro-environmental factor. South African SMEs have over the years spent a considerable amount of money on security as opposed to investing in initiatives that will

assist in growing their market share. At a micro level, and within the context of marketing, a poor understanding of the “4 P’s” of marketing stood out. The SMEs in this study demonstrated (amongst other things) that they made use of unjustified pricing practices, and had a poor understanding of their target audiences and the concept of branding. Given that marketing is crucial in creating brand awareness, acquiring new customers, and ultimately increasing profits and market share, it is conceivable that SME failure is partly related to poor marketing capabilities – a view studied and proven by Van Scheers (2012) in a study on challenges facing South African SMEs and SMEs in other developing African countries.

While SMEs have very little control over macro-environmental factors such as crime and the funds channeled toward efforts to fight it, they do have some control over micro-environmental factors such as the marketing channels they use, and what to spend on these channels. The growing popularity of digital marketing technologies presents a greater scope of options to be considered by SMEs in their marketing decisions. Various studies show that SMEs have a positive attitude and a real desire to incorporate technology into their marketing strategies. Technology is seen as a means by which SMEs can engage with customers more interactively. However, there is a poor understanding of return on investment, and ways in which these technologies can be incorporated into existing models and traditional marketing strategies. (Alford & Page, 2015; Jones, Simmons, Packham, Beynon-Davies, & Pickernell, 2014)

It is against this backdrop that the current study is being conducted. With SMEs playing a vital role in growing the economy, marketing needing to be an area of focus, and with technology gaining popularity in unprecedented ways; it’s imperative that various marketing alternatives be explored in an effort to sustain and expand SMEs. Of particular interest in the options that digital marketing & technology present, would be mobile phones which have high adoption rates and are being used by consumers in ways that are important to any marketer wanting to build effective marketing strategies (Deloitte, 2016; Jackson & Ahuja, 2016). Mobile devices are becoming ever-present around the globe and although a lot of research conducted on mobile technology usage

and mobile marketing has been conducted in developed countries, more growth is being seen in emerging markets such as Africa and China (Shankar & Balasubramanian, 2009). As at 2016, mobile device penetration in South Africa was at 99% for smartphones in urban areas and 83% in rural areas, with South Africans showing a preference for using their mobile devices to browse for and purchase products (Deloitte, 2016).

Mobile marketing was defined by Shankar and Balasubramanian (2009) as “the two- or multi-way communication and promotion of an offer between a firm and its customers using a mobile medium, device, or technology”. According to the researchers, mobile marketing has the potential of helping SMEs better connect with their clients. This can be attributed to the mobility of mobile devices and their ability to allow brands to build personal relationships with consumers, who treat their phones as constant companions. Therefore, mobile devices allow for constant communication with the consumer at any given point in time (Shankar, Venkatesh, Hofacker, & Naik, 2014).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.3.1. Main problem

This research aims to investigate the relationship between mobile marketing and its influence on the performance of SMEs. The performance will be measured in terms of brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales. These three variables are used in this context to measure the said performance of SMEs.

The research problem has come about as a result of various firms making significant marketing investments in mobile channels/strategies, search engine optimization, social media, e-mail, and display advertising (Chaffey Ellis-Chadwick, 2016; Grandhi & Chugh, 2012; Schwartz, Ross, Bradlow, & Fader, 2017; Tajvidi & Karami, 2017). Organizations can no longer rely on traditional marketing methods as they deal with more tech-savvy consumers (Peterson, Koch, & Gröne, 2010; Jackson & Ahuja, 2016). In light of the ubiquity, a plethora of digital marketing channels/techniques are available; however,

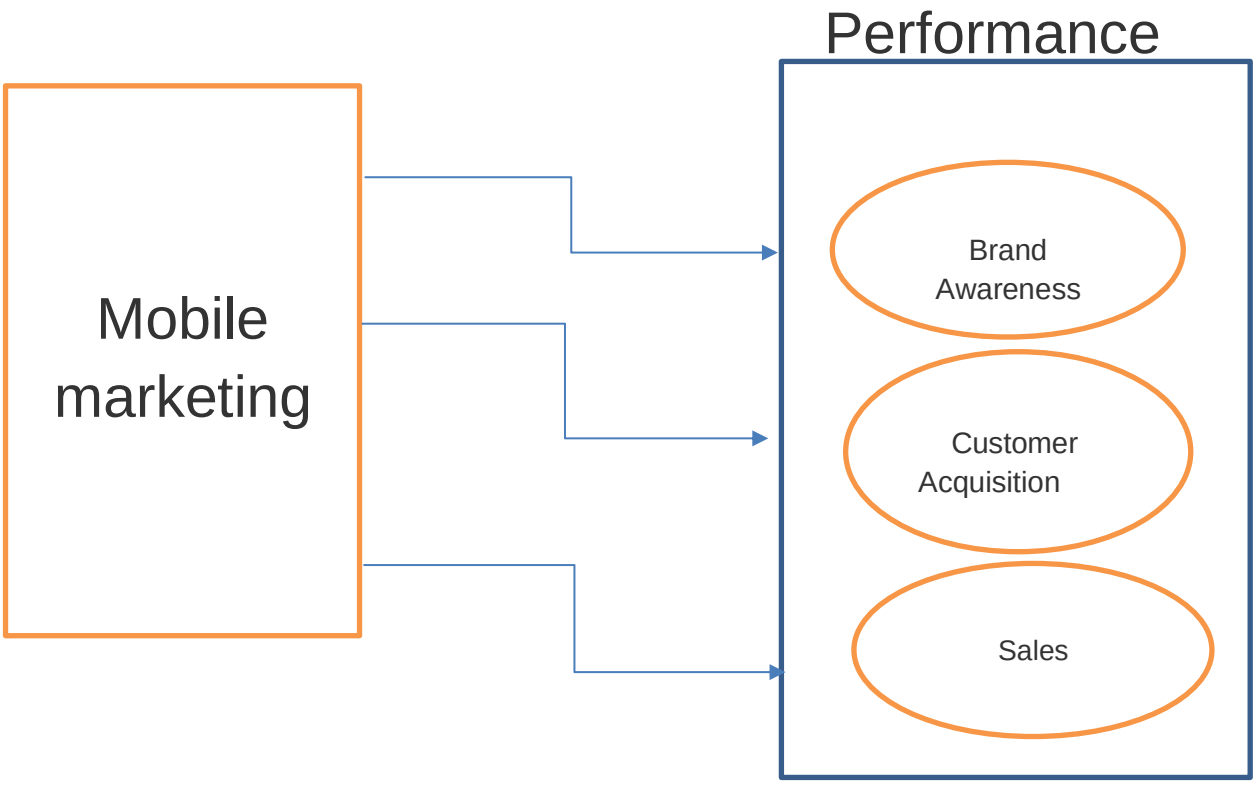
there is a limited understanding of the value add/ROI of each of these technologies/strategies for SMEs in particular (Kasilingam & Thanuja, 2020; Momany & Alshboul, 2016). Mobile marketing is a unique component within the digital marketing space. It's unique nature can be attributed to the rise in the adoption of mobile devices, the various marketing strategies that now make use of mobile options, and mobile influence on all the stages involved in the customer decision-making process (Balasubramanian & Shankar, 2009; Rettie, Grandcolas, & Deakins, 2005).

The research aims to investigate the influence of mobile marketing on performance within the context/constructs of brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales in the SME sector.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH SUBP-ROBLEMS, & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The objective of this study is to determine whether mobile marketing has an influence on SME performance. The performance will be determined by considering three variables, namely, brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales.

Conceptual Model



1.4.1. Research Objective 1

To understand the relationship between mobile marketing and brand awareness as it relates to SMEs in South Africa.

1.4.2 Research Problem 1 and Hypotheses

To investigate the influence of **mobile marketing** on **brand awareness** within SMEs.

> ***$H1_0$: There is no relationship between mobile marketing and brand awareness within SMEs.***
>
> ***H1a: There is a positive relationship between mobile marketing and brand awareness within SMEs.***

1.4.3 Research Question 1

What is the relationship between mobile marketing and brand awareness within SMEs in South Africa?

1.4.4 Research Objective 2

To understand the relationship between mobile marketing and customers acquisition as it relates to SMEs in South Africa

1.4.5 Research Problem 2 and Hypotheses

To investigate the influence of **mobile marketing**, on **customer acquisition** within SMEs.

> ***$H2_0$: There is no relationship between mobile marketing and customer acquisition within SMEs.***

H2a: There is a positive relationship between mobile marketing and customer acquisition within SMEs.

1.4.6. Research Question 2

What is the relationship between mobile marketing and customer acquisition within SMEs in South Africa?

1.4.7 Research Objective 3

To understand the relationship between mobile marketing and sales as it relates to SMEs in South Africa.

1.4.8 Research Problem 3 and Hypotheses

To investigate the influence of **mobile marketing** on **sales** within SMEs.

$H3_0$: There is no relationship between mobile marketing and sales within SMEs.

$H3_a$: There is a positive relationship between mobile marketing and sales within SMEs.

1.4.9 Research Question 3

What is the relationship between mobile marketing and sales within SMEs in South Africa?

1.5 RESEARCH GAP AND JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY

In earlier research conducted on mobile technologies, their role in aiding the development of transactions was a focus for researchers; however, little attention was paid to their contribution to marketing and role as a marketing channel (Shankar & Balasubramanian, 2009). This has changed significantly over the years, especially for big corporates across industries, but not so much for SMEs. Unilever presents a great

example of a big corporate considering mobile technologies as additional marketing channels. In a case study carried out in India, the Fast Moving Consumer Goods giant demonstrated the power and importance of mobile marketing. The targeted consumers were based in rural areas with no access to television sets, as such, a mobile entertainment channel was launched where Unilever ads were conducted over a period of time. And in six months, eight million subscribers being marketed to through the mobile channel were gotten (Jarboe, 2015).

On the academic front, research and insights into mobile marketing have looked into retail (Shankar, Venkatesh, Hofacker, & Naik, 2014; Strom 2012) and demonstrated the value of the channel, its growing importance, and impending ability to transform retail as it is known . Other researchers have looked at the effectiveness of mobile marketing (Merisavo et al., 2006), mobile marketing and consumer behavior (Lamarre, Galarneau, & Boeck, 2012), mobile marketing and the intention to purchase (Alam, Faiz, Aftab, & 2015) as well as a look into how brands can make better decisions using mobile marketing (Bakooulos, Baronello, & Briggs, 2017). The list is exhaustive but demonstrates that although there is a lot of focus and research on mobile marketing, the research is fragmented with little focus on SMEs. This is slowly changing as SMEs continue to look into more cost-effective marketing methods.

A literature review with respect to SMEs suggests that the genesis of this change began with studies into factors influencing the adoption of digital marketing technologies. Various studies have investigated mobile marketing specifically. In a study conducted in Malaysia, Musa, Li, Abas, and Mohamad (2014) found that an SME's brand strategy and the availability of technical knowledge were key determinants of whether or not an SME would adopt mobile marketing. After studying Cameroonian SMEs, Mimosette and Paul (2015) stated foreseen benefits and the importance of the objectives sought, as determinants of adoption.

Within the South African context, IT capability, customer pressure, top management support, and perceived relative advantage were among the determining adoption factors. (Maduku, Mpinganjira, & Duh, 2016). While understanding the adoption factors

is important, SMEs need to understand the value add of these digital marketing technologies. Studies into the influence of **different digital marketing techniques** (Email marketing, SEO, Paid search) and their **influence on SME objectives/performance** (performance/objectives as defined by customer acquisition, exposure to new markets, improvement of communication, brand awareness, etc.) have demonstrated a positive effect (Çizmeci & Ercan, 2015; Išoraitė, 2016; Njau & Karugu, 2014; Nusier, 2018; Rotich & Mukhongo, 2015).

While several studies cover more than one digital marketing technique, predominant research on the influence of a single digital marketing technique (e.g. Mobile marketing, SEO, Social media) on **brand awareness** (Bilgin, 2018; Kapoor & Si, 2014; Momany & Alshboul, 2016; Seo & Park, 2017) **customer acquisition** (Ahmad, Ahmad, & Bakar, 2018; Bajaj & Bhanot, 2016; Du, Ke, He, Chu, & Wagner, 2019) and **sales** (Lee, Lee, & Oh, 2015; Tajvidi & Karami, 2017) lie within the area of **social media marketing**. The overall result of studies conducted on the impact of social media on identified constructs is that it has a positive effect on the studied variables. This is as a result of traffic being driven to companies websites (through social media), real time interaction with customers, and general awareness being created around the brands in question. SMEs are however advised to be tactful in creating content that appeals to customers. (Jones, Borgman, & Ulusoy, 2015; Öztamura & Karakadılar, 2014; Smits & Mogos, 2013).

There is however a dearth of studies that look into mobile marketing and its relationship with brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales. The few studies (Phumisak, Donyaprueth, & Khang, 2012; Okazaki & Taylor, 2008; Rettie, Grandcolas, & Deakins, 2005) on mobile marketing in relation to the proposed constructs (brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales) mainly look into SMS/MMS as forms of mobile marketing and do not take into consideration new developments like WhatsApp business, Mobile search ads by Google, and mobile applications. Furthermore, there is no particular focus on SMEs. Hence this study only considers SMEs and combines new aspects of mobile marketing, as it has evolved significantly over the years.

As yet, and to the author's knowledge, no studies on the influence of mobile marketing on SME performance (defined by **brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales**) have been conducted within the South African context. This study will not only contribute to the body of knowledge on SMEs in relation to digital marketing, but it will also provide some valuable information to SMEs looking to make decisions on the most suitable digital marketing channels.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Although various variables lead to business performance, the present study only considers three variables: Brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales.

1.7 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

SMEs

SMEs in South Africa is defined in the National Small Business Act of 1996 as:

'small [business] enterprise organization' means "any entity, whether or not incorporated or registered under any law, [which consists] consisting mainly of persons carrying on small [business] enterprise concerns in any economic sector [or which has been] established to promote the interests of or represent small [business] enterprise concerns, and includes any federation consisting wholly or partly of such association, and [also] any branch of such organization" [www.gov.za]

Mobile Marketing

“The two- or multi-way communication and promotion of an offer between a firm and its customers using a mobile medium, device, or technology” (Shankar & Balasubramanian, 2009 p.118).

Customer Acquisition

“The customer acquisition process is part of the customer-firm relationship that begins with the consumers' first interaction with the firm and proceeds through the first purchase until the first repeat purchase” (Thomas, 2001 p.262).

Sales

“Any of a number of activities designed to promote customer purchase of a product or service. Sales can be done in person or over the phone, through e-mail or other communication media. The process generally includes stages such as assessing customer needs, presenting product features and benefits to address those needs and negotiation on price, delivery, and other elements.” American marketing association 2018.

Brand Awareness

“Brand awareness consists of brand recognition and brand recall performance. Brand recognition relates to consumers' ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue. In other words, brand recognition requires that consumers correctly recognize the brand as having been seen or heard previously. Brand recall relates to consumers' ability to retrieve the brand when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category, or some other type of probe as a cue.” (Keller, 1993 p.3)

1.10 ASSUMPTIONS

- Respondents have employed mobile marketing strategies in their marketing efforts and are responding based on results derived from mobile marketing efforts.
- Respondents answered truthfully and accurate data will be provided for analysis.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1 Marketing

The marketing association (2013) defined marketing as “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.” Kotler and Keller (2016) distinguished between the managerial and social definitions of marketing. In their study, the social aspect of marketing was seen as a source of value creation where marketing is seen through the lens of a consumer who realizes value through the exchange of goods and services. From a managerial point of view, marketing serves as a tool to enable organizations to understand their customers better, to match and sell the right products or services to them.

There is a consensus amongst scholars that marketing came about as an off-shoot of applied economics (Tamilia, 2009). Marketing has, over the years, been characterized by various schools of thought which are not to be confused with subjects such as sales or research which also make up part of the discipline (Jones & Shaw, 2005). These schools of thought are numerous and include (but are not limited to) the consumer behavior school of thought, whose key concepts and theories include constructs such as personality, attitudes, needs, and motives; the marketing management school of thought, which includes a focus on the marketing mix, segmentation, and customer orientation; the marketing functions school of thought, which has a particular focus on the value that marketing can add to an organization (Jones & Shaw, 2005; Tamilia, 2009).

The functional/marketing functions school of thought is considered one of the most important as it is seen as having contributed immensely to the discipline (Hunt & Goolsby, 1988). Noted at the time as being more descriptive than analytical the functional school of thought/approach saw a decline in the 1950s, this led to an

increased focus on the managerial approach which encompassed the integration of functions such as promotion, product, distribution channels, and pricing (Hunt & Goolsby, 1988). Each of these schools of thought, and others not included here, have played a significant role in shaping the way that marketing is viewed. The understanding of the different concepts and their origins is important in developing answers to marketing questions (Hunt, & Goolsby 1988; Jones & Shaw, 2005; Shaw, 2015; Tamilia, 2009).

The foundations of this research are based on concepts related to the managerial school of thought, which considers marketing from the organisation/seller's perspective, and seeks to explore better methods to market products or services (Jones & Shaw, 2005). This school of thought has become more dominant and is focused on improved communication and the consumer (Tamilia, 2009). Of importance and within the context of this study is the fundamental theorem of market share determination, further developed by Kotler (1972).

The theorem gives credence to the marketing mix as it is known, and the idea that the market share of an organisation is a function of the organization's effort/spend on marketing. The theoretical points are centered on the idea that an organization's success when meeting marketing needs, is attributable to the value and adaptations of its marketing mix (Kotler, 1972 as quoted in Bush & Hunt, 2011; Jones & Shaw, 2005). The marketing mix herein initially made reference to promotional mix, distribution, price, product quality (Bush & Hunt, 2011). Or alternatively the 4 p's (product, price, promotion, and place) of marketing as described by Jerome McCarthy in the 1960s (Yudelson, 1999).

The 4 p's of marketing have evolved over the years with various scholars advocating for several other p's to be added to give a more holistic view of the discipline (Goi, 2009; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Yudelson, 1999). In Kotler and Keller's (2016) proposed update of the 4 p's, the authors suggest people, processes programs, and performance where programs bring together the "old" four 4p's of marketing including offline and online activities. The expansion of the terms and recognition of online activities is important

given the rise in e-commerce, and the new dynamics that technology (e.g. increased mobile adoption rates) brings to marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Traditionally, promotion was made up of sales promotion, advertising, sales force, public relations, and direct marketing (Kotler & Keller 2016). Promotion, as an element of the marketing mix, has evolved tremendously over the past couple of years. As it has evolved, there is a need for organisations to consider digital marketing as a tool to promote products and services and in creating brand awareness and brand loyalty (Nair, 2017).

2.1.2 Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is a term that has evolved over the years but generally refers to the processes involved in using technology to drive marketing efforts. These can include (but are not limited to) the promotions of brands, products, services, acquisition of customers, as well as the building of customer relationships (Kannan & Li, 2017). It also encompasses the management of different online company presence (Blogs, company websites, social media platforms, etc.) for the benefit of marketing objectives.

Digital marketing technologies have proven beneficial over the years as marketers explore ways in which they can use them as (amongst other things) advertising mediums, lead generation tools, and platforms for sales transactions (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Organisations wanting to gain a competitive edge need to be innovative in the adoption of digital marketing technologies. There is a further requirement to make sound marketing decisions based on the data that technology allows marketers to collect (Grishikashvili & Dibb, 2014).

Several marketing-related factors are changing as a result of the ubiquity of technology. Examples include the customer purchase journey that has changed with the advent of search engines, as well as social media which allows for real time user-generated content that can have negative or positive effects on your brand/organisation (Kannan & Li, 2017). Furthermore, throughout the world, marketers are, the world

over,experiencing radical changes as a result of digitization, with research suggesting that consumers are increasingly making use of the internet to source the most affordable and suitable deals. There is therefore an influx of online promotions, forcing marketers to find new ways to make sure they are in the eyes of their consumers. Search engine optimization, content marketing, influencer marketing, and social media marketing are just some of the methods that marketers are using. The challenge is understanding which technique or combination of techniques is best to use to achieve business performance. To this end, marketers require new knowledge and approaches, so that they can capitalize on marketing that is powered by technology as they engage with the evolving customers (Bala & Verma, 2018). This study aims to be a source of knowledge for South African SMEs, enabling them to be more advanced in their approaches when selecting digital marketing techniques that are suitable for their businesses.

Having noted this, there are additional technology-specific factors that impact digital marketing as a whole. These include the internet of things (IoT), artificial intelligence, analytics, and the intersection of technologies/techniques such as mobile marketing with other technologies/techniques (e.g. social media marketing). These further present unique challenges as marketing professionals continue to try and keep up to date. Similarly, there is a dearth of research in understanding how each of these techniques/combinations can impact marketing/business objectives (Bala & Verma 2018; Felt & Robb, 2016; Nguyen & Simkin, 2017).

Research conducted to understand how each of these technologies is being adopted, points toward a few trends within the digital marketing space. First, marketers have noted a few digital marketing technologies/techniques as being essential for achieving business success/performance. The first of these is content marketing which is essential for all digital marketing strategies as it is relevant for every touchpoint. Content in its different formats is playing an important role in how firms interact with audiences that are continuously distracted. Video marketing, big data, marketing automation, artificial intelligence, and mobile marketing are amongst the most highly rated digital

marketing techniques for a successful digital marketing strategy. Having said this, mobile marketing is not only recognized as a relatively new technique but one that is gaining prominence because of its increasing mobile adoption rates around the world (Bala & Verma, 2018; Kotane, Znotina, & Hushko, 2019).

While all of these options present new ways in which markers can reach their audiences, other matters remain urgent and are somewhat of a challenge. These mainly relate to data protection and privacy laws. Marketers need to be aware (now more than ever) of online advertising laws and while they ensure that they are processing customer data for limited purposes and ensuring that customers understand what their data is being collected for and what it will be used for (Chaffey & Ellis- Chadwick, 2016).

Furthermore, there are gaps in understanding the opportunities that digital marketing presents. These relate to digital marketing and how it is affecting business models. As technologies/techniques are changing how businesses operate, marketers have to find ways to incorporate digital marketing, while understanding how it might compromise existing business models (Leeflang et al., 2012). Second, there is the advent of big data which makes it highly complicated for marketers to look into digital marketing reports and draw good customer insights. Oftentimes, there is just too much data, making for a less than ideal situation where curation and visualization of data are concerned, thus compromising what marketers know about the customer journey (Snijders, Matzat, & Reips, 2012). The likes of Google are making inroads with the introduction of attributes that can help marketers e.g. sales to a particular touchpoint (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Finally, with all its advancements, marketers have expressed that digital marketing seems to be limiting creativity and their being intuitive as most decisions now need to be data-driven (Leeflang et al., 2012).

With the advent of new channels being made available, it is estimated that digital marketing will form an integral part of marketing in the future. As such, organizations need to be aware of these various changes and how they can adapt their marketing strategies. Being able to adapt marketing strategies will entail understanding what content appeals to your target audience, what digital marketing platforms are likely to

expose them to the firm's content/marketing initiatives and. Most importantly, marketing budgets will need to be allocated accordingly for each chosen digital marketing technique (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016; Leeflang et al).

2.1.3 Mobile marketing

Mobile devices were introduced as a means of communication in the 1970s to allow people to communicate irrespective of their location. This has changed significantly over the years, with mobile phones bringing about a new marketing channel for marketers. The advent of mobile marketing is changing how marketers communicate and connect with consumers (Öztas, 2015; Roach, 2009; Shankar & Balasubramanian 2009). In 2016, marketers around the world are said to have spent in excess of USD$100 billion on mobile marketing. It was further anticipated that the value of the technique will increase and marketers will allocate more of their digital marketing budgets to it, thus making it an even more important focus area (Fritz, Sohn, & Seegebarth, 2017).

The mobile marketing association refers to mobile marketing as “a set of practices that enable organizations to communicate and engage with their audience in an interactive and relevant manner through any mobile device or network” (MMA, 2018). Other authors recognize it as “the two- or multi-way communication and promotion of an offer between a firm and its customers using a mobile medium, device, or technology” (Shankar & Balasubramanian, 2009). The terms mobile marketing and mobile advertising are often used interchangeably, however mobile advertising is recognized as an integral part, and form of mobile marketing (Tähtinen, 2006).

Part of mobile marketing attractiveness comes from factors relating to the fast adoption of mobile marketing, the portability of mobile devices, location specificity, and the immediacy with which marketers can communicate directly with customers (Hofacker, Ruyter, Lurie, Manchanda, & Donaldson, 2016; Karjaluoto, Leppäniemi, & Salo, 2004; Shankar & Balasubramanian, 2009). Additionally, the platform is lauded for being able

to gain marketers quick access to their target audiences, while also giving them insight on things such as social patterns and purchase history. Marketers can also have real time conversations with their customers through their mobile marketing efforts. Most importantly, marketing messages can be delivered through mobile platforms and, at the same time (should customers want to purchase), customer transactions can be completed through the mobile device (Ekakitie-Emonena & Odanibeh, 2015). Over the years, mobile social media has proven itself to be a field that is gaining prominence. It looks at social media applications that are predominantly used on mobile devices (e.g. Instagram), demonstrating the intersection between mobile and social media marketing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Marketers are now at liberty to decide how to make use of the two in conjunction with each other because employing mobile social media techniques has demonstrated an ability to improve how marketers reach and engage with customers (Du, Ke, He, Chu, & Wagner, 2019).

Although this is the case, only a few organizations around the world have developed formal mobile marketing strategies that can help them take full advantage of the channel (Doherty, Kearns, & O'Rourke, 2015). As the channel gains popularity across various categories, there is a need to build formal strategies. Successful mobile marketing strategies are achievable when organizations react to and understand the complexity of the channel, design online platforms that are mobile-friendly, and allow for customer engagements (Berman,2016; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Mobile marketing's feature related to immediacy have benefits that allow marketers to test certain campaigns, such as sending communications to past loyal customers when they are in a particular area, test price elasticity by sending out reduced offers at particular locations at certain times of the week/day, and this makes the platform ideal. Additionally, mobile marketing (because of the personal nature of mobile phones, and the increasing rate at which mobile phones are being used to search and purchase) allows for a high degree of personalization where marketers can track past purchases, social media usage, past and present behavior so as to tailor-make offers, etc. (Berman, 2016). Largely, the platform is being used for creating brand awareness and

generating purchase intention amongst the identified target audiences (Mirbagheri, 2010).

Nevertheless, even with all these benefits, several issues are related to the platform. These include the technical problems related to tracking the performance of a single campaign from multiple devices and users, and then trying to understand which elements of the campaign resonated with which customer. Marketers are also yet to understand the most ideal ways in which to use mobile marketing to optimally engage with their target audiences (Ekakitie-Emonena & Odanibeh, 2015). Furthermore, mobile marketing no longer entails sending a text message to a regular device. Mobile devices have become heterogeneous with the introduction of different sizes, formats, tablets. This means there is a variety of interphases, and this element affects how marketing messaging is received and perceived by customers, thus requiring more effort in the development of mobile marketing campaigns (Brasel & Gips, 2014).

These challenges are further exacerbated by a dearth of recent studies focusing on mobile marketing as a digital marketing technique. However, with the evolution of mobile marketing, there has been a strong interest in the technique, and it is anticipated that more research will be done. The interest in the technique is demonstrated by a review of top marketing journals done by (Fritz et al., 2017), showing that between 2009 – 2016, 63 studies that focused on mobile marketing were put up for publication. Studies in this regards have looked into the available demand for mobile applications (Garg, Rajiv, & Rahul, 2013), the affective variables that influence customer behavior concerning mobile marketing (Martínez-Ruiz et a.l, 2017), the effectiveness of mobile advertisements (Andrews et al., 2015), what determines customer attitudes towards mobile advertising (Feng, Fu, & Qin, 2017), the types of content used on in mobile advertising, and how it affects purchase intention (Hashim, Normalini, & Sajali, 2018), as well as, examining how advertising to customers on their mobile devices (while they are in-store) affects their purchase intention (Bues, Steiner, Stafflage, & Krafft, 2017)

Earlier studies (Merisavo & Vesanen, 2006; Phumisak, Donyaprueth, & Khang, 2016; Okazaki & Taylor, 2008; Rettie, Grandcolas, & Deakins, 2005) that looked into mobile

marketing as it relates to some of the constructs identified in this study (e.g. brand awareness, sales) only considered SMS and did not consider new developments (e.g. Google mobile search ads). This demonstrates a gap in mobile marketing research as the technique has evolved over the years. SMS and MMS are no longer considered as being reflective of mobile marketing as a whole (Fritz, et al., 2017). This necessitates studies such as this one, which look into an evolved mobile marketing technique as it relates to certain marketing objectives, especially for SMEs that (as stated above) play an important role in the South African economy.

The technique, used effectively, has immense potential. As of 2016, Google and Twitter had attributed a substantial amount of advertising revenue to mobile. This trend is expected to increase with the rise in ownership of tablets and wearable technologies (Hofacker et al., 2016). Overall, there needs to be caution when adopting mobile marketing techniques as the resources to see the strategy through can be intensive. Financial considerations, the mobile marketing channel (MMS, SMS, Java-based application, QR codes, Location-based marketing, mobile applications, mobile search ads) to be adopted, as well as the overall objectives, are some of the top priorities to be considered (Doherty, Kearns, & O'Rourke, 2015) because mobile marketing initiatives tend to require testing on different devices. In addition to this, marketers need to pay attention to segmentation. Mobile marketing efforts need to focus on creating awareness while building relationships with individual consumers being targeted. This can be achieved by engaging customers in a way that is suitable to them (Persaud & Azhar, 2012). All of this requires resources and to this end, it is logical to conclude that it would be important for SMEs (and other organizations in general) to understand the value add of mobile marketing. Having said this, organizations need to keep in mind that mobile marketing is an important component of the promotional mix, it is more effective when implemented as part of an organization's multi-channel marketing efforts (Doherty, Kearns, & O'Rourke, 2015; Karjaluoto, Leppäniemi, & Salo, 2004).

2.1.4 Brand awareness

Aaker (1996) definition of brand awareness relates to three important factors that measure whether a level of awareness is reflected, these are recognition, recall, awareness, top of mind, knowledge, opinion as well as brand dominance. Brand awareness is seen as the first medium through which customers get to know about a brand. In its assessment of awareness, this report looks into recognition, recall, brand dominance, and top of mind (Aaker, 1996). [This is expanded on in chapter 3's discussion of measurement instruments.]

Knowing the brand influences whether or not it immediately comes to mind, and the likelihood of it actually being purchased. As such as for marketers, the ability to achieve high levels of brand awareness is important, because having attained these high levels often translates to higher market share (Malik, Ghafoor, & Iqbal, 2013).

As noted above, this report focusses on top of mind, dominance, recognition, and recall (Aaker, 1996; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). While brand recall is linked to correct remembrance from memory when certain prompts or probes are in place, a customer's ability to encounter a brand and be able to confirm that they were previously exposed to it, relates to the element of recognition (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). It is important to note that in this instance, the customer in question need not remember every single detail about the brand. Sometimes, it is a picture. Sometimes, it is knowing that the brand identified falls into a particular category. What matters is that the customer's awareness is sufficient for them to make a purchase in the event of a decision being made between varying options (Percy & Rossiter, 1992; Malik et al 2013). Other factors such as top of mind (whether a brand is first in a recall task), recognition (whether the brand has been heard of), and dominance (is this the only brand recalled) play an important role in measuring brand awareness (Aaker,1996).

Brand awareness has been said to have a significant effect on what purchase decision a customer makes when there are different considerations to be made (Keller, 1993; MacDonald & Sharp, 2000). With the vast amount of products likely available to a

customer, it is rare to have a customer solely loyal to a particular brand. Instead, they have a couple of brands in their minds that they can choose from. This set is referred to as a consideration set, and marketers need to have customers who have their brand as a part of their consideration set as it aids recall (Keller, 1993; Nedungadi,1990). Another factor that makes brand awareness important is the fact that it serves as a pretext for other brand elements. This is to say that without customers being aware of a brand, they cannot form an attitude about it, they cannot be loyal to it, or associate it with anything in an organization's product/service category (Keller, 1993, 2008; Macdonald & Sharp, 2003).

As such, it is encouraged that brand custodians be active in fostering their customers' capability to see, recognize, and remember their brands so as to initiate a purchase (Kotler & Keller, 2016).To this end, marketing strategies need to involve a plan around how brand awareness will be achieved. Firms can opt for traditional methods or methods that incorporate digital marketing techniques (Išoraitė, 2016).

Methods (e.g. campaigns) taken in line with increasing brand awareness, essentially improve the visibility of the brand by being a source through which the target audience is informed about the brand (Homburg, Klarmann, & Schmitt, 2010). Over the years, brand-building efforts have been employed across various organizations, and have proven to be worthwhile tactics when marketers are looking to raise brand choice probabilities (Hoyer & Brown, 1990).

2.1.7 Mobile marketing and brand awareness

Mobile marketing has been found in earlier studies to have a significant impact on overall brand awareness. In their study, Okazaki & Taylor (2008) found that executives were increasing mobile marketing efforts as part of their marketing strategies. Even at a time when mobile marketing was not very advanced and they were limited to SMS and MMS, these multinationals found that mobile marketing was having a significant impact on their brand-building efforts.

Researchers in this field have attributed the success of mobile marketing (in relation to brand awareness) to personalization; how the message is received and stored on the mobile device; the relationships that consumers have with their mobile devices that in turn enable constant access to the customer; the frequency with which text messages/mobile messaging can be sent; as well as the various formats that can be explored in mobile marketing (Ghaleno, Zavareh, & Bahrami 2016; Phumisak, Donyaprueth, & Khang, 2012; Shankar & Balasubramanian, 2009). These factors, and others, have been noted as playing a role in the level of exposure that the intended customer has, thus improving brand awareness.

Mobile marketing does not operate in a silo and is often accompanied by other digital marketing techniques, influencer marketing, SEO, content marketing, social media marketing, etc. Depending on the goal, each of these tend to be explored in a digital marketing strategy (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Given the dearth of studies that isolate mobile marketing, and the fact that these techniques fall into the digital marketing suite, it is worthwhile to examine other studies that consider the impact of digital marketing technologies on brand awareness.

A review of literature across different digital marketing platforms and their impact on brand awareness has found that although some research has been conducted on the influence of mobile marketing and brand awareness, the majority of studies lie in the area of social media marketing. Scholars have gone on to isolate social media marketing with the intention to examine its impact on various brand constructs. These studies (Çiçek & Erdogmus, 2012; Ismail, 2017; Ko & Kim, 2012; Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013; Seo & Park, 2017; Zahoor, Younis, Qureshi, & Khan, 2016) have found this digital marketing technique to have a strong influence on various brand constructs including brand awareness.

Some of the above-mentioned studies span across different industries. In a study conducted in the airline industry, Seo and Park (2017) investigated the influence of social media marketing on two dimensions of brands (brand image and brand awareness) by examining customer response. Results found social media marketing to

have a positive influence on brand awareness. It was also found to be instrumental in driving commitment to the brand as well as electronic word of mouth. Bilgin (2018), in a study of the impact of social media on brand awareness and brand loyalty and brand image, found social media to have a greater impact on brand awareness. The positive impact on brand awareness was aided by varying content and engagement. In doing this, it was found that it helped the brand stay top of mind for the consumer.

Overall, social media has been found to have a significant impact on varying brand dimensions, brand image, brand association, brand awareness, and brand loyalty have been studied in detail (Abu-Rumman & Alhadid, 2014; Zahoor et al, 2016). In his research Ismail (2017) found that social media marketing has a significant impact on brand loyalty, brand consciousness, and value consciousness. His findings suggest that when brands advertise on social media and engage with their customers, they can build relationships with them which in turn result in increased consciousness/awareness of the brand and ultimately loyalty to the brand. The author advocates for the consideration of social media marketing as a tool for marketers to use in driving the identified brand elements.

In a study by Çiçek and Erdogmus (2012), social media marketing was found to have a positive influence on brand loyalty given relevant, popular content that is available across different social media platforms. In their research findings, Shen & Bissell (2013) found that when firms use social media networks, they were able to improve their brand awareness. The improvement of brand awareness in this regard is also complemented by a focus on customer engagement. Zahoor et al. (2016) considered the impact of social media marketing on brand equity. The researchers looked at brand trust, brand loyalty, brand association, perceived quality, and brand awareness and found that there was a positive relationship between social media and brand awareness and the other brand constructs.

Social media's value is said to lie in the fact that it is able to drive electronic word of mouth. Customers tend to trust content shared by their friends on social media, the viral effect in turn drives brand awareness (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). The same is

said to be true for mobile marketing, in that the ability to easily share/forward text messages with friends impacts the number of people exposed to it. This means that there is a similar viral effect that in turn influences brand awareness positively (Rettie, Grandcolas, & Deakins, 2005).

Other studies have looked into varying digital marketing techniques and their impact on brand awareness. In her study Išoraitė (2016) looked into internet marketing as a whole where corporate websites, social media networks, email marketing, etc. were considered in relation to their impact on brand awareness. Findings suggest that by publishing on digital marketing platforms, firms help to improve brand awareness and strengthening the position of their brands in the minds of their customers. Further to this, there is a study by Chan, Lueng, Peking, and David (2016) where traditional and digital marketing techniques were explored in relation to their impact on brand awareness. Given the use of traditional methods in the past, there were some uncertainties about whether or not brand awareness goals could be reached through the use of digital marketing. Both were found to be significant in increasing the brand awareness of products/services, with marketers being encouraged to consider the use of both in their efforts to increase brand awareness.

Where mobile marketing is concerned, Ghaleno, Zavareh, and Bahrami (2016) study within the insurance industry, and Masika (2013) study within the telecommunications industry found mobile marketing to have a positive influence on different brand dimensions, namely brand loyalty, brand association, brand image, and brand awareness. With marketers being continually encouraged to find ways to incorporate mobile marketing into their overall digital marketing strategies, social media marketing, email marketing, SEO, and mobile marketing (to some degree) as digital marketing channels/techniques have demonstrated positive relationships with brand awareness and other dimensions of brand equity across different industries. Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

> ***$H1_0$: There is no relationship between mobile marketing and brand awareness within SME's.***

$H1_a$: There is a positive relationship between mobile marketing and brand awareness within SME's.

2.1.8 Customer acquisition

In understanding customer engagement/customer relationship management processes, the retention, acquisition, and overall value of customers is considered. Customer acquisition is considered as the acquiring of prospective customers by means of collecting information that helps an organization understand them and allocate the relevant resources (Fang & Palmatier, 2011; Fazlzadeh, Tabrizi, & Mahboobi, 2011). Having said this, customer acquisition is under studied because acquiring customers and analyzing the process through which it was done is more complex and expensive. Furthermore, retaining customers is cheaper and as such, researchers and industry experts alike tend to be more interested in understanding how customers can be retained (Meire, Balling, & Van den Poel, 2017).

Customer acquisition is one of the most important steps in the customer lifecycle; there can be no retention and management of customers without their acquisition. This holds true more so in business settings where the acquisition of customers is at the center of business success. Examples include universities, morgues, or new businesses (Ang & Buttle, 2006). Katsikeas et al., (2016) noted the need to have more attention paid to customer acquisition as a marketing outcome. The recommendation is based on its ability to convey information (in most instances) such as how the firm is fairing in terms of the results of the advertising strategies that are implemented. For example, the number of customers acquired would assist in understanding if the advertising campaign to drive brand awareness has been effective (Peters & Naik, 2012).

With customers becoming less loyal, and competition between organizations increasing drastically over the years, there is greater focus on methods to acquire customers and build meaningful relationships with them (Ang & Buttle, 2006; Fazlzadeh, Tabrizi, & Mahboobi, 2011). Furthermore, given implications to the profitability of the organizations, are encouraged to look into different acquisition strategies that not only

influence the process of acquisition but also the quality of the acquired customer (Lehmann & Gupta 2003; Villanueva, Yoo, & Hanssens, 2008). In doing, this it is important to make decisions around means of communication, target segment, offering, and cost (Buttle, 2004; Lehmann & Gupta, 2003).

The acquisition of new customers needs to be aligned to the cost involved in acquiring them, as well as the lifetime value attached to the customer. Different channels for acquisition need to be explored as they may have varying costs and yield different results. (Ang & Buttle, 2006; Lehmann & Gupta, 2003). Overall, organizations need to be engaged in efforts to recognize and acquire new customers; not paying attention to this can lead the dwindling customer portfolios (Tillmanns, Hofstede, Krafft, & Goetz, 2017).

2.1.9 Mobile marketing and customer acquisition

The advent of technology has played a significant role in the customer relationship management process which customer acquisition forms a part of (Viljoen, Bennett, Berndt, & Van Zyl, 2005). There has been a rise in mobile customer relationship management (mCRM). This has come about as a result of the adoption of mobile devices and existing knowledge around the importance of CRM in profitability, customer acquisition, and customer retention (Negahban, Kim, & Kim, 2016). Mobile CRM is noted as being a tool through which organizations can support marketing and sales initiatives while acquiring and retaining customers (Camponovo, Pigneur, Rangone, & Renga, 2005).

The ability to cultivate a high degree of personalization and extract customer information through mobile applications make mCRM different from the traditional CRM (Negahban, Kim, & Kim, 2016). Furthermore, customers are becoming more tech-savvy and are aware of the various channels available to them. Mobile presents an opportunity for organizations to acquire customers. However, care needs to be taken in ensuring that the messaging targets the intended customer (Hsu & Lin, 2008). This can be achieved through proper segmentation when mobile marketing initiatives are employed. It is

important to note that mobile marketing messaging/advertisements can be delivered using other means. Mobile CRM simply works alongside existing CRM in achieving business success and are not new tools that need to be employed by the organization. Furthermore, they can be used to deliver marketing messaging and aid customer acquisition (Camponovo et al 2005; Grhandhi & Chugh, 2012).

Outside of mobile marketing, several studies have looked into the role that other digital marketing techniques have on the acquisition of customers. One such study is by Schwartz, Ross, Bradlow, and& Fader (2017), where they looked into how display ads affect customer acquisition. Following the testing a few advert creatives for display ads, their predictions indicated that with the right ad creative within the right context, leads to successful campaigns which in turn attract customers and aid in the process of customer acquisition.

There is a lack of research within the context of mobile marketing/mCRM and customer acquisition. Grhandhi and Chugh (2012), in a study conducted in the manufacturing and television industries, looked into the value add of mobile CRMs. Their findings show that the implementation of mobile CRM applications played a role in managing customer relationships, increasing productivity, and most importantly acquiring customers while reducing the cost thereof. The review above demonstrates the effectiveness and use of mobile platforms in the acquisition of customers. These platforms are also sometimes used in the delivery of marketing messages. It is reasonable to conclude that mobile marketing efforts employed by SMEs could yield results in as far as customer acquisition is concerned. The following hypothesis is proposed:

> ***$H2_0$: There is no relationship between mobile marketing and customer acquisition within SMEs.***
>
> ***$H2_a$: There is a positive relationship between mobile marketing and customer acquisition within SMEs.***

2.1.10 Sales

The American marketing association considers sales from a perspective that encapsulates activities that are developed to indorse the purchasing of goods by prospective clients. They include introducing product features and negotiation pricing and ultimately selling the products to the targeted customer (AMA, 2018).

The concept of sales/selling has evolved over the years with earlier scholars simply viewing it as a method to sell what had been manufactured, instead of a process that is complementary to marketing (Sugathan & Kozhikode, 2018). The lack of synergy between the two (sales and marketing) can have adverse effects on firm performance. The bone of contention between the two has mainly been caused by a lack of understanding as far as the roles of each are concerned. To overcome this, sales and marketing need to find synergy, with marketers having a clear understanding of what effects their measures have on sales. Collaborative sales and marketing teams result in reduced cost of sales, short sales cycles, and overall improved firm performance (Kotler Rackham, & Krishnaswamy, 2006).

Once sales and marketing are aligned, it is often advised that firms look into putting together a sales forecast. Putting forecasts in place, these do not determine what the marketing budget is, but they assist marketing in getting to know what needs to be put in place in order to achieve the sales forecasts that are set. In doing this, firms need to understand their market potential and not attribute shortcomings to marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Notwithstanding, sales are the bedrock of organizations and are important for their survival. They allow organizations to raise capital for the hiring of workforce, the buying of inputs, and other functions of the business (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p.107). In recent times, there has been a power shift from those selling products and services to those buying them. Marketers and salespeople alike are having to find ways to build relationships with customers in order to sell their products or services. (Colletti & Fiss, 2006). To achieve this, marketing and sales need to be integrated, as salesforce data

contributes to the development of marketing strategy, by giving insight into customer needs (LeMeunier-FitzHugh, & Piercy, 2006). Following this process, organizations need to consider what forms of advertising are best suited to helping them attain their sales goals.

2.1.11 Mobile marketing and sales

Mobile advertising is an integral part of mobile marketing and is often used to deliver marketing messages to customers (Tähtinen, 2006). One of the main goals in marketing-related efforts is to add value to the organization through the sale of products or services. The influence of advertising on sales is a principle that has been studied since antiquity. This can be attributed to the fact that in developing a marketing strategy, marketers need to be cognizant of the possible sales that can be derived from advertising efforts (Adams & Moriarty, 1981).

At the center of marketing decisions is the decision around which scarce marketing resources to allocate in order to realize a return on investment (Dekimpe & Hanssens, 1999). Studies in advertising have considered the role of advertising and its effect on sales in the short and long run, while others have considered its impact on experience cognition effect (Brice, Peters, & Naik, 2012). Overall, various forms of advertising have been found to have a significant effect on sales.

A review of the literature indicates that a few studies have been conducted to understand the influence of digital marketing channels on sales. Where mobile marketing is concerned, a more recent study done by Osinga, Zevenbergen, and van Zuijlen (2019) looks into mobile banner ads and their impact on sales and finds them to have a significant impact on sales. Results remain significant post the mobile marketing campaigns that are under consideration.

Having noted this, the bulk of these studies lie in the area of social media marketing, with others looking into other digital marketing techniques. This review therefore goes on further to consider other digital marketing techniques in its analysis, regarding the

impact on sales. In a study conducted in relation to social media advertising within the context of SMEs, Ahmad, Ahmad, and Bakar (2018) found social media advertising and sponsorship to have a notable impact on SME revenue growth. This was attributed to the platform's ability to enable personalized offerings in a way that encourages purchase. Other notable studies in the area of social media marketing include Lease and Barton (2016), who conducted a study within the wine industry and found that wineries making use of social media practices as part of their marketing strategy were seeing a positive impact on sales.

These studies further support the notion of digital marketing techniques such as social media, having a positive effect on sales. As a communication tool that is constantly advancing, and helping firms find new ways of marketing and increasing sales, social media has been found to be complementary to brick and mortar store by driving traffic into the stores and also being the reason (in some instances) for a 20% increase in sales (Erkan, Gokerik & Acikgoz, 2019; Pauwels & Neslin, 2015)

Taiminen and Karjaluoto (2015) found that given the sales-centric nature of SMEs, many viewed (and were using) digital marketing channels (e.g. search engine marketing, social media marketing) as instruments to achieve sales objectives. With organizations exploring new forms of digital marketing techniques, scholars have gone on to explore the various effects on marketing/sales goals. Online display ads were a feature in a study conducted by Johnson, Lewis, and Reiley (2015), where they found the digital marketing technique to have a significant impact on sales when it was able to increase sales by 3.6% for the period that was under review. Other scholars (Rotich & Mukhongo, 2015) have expanded variables to include other digital marketing techniques as variables to help them further understand how sales are impacted. To this end, content marketing, email marketing, social media advertising, and mobile marketing have been found to have a positive relationship with sales. In order to see results for any incorporation of digital marketing techniques, marketers are advised to have a good understanding of their customers to allow for segmentation and to have an idea about

what digital marketing techniques might work for which marketing goals (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016).

In addition to ensuring that the right digital marketing technique is chosen, firms need to look into the content strategies that they put in place. Content marketing is another important digital marketing technique that might have an impact on sales. Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, and Janakiraman (2016) demonstrated a positive relationship between content marketing strategies and sales in a study looking into how firm generated content affected sales. Content in this regard makes reference to content used for the purposes of digital marketing as the study also looked into content on digital channels such as social media and email.

Furthermore, from a study conducted into how SMEs use digital marketing, Rishika, Kumar, and Janakiraman (2013) found that coupled with using social media for brand awareness and customer relationship management, SMEs were increasingly using it to drive sales-related objectives. SME's use of social media to drive sales was partly ascribed to findings that customers who were linked to SME brands through social media platforms, yielded more revenue than those that were not. As such, the digital marketing channel has been found beneficial by SMEs outside of the SME space. In a study conducted on how targeted mobile advertising can affect sales of mobile services, Merisavo and Vesanen (2006) found mobile advertising to have a significant impact.

Having said this, the authors note the importance of understanding customers and their preference for content as this plays a role in the purchase decision. Andzulis, Panagopoulos, and Rapp (2012), in an effort to understand the influence of social media marketing on sales, recognized social media as having a marketing function (promotion, the establishment of brand equity) and sales function which allows for CRM-related matters. The culmination of the two leads to a platform that plays a role in the facilitation and completion of sales.

While numerous studies are focused in the area of social media, it is evident that their use of a particular digital marketing channel can have several effects. The following hypotheses were proposed:

> ***$H3_0$: There is no relationship between mobile marketing and sales within SMEs.***
>
> ***$H3_a$: There is a positive relationship between mobile marketing and sales with SMEs.***

2.2 Conclusion of literature review

The evolution of the Promotion element within the marketing mix over the past couple of years, necessitates a relook into how organisations organizations can effectively make use of its various techniques. Digital marketing presents a set of new channels that can be considered in an effort to achieve marketing objectives in a world made up of a more tech savvy customer (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2016; Nair, 2017).

Having said this, the digital marketing channels and their accompanying techniques are many, and their testing and implementation may prove costly for SMEs which are known to have resource-related limitations such as human, financial, technological (Jain, 2014; Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011). Social media marketing is dominating the nature of studies (within the context of SMEs and big corporates) associated with understanding digital marketing channels and their effectiveness on marketing objectives. Having identified the rising mobile adoption rates and the dearth of research in the area of mobile marketing as a digital marketing channel, this study aims to deliver new knowledge in the area of the channel's effectiveness, as it relates to SME performance.

Performance is considered in light of the three constructs namely, brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales. All three constructs are poorly researched where mobile marketing is concerned.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will have an in-depth look at the research methodology that was made use of in conducting the study. Methodology is a concept that deals with the logic, procedure, and theoretic viewpoint of conducting a study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Babbie, 2013 Long, 2014). The research methodology that a researcher selects is important because it guides the choices made in terms of research methods (Long, 2014).

The section will cover: (a) research paradigm and strategy (b) research design (c) population and sample (d) research instrument (e) procedure for data collection (f) data analysis (g) the limitations of the research procedure and methods (h) reliability and validity of the instruments used.

3.1 Research Paradigm and Strategy

A research paradigm is used to make reference to as a set of substantive concepts, problems, and variables that are attached to the methodological methods that correspond with them. The term encapsulates a culture of research shared by a community of researchers; the culture is made up of a set of beliefs, assumptions, and values regarding the nature and conduct of research (Kuhn, 1977 as quoted in Thomas, 2010, p. 292). Constructivism, pragmatism, positivism, and advocacy/participatory are some of the research paradigms that are generally made use of (Creswell, 2003).

The current study aims to determine whether mobile marketing influences SME performance. This was explored by considering three variables namely, brand awareness, customer acquisition as well as sales. As such, the orientation of the author tends towards positivism which holds the notion that determines certain outcomes and that the reality is measurable and can be studied by looking at certain separate variables (Creswell, 2003; Kawulich, 2012).

A quantitative research strategy was made use of for this study. Quantitative research analyses data that have been generated in its quantitative form is further considered in terms of various research approaches such as the experimental approach in which variables are used to study what effect they have on other variables (Kothari, 2004). Researchers in a quantitative study tend to be aligned to a positivistic paradigm, and at the center of this type of study are a cause and effect approach, and the analysis of specific variables in testing a hypothesis (Creswell, 2003).

A recent study (Sekere, 2016) on the effect of mobile communication on SME performance utilized a quantitative study to explore the relationship between operational costs, the efficiency of business operations, marketing, and sales in relation to mobile communication and business performance. In line with this, and given that this research aims to study the relationship between mobile marketing and performance (brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales), a quantitative study was selected with the intention to draw causal inferences.

3.2 Research Design

Research design refers to the outline by which a researcher structures and plans the investigation that allows them to answer a particular research question. The selection of a design is dependent on the question being answered and the objectives of the research (Kumar, 2011; Williman, 2011). Research designs can be qualitative, quantitative, or make use of mixed methods where both qualitative and quantitative measures are combined (Creswell,2009).

In quantitative research, objective theories are tested by considering the relationship between the variables that form part of the study. Over the years, and where quantitative methods are concerned, research designs that incorporate logistic regression, hierarchical linear modeling, factorial designs, and the likes, have been used to understand multifaceted relationships between variables. As in the case of qualitative/mixed methods, this method requires that the design be done in such a way that results can be duplicated and generalized while avoiding bias (Creswell, 2014).

Given that this is a relatively new area of research, these factors were equally important for this study.

A causal/explanatory research design was utilized for this study. Explanatory research often explains why and how a relationship exists between various aspects (Kumar, 2011). The significance of explanatory designs lies in their ability to be prescriptive and descriptive. They explain the functions of artifacts theologically and can clarify why and how an artifact was created (Baskerville & Jan Pries-Heje, 2010).

A causal design allows for the description of a cause and effect relationship where the cause is the independent variable and the latter is the dependent variable. The identified variables can either have a negative or a positive relationship (Williman, 2011). To study the influence of mobile marketing on SME performance, a cross-sectional design was used. In cross-sectional designs, the data is collected at a particular point/occasion in time. Following this, the data is then analyzed to determine how the variables are associated or how they differ from each other; this design is lauded for its ability to identify association/variation patterns (Bryman, 2012). As such, it was deemed appropriate for understanding the relationship between the aforementioned variables.

3.3 Population and Sample

3.3.1 Population

According to (Bryman, 2012), the universe of cases that a sample is selected from is referred to as a population. The population of this study was made up of the 2 251 286S South African SMEs. This total list is made up of both formal and informal SMEs (Seda, SMME quarterly, 2017). The National Small Business Act 102 of 1996 (South Africa, 1996) amended by Act 29 of 2004 (South Africa, 2004) is used in South Africa to classify small organizations. They are divided into four groups all of which are similar except for micro-enterprises which are differentiated based on the number of employees (Smit & Watkins, 2012).

3.3.2 Sample

The sample was made up of SMEs located in the Gauteng province of South Africa. The prerequisite for SMEs that took part in the study was that they are SMEs that make use of mobile marketing as part of their digital marketing strategies. Other unique features of the respondents are below.

Respondent type: Given the different sizes of SMEs and their capabilities in terms of hiring personnel responsible for marketing, an option was made available for respondents to specify their roles within the organization. Respondents were primarily made up of SME owners (56.3%), marketing professionals (31.5%), and people within the organization who had multiple roles (11.4%). The remaining (0.8%) are either managers or salespeople within the organization.

Industry segments: An effort was made to ensure that the respondents from this study came from a range of industry segments. These included (but are not limited to) the automotive, hospitality, hair, retail, legal, financial services, tourism, and construction industries.

Length of use: 92.52% of our respondents indicated that they had been making use of marketing for more than a year, while 4.3% had made use of it for anything between 9-12 months. Overall, the respondents are people who are quite well versed in the area of mobile marketing and have had a considerable amount of time to look into the benefits as it applies to their businesses.

Mobile marketing techniques: Given that the use of mobile marketing was a prerequisite for each of these SMEs, each was asked to indicate how they went about their mobile marketing campaigns, in terms of the techniques and tools that were being made use of. All respondents had made use of mobile marketing. In combination with other mobile marketing techniques (Mobile applications, Location based marketing, QR codes, etc.) the bulk (96.8%) respondents indicated WhatsApp/ WhatsApp business as featuring significantly in their mobile marketing strategies.

Means through which digital marketing is conducted: While the assumption was that most SMEs were conducting their digital campaigns through advertising agencies, 86.2% of the respondents have been conducting their mobile marketing activities in-house. The remainder of respondents either made use of a combination of in-house and advertising agency services (11.9%) or relied solely on advertising agencies (2%).

Budget: In the main, the identified sample spent between R50-R1000 on mobile marketing efforts with the remainder investing amounts between R1000-R30000.

Other social media channels: In addition to making use of influencer marketing, email marketing, SEO, Affiliate marketing, and content marketing, the respondents commonly make use of social media as an alternative digital marketing technique.

3.3.3 Sampling technique

The sampling technique for this study was non-probability sampling, as the sample was not chosen randomly. When making use of this technique, cases that form part of the population are more likely to be chosen in favor of others in the population (Bryman, 2012). SMEs that formed part of this study needed to meet the following criteria: (i) fall into what the National Small Business Act 102 of 2004 defines as small businesses and (ii) employ mobile marketing techniques. To ensure that this was indeed the case, this research made use of a non-probability technique referred to as purposive sampling. Purposive sampling requires that a certain level of judgment or random ideas be followed in order to get to the kind of sample that is required for the specified research objectives. Researchers can reject respondents who do not fit particular criteria for the desired sample (Vehovar, Toepal, & Steinmetz, 2016).

A lot of respondents indicated having made use of digital marketing without really understanding which part of their digital marketing efforts constituted “mobile marketing”. To this end, respondents are sometimes (in instances where it was paper-based) asked qualifying questions to establish whether they had made use of mobile marketing.

The use of non-probability sampling proved to be efficient and beneficial for this study as it increased the likelihood of getting respondents that represented the desired sample. It also gave greater variation (in terms of e.g. industry segments and SME sizes) as participants that did not fall into the aforementioned criteria had to be rejected, and new ones had to be sourced.

3.3.4 Sample Size

A sample size of 254 respondents was obtained for this research. A large sample needed to be obtained as quantitative studies requires larger samples to get a more representative sample (Bryman, 2012). A greater effort was put into ensuring that a large representative sample was obtained. A larger set of questionnaires was sent out to ensure that the desired sample size was reached.

3.4 The research instrument

This study made use of a self-administered questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaires were sent to respondents and they answered independently without any guidance from the researcher. In light of this, every effort has to be made to ensure that the questions are designed in a way that is easy to comprehend. Additionally, questions have to be brief and be more close-ended so as to aid the respondents through the thorough completion of the questionnaire (Bryman,2012). As such, careful consideration went into the framing of the questions.

The literacy level of the respondents was also taken into consideration, as issues around understanding questions and the ability/inability to follow instructions have an impact on how questions are answered (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2005). Given the broad nature of the South African business landscape and the anticipation that respondents would be coming from different socio-economic backgrounds, careful consideration went into the wording of the questions. Of particular importance was ensuring that there was no ambiguity or complex words in the questions.

The questionnaire was divided into four clearly labeled sections that introduced the respondent to the different elements that were being researched. Section A was made up of background questions that sought to get background information about the SME. Constructs related to brand awareness, sales, and customer acquisition were covered in sections B, C, and D respectively.

A key benefit of using a self-administered questionnaire is the affordability and ease of use (Welman et al., 2005). The elements of anonymity also ensured that our respondents knew that they were not divulging any secret business information that could compromise their businesses.

3.4.1 Research instrument items and source

The four sections of the questionnaire consisted of the following sections:

Section A - Screening Questions (Question 1-7)

This section consists of a few screening questions that ascertained the role of the respondents within the organization: which industry segment they fell under and which type of mobile marketing tool/technique was being used, how long it had been used, the budgets that were being allocated to mobile marketing, whether the marketing was being done in-house or by an agency, and other digital marketing techniques that were being used. The aim of the questions was to give a better view of the SMEs and help (amongst other things) to better understand what mobile techniques were being used, and what investments companies were willing to make in this tool and technique.

Section B - The influence of mobile marketing on brand awareness (Question 8-10)

Based on a study conducted by Homburg et al (2010), brand awareness measured on a seven-point scale: strongly disagree to strongly agree. In the study, the scale measures brand awareness at firm level, where the goal is to understand how decision-makers (within the organization) rate their brand awareness within the marketplace. The authors

adapted their scale from Aaker (1996) and took into consideration, whether the brand is top of mind, brand recall, brand recognition, or brand dominance.

Section C - The influence of mobile marketing on customer acquisition (Question 11-15)

The measurement for customer acquisition was derived from Thomas (2001) and Rodriguez, Peterson. and Krishnan (2012), measuring on a seven-point scale: “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Section D - The influence of mobile marketing on sales (Question 16-20)

The influence of sales on mobile marketing was measured using a scale adapted from Tallon et al, (2001) and Homburg et al. (2010), both measuring on seven-point scales and varying slightly. Tallon et al. (2001) established the impact of I.T. on firm performance with different constructs (logistics, customer service, sales, and marketing, etc. are considered) that denoting performance. The 7-point Likert scale was configured so that 1 represents “low realized impacts” and 7 represents “high realized impacts”. In Homburg et al. (2010), 1 denoted “clearly worse” while 7 denoted “clearly better”. The scales have been adapted to suit the current study.

Details on the scales are contained in Appendix A

3.5 Procedure for data collection

3.5.1 The briefing of respondents

The questionnaire used for data collection had a cover letter that gave respondents clarity on what the research was about and what they could expect in the questionnaire. Their privacy and the anonymity of the research were also assured in this statement and they were advised that their participation was voluntary. These factors were an important inclusion for respondents who may have had some concerns about participating.

3.5.2 Questionnaire distribution and data collection

Data collection is a process through which data is gathered from a specified sample with the intention of getting them to answer questions related to the research being collected. There are various ways in which this can be done and methods depend on whether research is qualitative or quantitative. Data can be collected through interviews, self-administered questionnaires, internet/email surveys, group-administered surveys, as well as participants to name but a few (Bryman, 2012; Welman et al., 2005).

This study made use of web-designed and paper-based questionnaires. The sample was mainly made up of businesses within the Gauteng province located in Johannesburg and Pretoria. The sourcing was done with the assistance of business consultants who service SMEs; they were able to provide a database of their clients who they deemed suitable for the study. Additionally, other SMEs were approached in person and asked whether they would be interested in taking part in the study.

The web-based questionnaire was designed on Google forms and a link was sent out to a set of respondents. For the paper-based questionnaires, various SMEs were visited and owners, marketing professionals, or people responsible for marketing were asked to complete the survey. The response rates for online surveys were initially low but changed after emailing times and days were reconsidered. Data also collected through pen- and paper-based questionnaires proved successful from the onset. The main benefit of paper-based questionnaires was that they are easier and quicker to collect as respondents were more accessible. In this instance, the questionnaire was handed over to the owner/marketing professional for completion and collected once it was finished.

3.5.3 Reminders / Follow ups

During this time, reminders were sent to participants who had been sent the Google forms link. Additionally, follow ups were done with respondents who had received the paper version. Online respondents took slightly longer periods of time to respond after

reminders had been sent. In contrast, once a follow up was done on the paper-based questionnaires, respondents were able to quickly complete the questionnaire and hand it over.

3.5.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were taken into account in designing the questionnaire, as well as collecting and analyzing data for the research. Ethics are said to be important across different stages of the research procedure namely in the recruitment of participants, measurement process that they go through, and issuing of the results that came from the study (Welman et al., 2005).To this end, the following factors were considered in line with recommendations from Bryman (2012).

(a) It was considered whether the study would be harmful to participants. Harm, in this context, constituted harm that is physical or that affects the development, stress levels, or self-esteem of the participant. (b) It was also considered whether the research would in any way invade the privacy of the participants. Concerning these, participants were assured of privacy/confidentiality and anonymity in as far as their responses were concerned. (c) Effort was also taken to ensure that there was no deception. This occurs when the research is represented for what it is not, and respondents are limited in their understanding of why they are taking part in the study, so they can respond more naturally (Bryman, 2012). (d) Lastly, the issue of informed consent was taken into consideration. This related to ensuring that the participants had enough information to allow them to decide on their willingness to participate/not participate in the study.

3.5.5 Pilot testing

Pilot studies come highly recommended as they allow for the researcher to ensure that the instrument being used works well and that participants have a clear understanding

of the questions and what is required of them (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014). To test the reliability and validity of the scale, a pilot study was conducted on 20 SMEs for this research. Respondents were asked to share their feedback on the study.

Respondents advised that they appreciated that the questionnaire was not too lengthy, as such, this allowed them to complete it timeously. In not making questionnaires too long, researchers minimize the chances of “respondent fatigue” and increase the chances of questionnaires being answered in their totality (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, respondents showed an appreciation for the fact that each of the mobile marketing terms and digital marketing terms was expanded on. This helped them answer questions with ease. Overall, respondents were able to answer all the questions and found the questionnaire to be straightforward. No changes were made to the questionnaire following the pilot study.

3.6 Data analysis

3.6.1 Data Processing

This step in the analysis of the collected data refers to how it is quantified so it can be made sense of and used in the analysis of the data (Bryman, 2012). In collecting data using Google forms, the output was released in text format, and while the researcher was able to look through the data and get a sense of what was happening, nothing much could be done with the data until it was processed and made suitable for analysis. Furthermore, data was also disorganized and contained some missing values. As such, the data needed to be made suitable and ready for analysis.

The following steps were followed in accordance with guidelines from Khothari (2004) and Neuman (2014).

i) **Data coding** - Coding is important before a researcher can proceed to inputting and analyzing it further. The data received need to have numbers/values attached so that each number can represent the data collected (Kothari,2004). In putting this research together, the data were coded accordingly and each response type was assigned a

particular number, making it easy for the chosen statistical package to analyze the data. Some of the research questions required that the respondent specify an option. This occurred if no option was available on the options list.

The items that did not form part of the list and that were specified were also coded for analysis. Provision was also made for the very minimal missing responses in the exploratory questions around industry segments that respondents were in or the budgets that they were using. These, although very minimal, were also noted.

ii) **Data entry/storing data on a computer-** Further to this, data were arranged in clearly marked columns and can be understood by the researcher. The researcher can make a decision on the input device/software that they want to use. In instances where there are a lot of variables, it becomes important to have labels and columns that make comprehension of the data possible. (Kothari, 2004; Neuman, 2014). In this study the software that was used for the purposes of data entry, is Excel. Items were carefully arranged in Excel so that the data represented both responses from the Google forms link and from the paper-based questionnaires.

iii) **Data cleaning** - Careful consideration was taken into ensuring that no errors were made. The entries were triple-checked against what had been inputted on paper. It is possible for a researcher to collect sufficient data from an ideal sample and then completely ruin the findings because of incorrect coding or data that was not properly captured. To this end, the process that involves the coding of the data becomes extremely important (Neuman, 2014). Much time was spent on this process so as not to compromise the findings of the study.

3.6.2 Data Analysis

3.6.2.1 Data Analysis considerations

When data are being analyzed, the researcher is in essence computing elements of the data to see if any relationships exist between the chosen variables, or if there are patterns that are worth being noted (Khothari, 2004). In the present study, for data

analysis, certain concepts of the collected data were connected to themes, generalizations, or trends. In quantitative research, this is done by making use of the numbers that would have been developed during the coding process. Making use of numeric values often results in standardization, uniformity, and precision (Neuman, 2014).

The data analysis can be considered from two different lenses, one being descriptive and the other being inferential. The former tells the story of (in the case of this particular study) the profiles of the SMEs that took part, and characteristics such as the mobile marketing technology being used, and the budget allocated to mobile marketing technologies. The latter tends to be the area of focus for research studies and entails factors such as causal or correlation analysis.

Where correlation looks at how variables that are being studied may be related, causal analysis can tell us how one or more variables affect or change other variables (Creswell, 2014; Welman et al., 2005). Over the years, the prominence and advancement of computer programs have made it possible for various statistical methods to be employed in this type of data analysis. These include multiple discriminant analysis, multiple regression analysis, multivariate analysis, and canonical analysis, all of which can be decided upon by the researcher and based on the research objectives (Khothari, 2004).

3.6.2.2 Data analysis procedure

The statistical analysis of this research was conducted by making use of Mplus version 8.3. This process was preceded by the extraction of data from Google forms and self-administered questionnaires, followed by coding and entry into an Excel spreadsheet. Following this, an analysis of the descriptive characteristics of the data was done. This allowed the researcher to look into standard deviation, correlations, and means, etc.

The analysis of data further made use of structural equation modeling where the goal was to assess the predictive influence of mobile marketing on brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales performance. Structural equation modeling (SEM) is

made up of various statistical techniques that allow the researcher to understand relationships between a set of discrete or continuous independent or dependent variables. SEM was selected for this study because of its proven benefits. These factors include its ability to show relationships that are devoid of errors related to measurement. With SEM, significantly complex relationships can also be analyzed. Lastly, the method is also noted as being quite reliable as errors related to measurement can be estimated and removed (Weiner, Schinka, & Velicer, 2012)

All items were adapted from previously validated studies. Hence, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was also performed to determine the appropriateness of the items in this study. CFA is used for a range of things, namely measures that are new and the psychometric properties of those measures. It is also commonly used to establish construct validity (Harrington, 2009). Goodness-fit indices and path coefficients were used to determine the appropriateness of the structural equation model.

Results of the aforementioned procedures and accompanying tables are discussed in greater detail in the presentation of results in Chapter 4.

3.7 Reliability and Validity

One of the most important factors in the development of a study is ensuring the reliability and validity of the study. Without ascertaining these factors, the study can be compromised in terms of the authenticity of its findings (Nueman, 2014; Welman et al, 2005). There are various ways that one can check for the validity and reliability of a study. Some of these techniques were explored in testing the study for both validity and reliability.

3.7.1 Validity

The validity of a study is put in place to consider whether the measure of a particular concept does measure the concept it is meant to measure (Bryman, 2012). This becomes particularly important when the instrument is modified slightly to meet the

study under consideration. This modification requires that the reliability/validity of the study be re-established. Validity can help us expand on the match between conceptual and operational definitions as they relate to a study. A good fit is said to indicate high measurement validity. Researchers tend to explore various techniques to ensure the validity of a study, these include face validity, internal validity, external validity, and construct validity (Neuman,2014; Welman et al., 2005).

Face validity - is said to be concerned with whether the study appears to measure what it is said to measure at face value. This is based on the judgment of those making the assessment. Usually, this is achieved through consulting people who are likely to be experts in the field of study under consideration (Bryman, 2012; Neuman, 2014). To assess face validity for this study, two postdoctoral fellows at the Wits business school were consulted and asked to look at any discrepancies or ambiguities in what was being presented to the respondents. The consensus was that the measure makes sense.

External validity- External validity covers concepts related to population validity as well as ecological validity. When a study is complete, what is being theorized is said to hold for the population in question (Welman et al., 2005). In this study, what was being theorized would need to hold for South African SMEs. To this end, it becomes important to have a sample that is representative of the population being investigated.

The degree to which a study can be generalized to the entire population (all South African SMEs) speaks to the population validity of a study (Creswell, 2014; Welman et al., 2005). Ecological validity on the other hand refers to the degree to which a particular study can be generalized to a context.

With regards to population validity, one of the flaws/limitations of this study is the fact that a lot of data were collected within the Gauteng province. With this being the case, it is likely the sample is not a complete representation of the population of SMEs in South Africa. Having said this, great effort went into ensuring that the sample was different in terms of the industry segments and the sizes of the SMEs that were under consideration. This helped to ensure that the sample was varied. Where ecological

validity was concerned, it is believed that this study can be generalized to particular contexts. For example, if the study was conducted in another large metropolis e.g. Durban in KZN or Cape-Town in the Western Cape, it would yield similar results.

It is however noted that South Africa is diverse, so perhaps the results might vary in a rural area where potential customers of the SME do not have proper access to mobile devices or the internet. This is likely to hinder the degree of generalization as the presence of certain factors affects the results of a study (Welman et al., 2005).

Internal validity- Internal validity relates to the degree to which changes in the dependent variable are caused by the independent variable, as opposed to other external factors (Welman et al., 2005). This makes internal validity extremely important because in trying to prove a theory, one has to be certain that there are no other external factors (other than the independent variable) that are affecting the dependent variables (Nueman, 2014).

To address issues that may arise and threaten internal validity, the study, in accordance with guidelines from Nueman (2014), avoided selection bias, looked into whether any elements would constitute the history effect, did not change any elements of the instrument during the study, and also avoided experimental mortality by ensuring that participants took part in the study in its totality.

Construct validity - Construct validity is used to examine whether a measure that is devised of a concept is reflective of the particular concept it meant to signify (Bryman, 2012). Elements related to construct validity are **convergent** (a result of multiple indicators, converging or associating with each other), **divergent** (a result of indicators of one construct converging but are also associated negatively associated with disparate constructs) **validity** (Bryman, 2012; Welman et al., 2005). Both elements were explored to ascertain the distinctiveness of the measures. The results and conclusions regarding this are discussed in the presentation of results in Chapter 4 of the paper.

3.7.2 Path model using Structural Equation Modeling

Path modeling/analysis and SEM also formed part of the data analysis process. SEM has been used extensively to analyze cause and effect relationships in the field of marketing. The introduction and prominence of path modeling/analysis have resulted in it being an acceptable method through which observed relationships can be defined; it further allows for the testing of the hypothesized research model's structural paths (Sarstedt, 2008). Path analysis has a significant focus on what is referred to as a path diagram, where standardized partial regression coefficients are looked at as effect coefficients (Khothari, 2004).To show how each variable depends on another variable, a set of equations is usually built. The analysis further allows for the researcher to consider the influence of the variables on each other (Khothari, 2004).

For this research, SEM was used to assess the predictive influence of mobile marketing on brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales performance. Goodness-fit indices and path coefficients were used to determine the appropriateness of the SEM. The goodness-fit indices for the model showed an acceptable level of fitness. Based on recommendations by Bagozzi and Yi (1988), some of the essential approximate fit indexes were adopted to provide sufficient information and guide on the model fitness. Assessment of the CFA results shows that the model produces acceptable fitness for the proposed measures.

Measures included the Chi-square value, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Results are expanded on in chapter 4 of the paper.

3.7.3 Reliability

The reliability of a study speaks to how dependable the study is. This dependability is based on consistency. This is to say that if the same experiment were to be run under circumstances with similar conditions, the same thing would occur. A reliable study is one that is stable and that can produce similar results when applied to other subpopulations (Neuman, 2014). An unreliable study is one that occurs as a result of

the measurement and it is characterized by instability and inconsistency (Bryman, 2012). To ensure that this study was reliable, Cronbach alpha and composite reliability were used in this study to ascertain reliability, which is in accordance with recommendations from (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). The results are discussed in chapter 4.

3.8 Chapter summary

This chapter served to give clarity on the methodology which was used to achieve the objective of this research. Various methods and measures were explored prior to the study and the methods that were selected were deemed suitable and appropriate.

Chapter 4. Presentation of results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is reflective of the results obtained from the 254 participants who took part in this study. The analysis was conducted using Mplus version 8.3., Excel, and Google forms. The results relating to each hypothesis are presented first, a note on whether the hypothesis has been supported by the research findings was included.

The chapter ends with a dive into the descriptive statistics which give details on what constituted the first seven questions of the questionnaire. Here, factors such as the profile of the person filling out the questionnaire, the industry segment within which the SME falls, the type of mobile marketing initiatives that have been followed, the period over which mobile marketing has been used, how mobile marketing initiatives are implemented (whether they are done in-house or by an agency), how much of the budgets used are allocated to mobile marketing activities, as well as which other digital marketing techniques are being used were considered. Results relating to the

confirmatory factor analysis and other reliability and validity measures are also discussed.

4.2 Descriptive statistics

4.2.1 Profile of respondents responsible for marketing within the SME

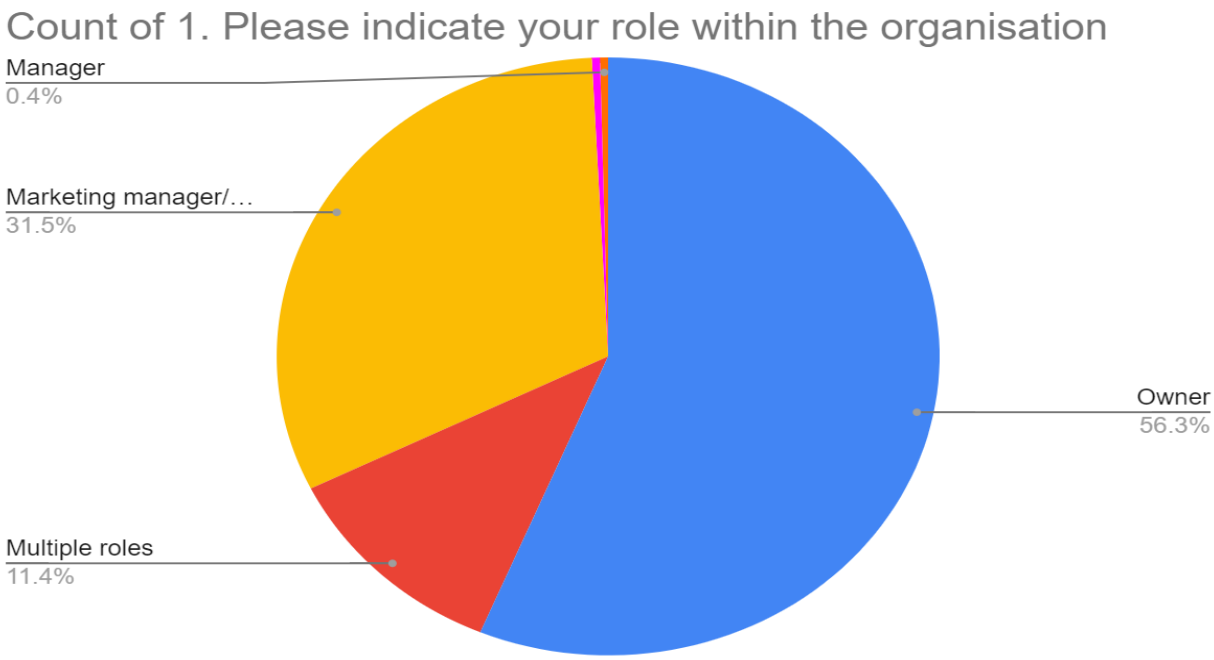


Figure 2.

Respondents were asked to specify their roles within the organization. This was done to understand the types of people that were responsible for marketing initiatives within SMEs. The results showed that 56.3% of SME owners and 31.5% of Marketing managers/professionals were responsible. 11.4% of respondents had multiple roles within the organization while 0.4% were managers and/or salespeople.

4.2.2 Industry segments

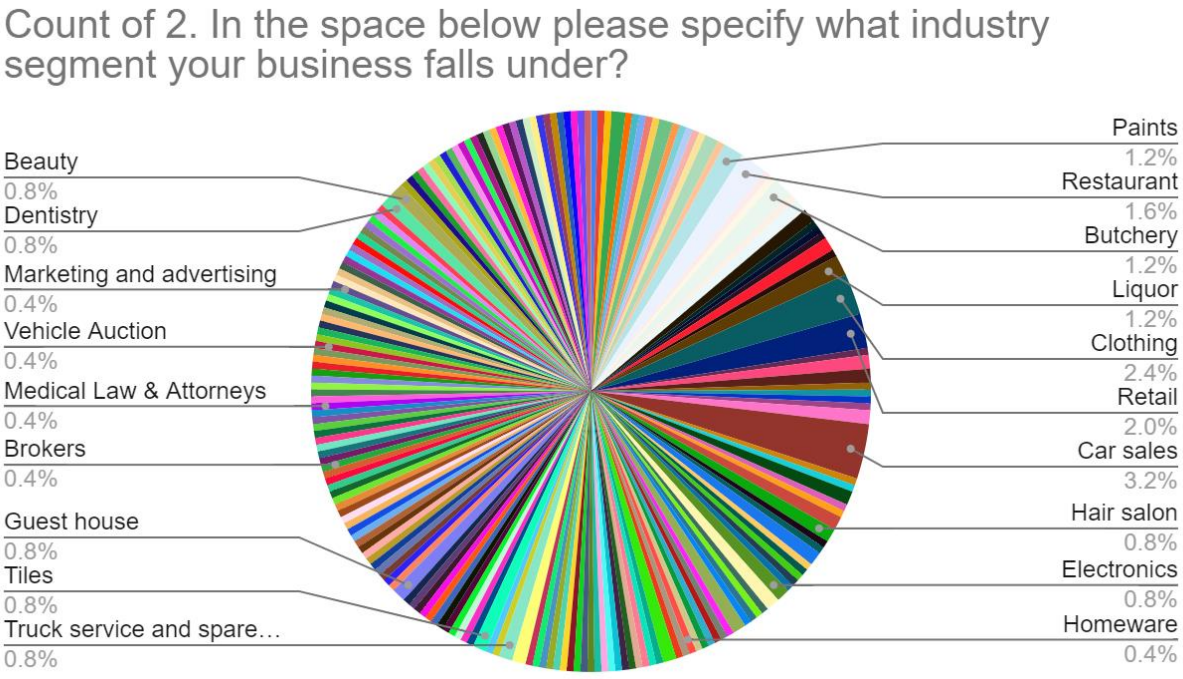


Figure 3.

Respondents were asked to specify the industry segments that their business fell into. This was done to gain a varied sample. This section has 254 unique values that have been summarized and detailed, and are contained in Appendix B. Industry segments span a wide spectrum ranging from hospitality, financial services, retail automotive, and medical to name but a few.

4.2.3 Types of mobile marketing that techniques that are being used

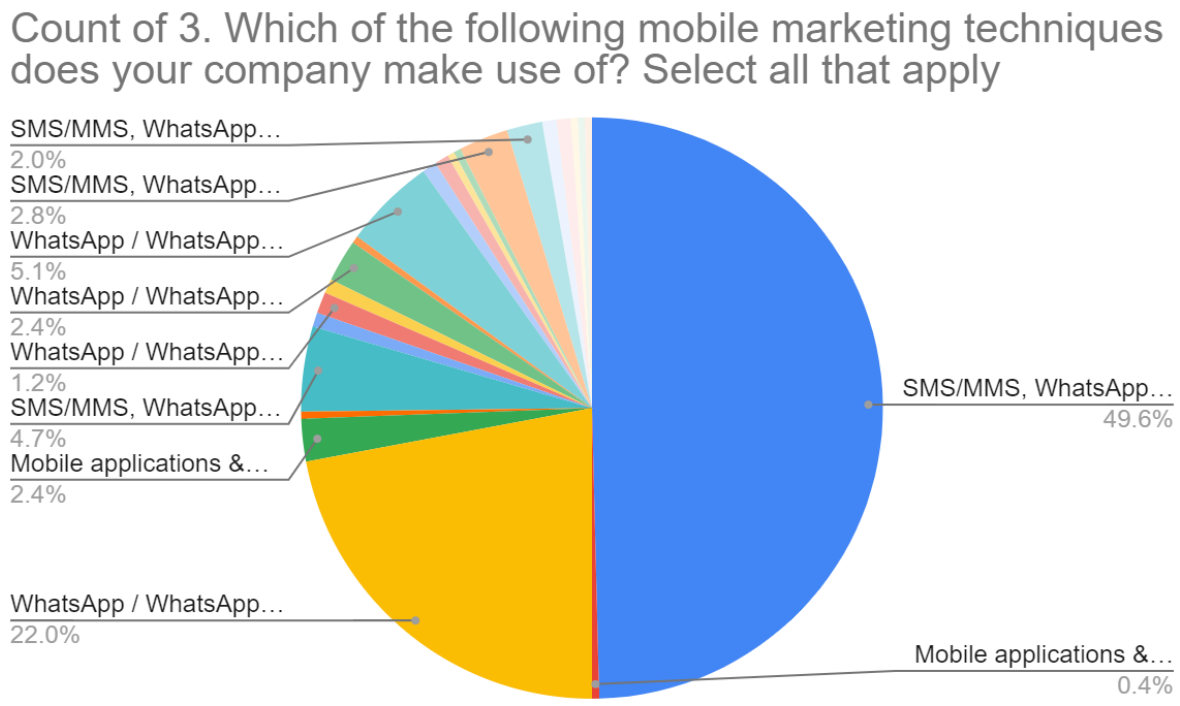


Figure 4

Respondents were asked to specify the different types of mobile marketing techniques that they were using. Of the responses, there were 23 unique combinations of mobile marketing techniques that were being used. These are represented in a table in Appendix C which demonstrates the combination of mobile techniques being used by the SMEs.

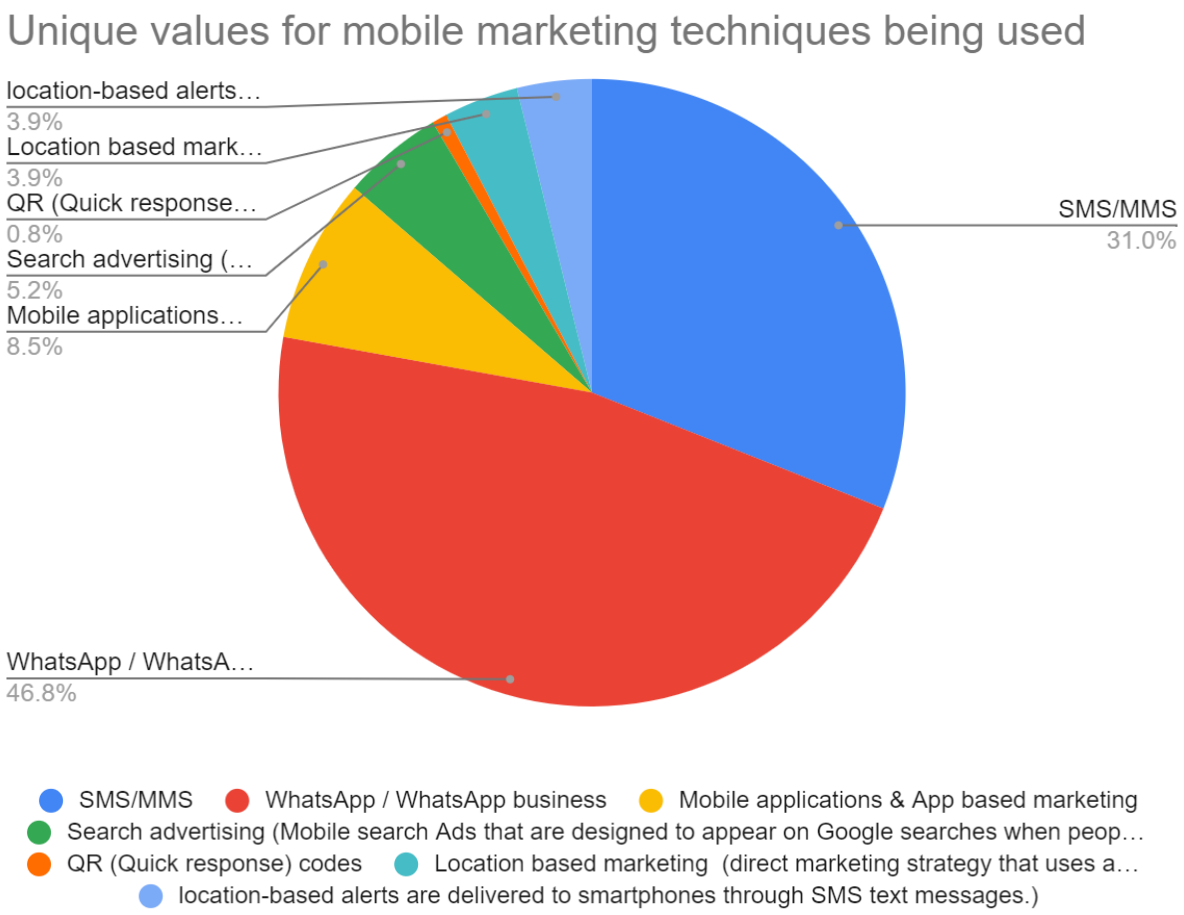


Figure 5

The chart above gives a clearer view of the unique mobile marketing technique and the degree to which it is being used by SMEs. 46.8% of respondents stated that they were using WhatsApp/WhatsApp business, 31% of respondents indicated that they were using SMS/MMS, while 8.5% said they were using mobile applications and app-based marketing. Search advertising was being used by 5.2% of the represented population, while 3.9% was being used for location-based marketing. Quick response codes constituted 0.8% of the mobile marketing techniques that are being used. An additional option listed by respondents is location-based alerts that are delivered to smartphones through SMS. These constitute 3.9% of respondents.

4.2.4 Length of use for mobile marketing techniques.

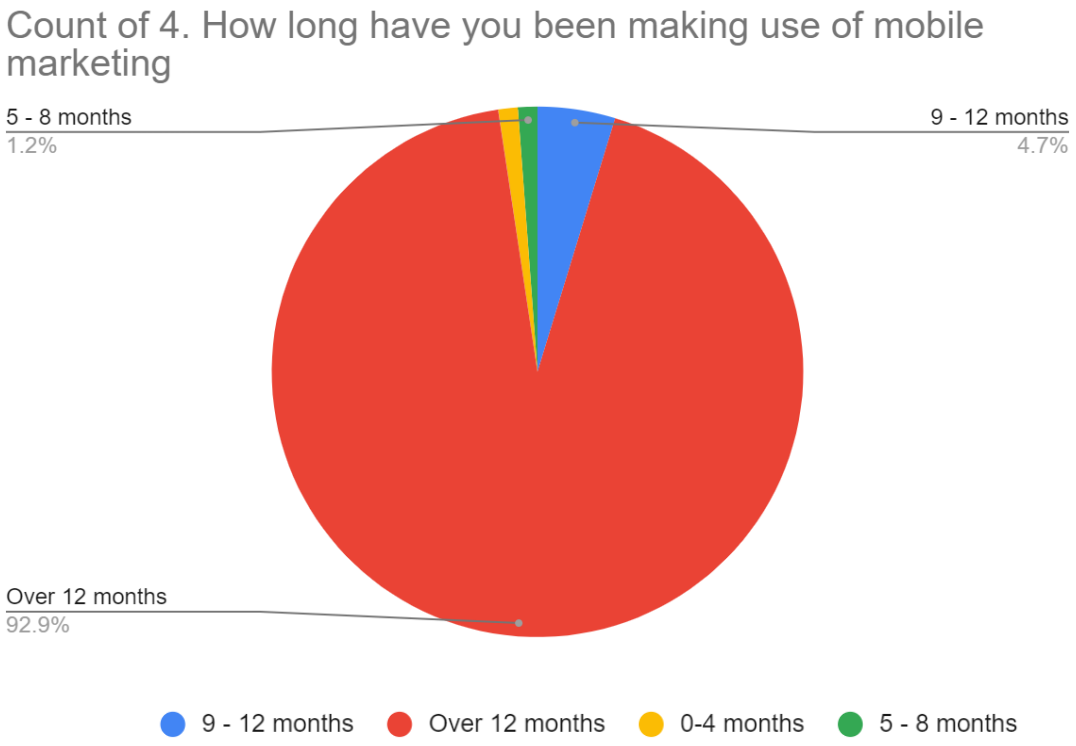


Figure 6

A look into the length of usage of digital mobile marketing technologies showed that the bulk of SMEs had been using mobile marketing for a considerable amount of time, with 92.9% stating that they had been using it for over 12 months. 4.7% stated that they had been using it for 9-12 months while 1.2% had noted usage of 5-8months and 0-4 months.

4.2.5 Manner in which mobile marketing initiatives are implemented

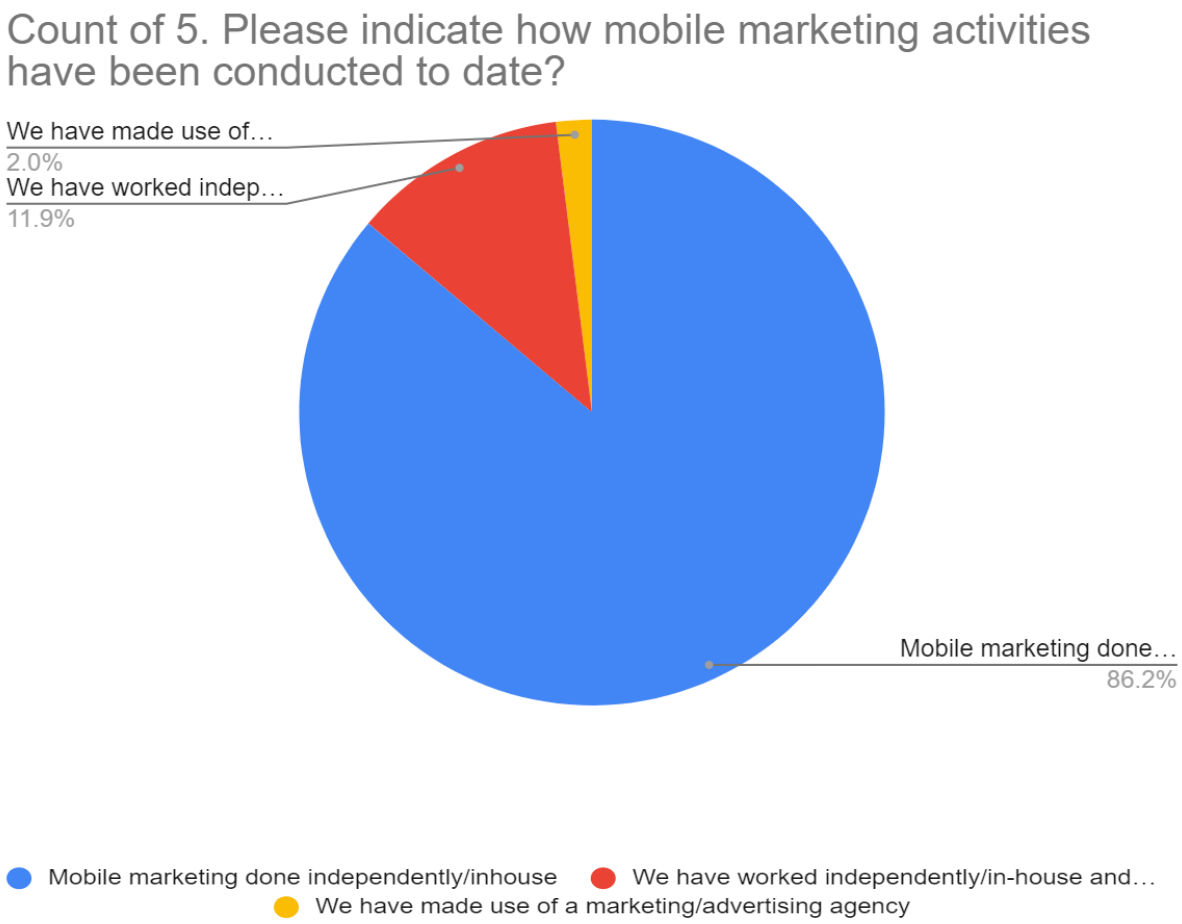


Figure 7

Respondents were asked to specify how they had gone about implementing their mobile marketing initiatives. 86.2% reported that they had been doing their mobile marketing initiatives in-house/independently while 11.9% and worked independently and made use of advertising agencies. 2% indicated that they had solely made use of advertising agencies for their mobile marketing initiatives.

4.2.6 Budgets allocated to mobile marketing

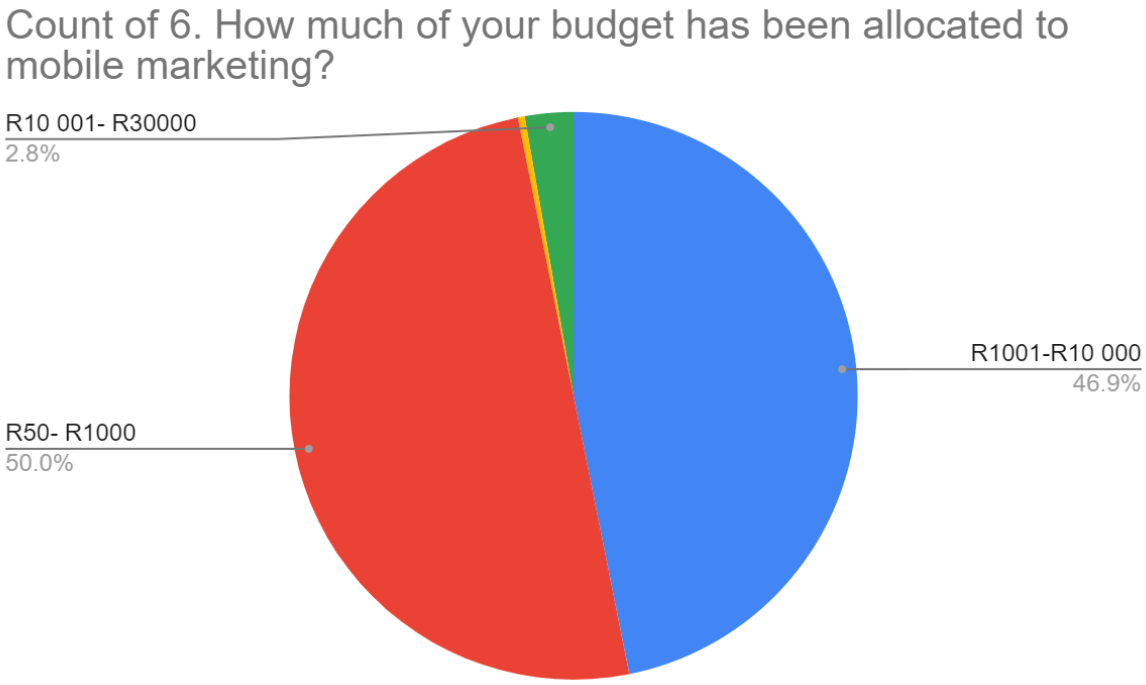


Figure 8

In an effort to understand how much SMEs spends on mobile marketing, respondents were asked to select from a range of items. 50% of them advised that they were allocating between R50-R1000 to their mobile marketing initiatives. 46.9% were spending a little bit more by investing 46.9%, 2.8% were investing R10001-R30000. Given the limited resources of SMEs, it is not surprising that only 0.4% were investing more than R30,000.

4.2.7 Other digital marketing techniques being used

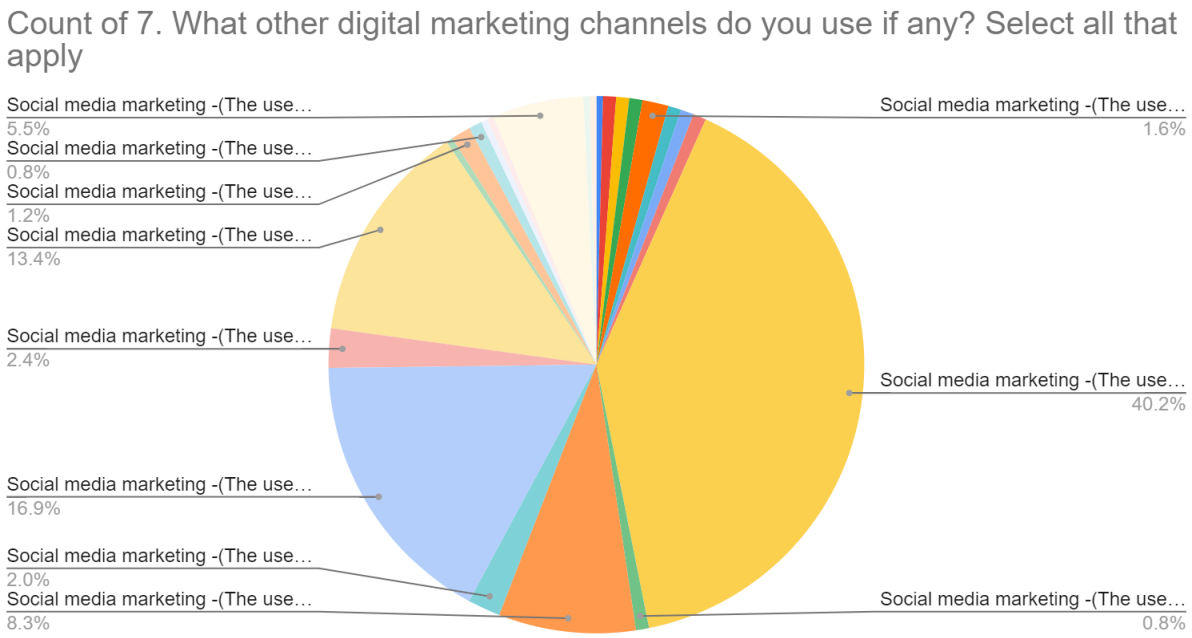


Figure 9

Given the broad range of options that are available to SMEs, it was interesting to find out which other digital marketing initiatives were being used by SMEs. Respondents were asked to select all responses that apply, and indicate the combinations of digital marketing techniques they were using. A total of 23 unique combinations were being used by SMEs with 40% using social media, and 34% using a combination of Social media marketing, SEO, and affiliate marketing. Appendix D has details around the various combinations that emerged from the study.

Below are details of how SMEs are using each digital marketing technique. Of all the digital marketing techniques, social media appears to be the most used technique at 98.8%, followed by SEO at 34.6%, and affiliate marketing at 7.06%. Only 3.93% of

SMEs in the study are making use of email marketing and 1.57% are making use of content marketing.

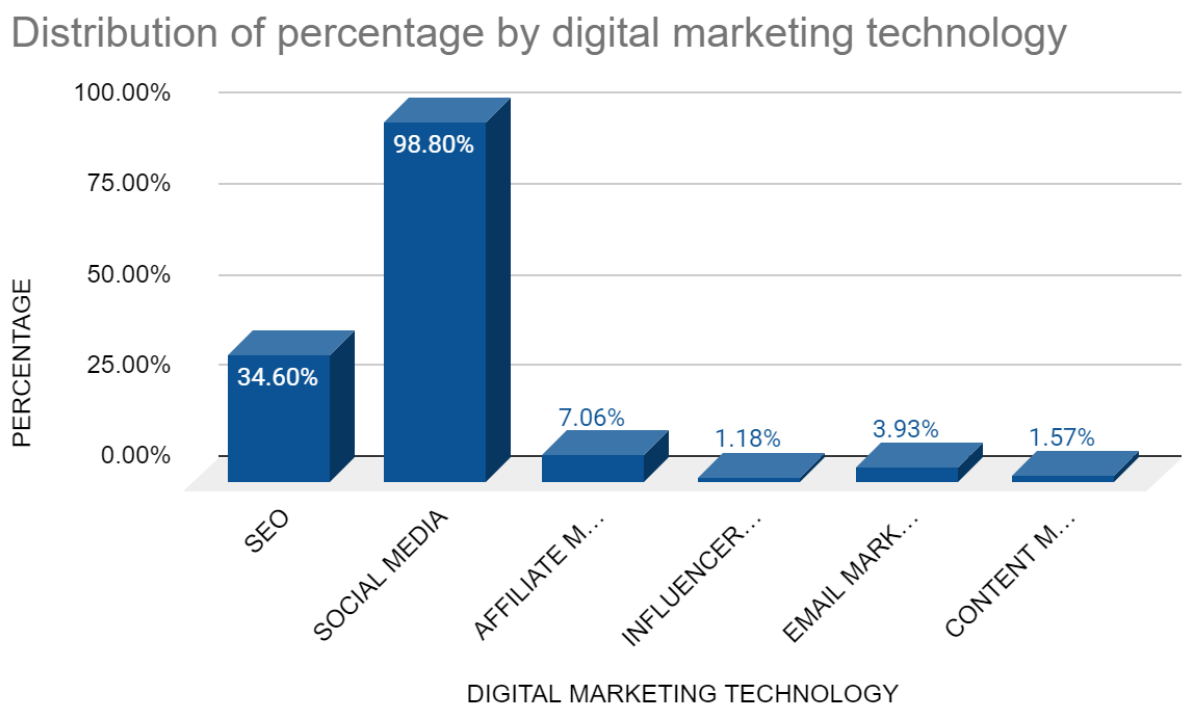


Figure 10

4.3 Reliability, Validity, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, and Path modeling

All the items were adapted from previously validated studies. Hence, a CFA was performed to determine the appropriateness of the items in this study. First, the reliability and validity of the study's constructs were assessed through the robust maximum likelihood technique in Mplus version 8.3. The Chi-square (X^2) test was used to assess model fitness. Based on recommendations by Bagozzi and Yi (1988), some of

the essential approximate fit indexes were adopted to provide sufficient information and guide on the model fitness. Assessment of the CFA results showed that the model produces acceptable fitness for the proposed model: X^2 = 131.789 (71); X^2/d.f. = 1.86; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .057; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.948; Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.934; and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = 0.056.

Moreover, to ensure that the measurement model derived through CFA was adequate, reliability and validity estimates were ascertained. First, Cronbach's alpha scores (α) and composite reliability estimates were derived. As depicted in Table 1, composite reliability scores for the three latent constructs were above the 0.7 thresholds. Cronbach's alpha scores were also above the 0.7 thresholds (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006).

Furthermore, as can be seen on diagonal, in Table 2, all the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores are above the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The correlation or covariation among the factors was significant at 0.01. Also, all the factor loadings showed favorable loadings of above 0.7 except for one item which was 0.68. There were no cross-loadings among the items (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). All the relevant thresholds point to adequate convergent and divergent validity of the scale items and factors (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012; Fornnell & Larker, 1981).

Table 1: Scale items for measuring constructs

Construct items	Factor loadings	CR	α
Brand Awareness (Homburg et al, 2010)			
We believe our potential customers have heard of our brand.	0.77	0.95	0.93
We believe our potential customers recall/remember our brand name immediately when they think of our product category.	0.91		
Our brand is often at the top of mind for our potential customers when they think of our product category.	0.94		
Our potential customers can clearly relate our brand to a certain product category.	0.91		
We believe our potential customers have heard of our brand.	0.87		
Customer Acquisition (Rodriguez et al. 2012; Thomas, 2001)			
Our use of mobile marketing has significantly increased as a tool to identify new customers	0.67	0.90	0.90

Compared to last year, our mobile marketing efforts have increased the number of new opportunities/leads	0.76		
Compared to last year, our mobile marketing efforts have allowed us to increase new customer acquisition	0.87		
We have acquired new customers through our mobile marketing efforts.	0.89		
We have seen an increase in more customers interacting with our business, as a result of our mobile marketing efforts	0.83		
Sales performance (Homburg et al. 2010; Tallon et al.2001)			
Mobile marketing has enabled us to increase sales per customer	0.79	0.84	0.83
Mobile marketing has increased our ability to identify individual customer needs and sell the right products to them	0.72		
Mobile marketing has helped us to understand customer response to pricing	0.82		
Mobile marketing has enabled us to see a return on sales (profit) over the last year.	0.68		

CFA Fit Indices

X^2 = 131.789 (71); X^2/d.f. = 1.86; RMSEA = .057; CFI = 0.948; TLI = 0.934; SRMR= 0.056

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis of variables

No	Factors	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1	Mobile Marketing	1.98	0.50	-			
2	Brand awareness	1.96	0.39	0.12**	0.78		
3	Customer acquisition	2.24	0.30	0.14**	0.19**	0.65	
4	Sales performance	2.10	0.29	0.16**	0.23**	0.25**	0.57

N = 254; Items in bold on the diagonal are Average Variance Extracted (AVE), all items correlate positively at $p < 0.01$ level of significance. AVE was not calculated for Mobile marketing since it is a composite factor of all mobile marketing tools that participants responded to.

4.3.1 Path model using Structural Equation Modeling and the hypothesized relationships

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to assess the predictive influence of mobile marketing on brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales performance. Goodness-fit indices and path coefficients were used to determine the appropriateness of the structural equation model. The goodness-fit indices for the model showed an acceptable level of fitness and are therefore shown as follows; X^2 = 471.696 (304); X^2/d.f. = 1.56; RMSEA = .051; CFI = 0.938; TLI = 0.928; SRMR = 0.063. The meeting of the minimum threshold for model acceptance allows further interpretation of the hypothesized model. See Table 3 and Figure 9 below for the depiction of the hypothesized relations.

Table 3: Structural Equation Modeling

Hypothesis	Path Models	Standardized Estimates	t-value	Hypothesis supported
H1a	Mobile marketing → Brand awareness	0.27	5.26**	Yes
H2	Mobile marketing → Customer acquisition	0.36	6.33**	Yes
H3	Mobile marketing → Sales performance	0.41	6.93**	Yes

SEM Fit Indices:

X^2 = 471.696 (304); X^2/d.f. = 1.56; RMSEA = .051; CFI = 0.938; TLI = 0.928; SRMR= 0.063

***p < 0.01*

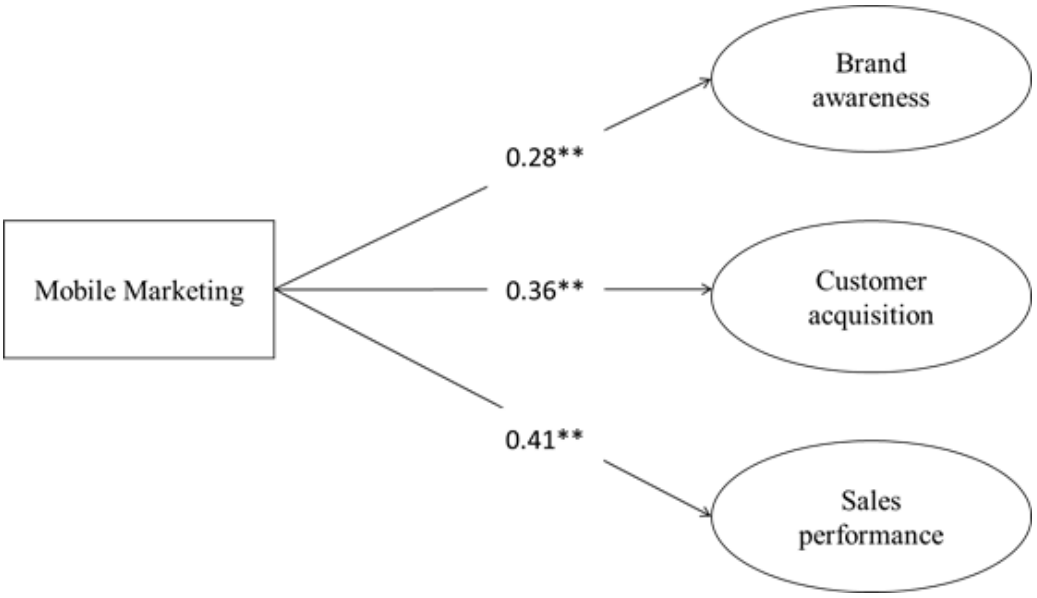
4.3.2 H1a: There is a positive relationship between mobile marketing and brand awareness within SMEs

First, it was hypothesized that mobile marketing will have a significant and positive influence on brand awareness for SMEs. This hypothesis that was confirmed as the link between mobile marketing and brand awareness was shown to be positive and significant (β = 0.27; t = 5.26; p < 0.01), hence supporting H1a. This finding supports the view that firms extensively utilizing mobile marketing, increases the level of awareness for their products and brands.

4.3.3 There is a positive relationship between mobile marketing and customer acquisition within SMEs

Secondly, it was hypothesized that mobile marketing will have a positive influence on customer acquisition. Again, this hypothesized relation was confirmed since the link between mobile marketing and customer acquisition is significant and positive (β = 0.36; t = 6.33; p < 0.01), hence supporting H2. Moreover, this supports the idea that effective deployment of mobile marketing can help in the customer acquisition activities of firms.

Figure 1: Path Diagram



4.3.4 There is a positive relationship between mobile marketing and sales with SMEs

Lastly, it was hypothesized that mobile marketing will have a positive influence on sales performance. This is against the backdrop that while SMEs do not have large financial resources to implement aggressive marketing communication and promotion strategies, relatively less costly strategies such as mobile marketing can influence SMEs' performance greatly. This study found that the link between mobile marketing and sales performance is significant and positive ($\beta = 0.41$; $t = 6.93$; $p < 0.01$). Consequently, hypothesis H3 was also supported.

Overall, the findings from this study showed that mobile marketing has a strong influence on brand awareness, customer acquisition drives, and sales performance of SMEs. When mobile marketing is effectively implemented, it will improve brand awareness for small firms, enhance their customer acquisition activities, and most importantly have an impact on sales.

4.4 Mobile marketing and brand awareness

4.4.1 Brand awareness measurement scales

Table 4

1. Brand Awareness		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
BA1	We believe our potential customers have heard of our brand.	0%	0%	0%	2%	14%	50%	33,07%
BA2	We believe our potential customers recall/remember our brand name immediately when they think of our product category.	0%	0%	0%	4%	16%	47%	31,89%
BA3	Our brand is often at the top of mind for our potential customers when they think of our product category.	0%	0%	0%	5%	20%	45%	29,53%
BA4	Our potential customers can clearly relate our brand to a certain product category.	0%	0%	1%	4%	19%	44%	32,28%

Table 4 presents a set of results as it relates to responses that were given in accordance with the measure for the impact of mobile marketing on brand awareness. 50% of the respondents agreed that as a result of mobile marketing, their customers had heard about their brand. 33% of this sample strongly agreed that this was the case. This is indicative of mobile marketing having an impact on creating brand awareness. Brand recall, as a result of mobile marketing, was also tested and 47% of the sample agreed that they believed their customers were able to recall their brand as a result of their mobile marketing efforts.

No respondents (0%) believed that their mobile marketing efforts had not had an impact on brand recall. 45% of the sample stated that they believed that their brand was top of

mind in the minds of their customers as a result of mobile marketing efforts. Additionally, 44% of the respondents confirmed that their customers could relate their brand to a certain product category, with 32,2% strongly agreeing and none being in disagreement. Overall, this further confirms the positive effect that SMEs deem mobile marketing to have on their brand awareness efforts.

4.4.2 Sales measurement scales

Table 5

	2. Impact on sales Mobile marketing has…	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
SA1	… enabled us to increase sales per customer	0%	0%	0%	4%	15%	65%	15,35%
SA2	… allowed us to improve monthly sales predictions	0%	1%	1%	7%	24%	54%	13,44%
SA3	… increased our SMEs ability to identify individual customer needs and sell the right products to them	0%	0%	1%	5%	15%	63%	16,27%
SA4	… helped our SME understand customer response to pricing	0%	0%	1%	3%	5%	58%	31,62%
SA5	… enabled us to see a return on sales (profit) over the last year.	0%	0%	0%	6%	35%	46%	12,60%

Table 5 considers scales as they relate to the impact of mobile marketing on SME sales. Mobile marketing ability to increase sales per customer was assessed and a large majority of respondents (65%) stated they agree there was indeed a link between their mobile marketing efforts and the sales they had been able to make per customer. However, 4% of respondents were neutral. With 15,3% selecting strongly agree, it can be confirmed that the main mobile marketing has had a good impact on individual sales.

Although 1% of respondents disagreed that mobile marketing had an impact on their ability to predict future sales, 54% believed that their SME could rely on mobile marketing to help them predict sales. In addition to being able to predict sales for the future, a significant majority (63%) of the respondents stated they believe that mobile

marketing could assist in identifying customer needs and thus selling the right products to them; however, 1% of respondents disagreed with the notion.

With pricing playing a significant role in product purchases (Kotler & Keller, 2016), it was also important to understand whether mobile marketing could help SMEs understand the impact of mobile marketing on their customers' response to pricing. 58% of customers agreed to mobile marketing being able to assist them in understanding customer response to pricing, 31,62% strongly agreed with this notion. Interestingly, none (0%) of respondents disagreed with the statement. This confirmed mobile marketing ability to assist SMEs in assessing how customers respond to pricing.

46% and 12% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively that mobile marketing had enabled them to see a return on sales (profit) in the last year. A notable number of respondents (35%) said that they somewhat agree. As such, while there is consensus (in the main) that mobile marketing can impact on profits, some of our respondents were not entirely convinced.

4.4.3 Customer acquisition measurement scales

Table 6

3. Customer acquisition		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
CA1	Our use of mobile marketing has significantly increased as a tool to identify new customers	0%	0%	0%	2%	19%	65%	12,99%
CA2	Compared to last year, our mobile marketing efforts have increased the number of new opportunities/leads	0%	0%	1%	5%	20%	63%	10,24%
CA3	Compared to last year, our mobile marketing efforts have allowed us to increase new customer acquisition	0%	0%	1%	5%	27%	57%	10,24%
CA4	We have acquired new customers through our mobile marketing efforts.	0%	0%	0%	4%	20%	65%	11,42%
CA5	We have seen an increase in more customers interacting with our business, as a result of our mobile marketing efforts	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%	40%	45,6%

Table 6 presents results as they relate to the impact of mobile marketing on customer acquisition. In a quest to understand whether mobile marketing had assisted SMEs in the acquisition of customers, respondents were asked to specify if mobile marketing has assisted them in identifying new customers. 65% agreed while none (0%) disagreed with the statement. 1% of respondents disagreed somewhat with the notion that mobile marketing had been able to help them increase their leads/new opportunities, this was in contrast with 63% of respondents who had agreed that mobile marketing had been able to assist them in this regard.

To this end, it can be said that mobile marketing had had an impact on the increase in new leads and opportunities. The same can be said for mobile marketing ability to help SMEs increase the acquisition of new customers. The stats in this regard were slightly skewed with 10,4% strongly agree, 57% agree, 27% somewhat agree, 5% being neutral and 1% being in disagreement. With the majority being in agreement, it can be confirmed that mobile marketing has an impact on increasing the acquisition of customers.

Mobile marketing also showed to have an impact on the acquisition of new customers, with 65% of respondents being in agreement with the fact that they had acquired new customers as a result of mobile marketing. 11,4% strongly agreed, 20% somewhat agreed, and 4% of respondents were neutral about this notion

Finally, the research also sought to understand whether there had been an increase in terms of the number of more customers interacting with their business. 45,6% of respondents strongly agreed with this while 40% agreed. The remaining 12% somewhat agreed. Overall, there is a strong sense that mobile marketing had a positive impact on the acquisition of new customers.

4.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter gave insight into the findings as they related to the validity and reliability of the study as well as details about path modeling highlighted in the text. The study meets reliability and validity requirements pertaining to the measurement instrument. Additionally, the path modeling results found all 3 hypotheses were significant and supported, with H3 having the strongest relationship. The next section discusses these findings by highlighting the broad conceptual and managerial implications.

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on having a more in-depth discussion around the research findings as discussed in Chapter 4. The section will begin by discussing the hypnotized relationships, the three hypotheses this study had intended to investigate: (i) mobile marketing influence on brand awareness (ii) mobile marketing influence on customer acquisition (iii) mobile marketing influence on sales. The discussion also takes into account supporting literature from prior studies' statistics element of the research. This is made up of the first seven questions in the study, which sought to get an overview of the respondents and the context under which they are operating. Following this, descriptive statistics will be discussed.

5.2 Discussion of hypothesized relationships

5.2.1 Sub problem 1 - To investigate the influence of mobile marketing on brand awareness within SMEs

The first sub-problem of this study was to understand the influence of mobile marketing on brand awareness. This hypothesis was confirmed as the link between mobile marketing and brand awareness is shown to be positive and significant ($\beta = 0.27$; $t = 5.26$; $p < 0.01$), hence supporting **H1a.** This finding supports the view that SMEs making use of mobile marketing can increase the level of awareness for their products and services.

> ***$H1_0$: There is no relationship between mobile marketing and brand awareness within SMEs.***
>
> ***$H1_a$: There is a positive relationship between mobile marketing and brand awareness within SMEs.***

These findings are consistent with earlier studies that looked at mobile marketing in relation to its impact on various brand elements. In their study which looked into SMS marketing specifically, Rettie, Grandcolas, and Deakins (2005) found that through mobile marketing, organizations have an opportunity to build brand awareness. This came as a result of being able to send SMSs to their customers' mobile devices. With these staying on mobile devices for an extended period of time, users got an opportunity to be continually exposed to them when they accessed other text messages. Recipients were also able to easily share messages with friends. This in turn established recognition and recall of the brand, which according to them aided overall awareness of the brand.

Later studies found that decision-makers at multinationals often included mobile marketing as part of their overall marketing strategies. The reasoning behind this was the fact that, over time, mobile marketing was found to have a positive impact on overall brand-building efforts. This was attainable under conditions such as, e.g. consumers taking to the mobile marketing efforts and allowing the firms in question to send promotional messaging (Okazaki & Taylor, 2008). Closely linked to this is a study by Phumisak et al, (2012) where they found mobile marketing had a significant positive impact on brand awareness. The success of creating positive brand awareness using mobile marketing emanated from the fact that regular messaging that was targeted and personalized, increased consumer exposure to the offering. In doing this, brand awareness was improved.

Further support for these findings can be found in a study conducted by Ghaleno, Zavareh, and Bahrami (2016) within the insurance industry where mobile marketing was found to have a significant impact on various brand constructs (brand association, **brand awareness**, and brand loyalty).

A lot of the aforementioned studies had a focus on SMS/MMS marketing. Technology has since advanced and mobile marketing has developed its applications and made some of the additions (e.g. WhatsApp business, Mobile search ads) that are mentioned throughout this study. Like social media, SEO, content marketing, and other similar

digital marketing techniques, mobile marketing is considered an important digital marketing tool (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Having said this, a review of the literature shows that other digital marketing techniques have received more attention in research. As such, there is a dearth of studies that isolate mobile marketing as it relates to brand awareness.

Given the fact that mobile marketing forms part of the digital marketing suite, it is worthwhile to also examine studies that have had a focus on other digital marketing techniques as they relate to brand awareness. The bulk of these studies are in the area of social media marketing. Many of them have been industry-specific with very little focus on SMEs as a whole. These studies remain relevant in that they can aid understanding in as far as digital marketing technologies/techniques and brand awareness are concerned. A few of them are examined below to further expand on the impact of digital marketing techniques on brand awareness and to serve as further support for the findings.

In their study looking into the effects of social media marketing activities on brand awareness and brand image within the airline industry, Seo and Park (2017) found that there was a positive relationship between social media marketing and brand awareness. Thus providing valuable information to airlines about digital marketing techniques that could be further explored in efforts to increase brand awareness.

Similarly, with a focus on social media's impact on brand awareness for SMEs in the bed and breakfast industry segment, Momany and Alshboul, (2016) found that there was a significant relationship between social media outreach efforts and brand awareness. The relationship showed a strong correlation between the two with a beta coefficient (β) of .70 ($p < .001$). As such, with every increasing effort within their social media platforms, these small businesses were able to significantly improve awareness around their brand.

This aligns with predictions from Bilgin (2018), where social media marketing was found to have more impact on brand awareness as opposed to brand loyalty and brand image.

With consumers logging onto social media platforms often, organizations on these platforms have found the digital marketing technique to be a great tool for creating brand awareness. Through different content and engagement, customers are reminded of the brand so that it stays top of mind.

Other supporting literature includes Kapoor and Si (2014) look into how brand awareness grows as a result of social media marketing. The study reveals an increasing use of various social media platforms by businesses, with businesses reporting improved brand awareness as a result of their social media marketing efforts. Different social media platforms are recognized for their ability to drive brand awareness amongst their target audiences. The digital marketing technique is lauded for being a good communication tool through which brands can reach and interact with their audiences with the motive of creating brand awareness.

Further studies such as Išoraitė (2016) consider varying digital/internet marketing techniques to have a significant impact on brand awareness that firms look to create. Findings in this regard point towards the ability of digital marketing techniques to increase brand awareness by motivating customers to become more familiar with the firm's brand. Additionally, they found that publishing on digital marketing platforms also helped improve brand awareness and strengthen the position of the brand in the mind of the consumer.

Aligned to this is a study by Chan et al. (2016), in which traditional and digital marketing techniques were explored in relation to their impact on brand awareness. Both were found to be significant in increasing the brand awareness of products/services. The positive relationship found between digital marketing efforts and brand awareness can also be seen in predictions made by Kasmad, Ahidin, Maddinsyah, and Budiyati (2019) in their study of the relationship.

The interest in digital marketing techniques and their effects on brand awareness can be further observed in a study conducted by Çizmeci and Ercan (2015) within the housing sector. The study looks at a combination of digital marketing techniques/tools

and their relationship with brand awareness. Tools in this study included SEO, email marketing, social media marketing, corporate websites, paid search ads, and mobile marketing (SMS/MMS and mobile applications). All were ranked according to their respective influence on brand awareness and they were found to have a positive relationship with brand awareness, corporate website ranking first, SMS/MMS ranking third, and mobile applications ranking sixth.

Where mobile marketing was concerned, the researchers found that (when using mobile applications a mobile marketing technique) the inclusion of visual-based messages and text in communications increased brand awareness. This was also the case for SMS/MMS campaigns that were being used to target identified users against specified criteria (Çizmeci & Ercan, 2015).

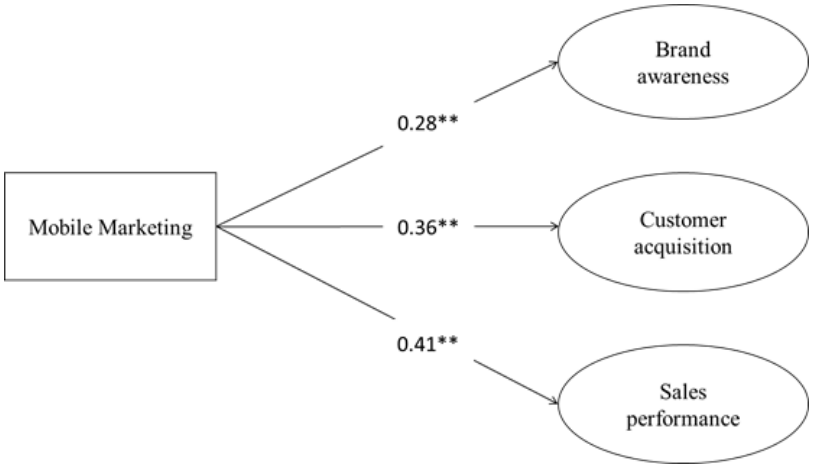
It is plausible to conclude that the research findings for Hypotheses 1, combined with research results from previous studies that have isolated mobile marketing alone, and also looked at other digital marketing techniques and their effect of brand awareness, show that there is indeed a positive relationship between mobile marketing and brand awareness.

5.2.2 Sub-problem 2 - To investigate the influence of mobile marketing on customer acquisition within SMEs

The second sub-problem of this study was to understand the influence of mobile marketing on customer acquisition. Again, this hypothesized relation was confirmed since the link between mobile marketing and customer acquisition is significant and positive ($\beta = 0.36$; $t = 6.33$; $p < 0.01$), hence supporting H2. After brand awareness, mobile marketing (as can be seen in the diagram below) has an even stronger influence on customer acquisition. This supports the idea that effective deployment of mobile marketing can help in the customer acquisition activities of firms.

H2$_0$: There is no relationship between mobile marketing and customer acquisition within SMEs.

H2a: There is a positive relationship between mobile marketing and customer acquisition within SMEs.



The area of study that looks into forms of advertising as they relate to customer acquisition is highly under-researched. More so within the area of digital marketing techniques. However, in recent times, there has been a move towards trying to rectify this. As such, the aforementioned findings are supported by a study conducted by Srinivasan, Bajaj, and Bhanot (2016), who looked into Micro SMEs and considered how their social media marketing activities were affecting customer acquisition. The findings show social media marketing as being positively related to customer acquisition. Its success in this regard is related to the viral effect of the platform and the ease with which customers are able to share content. As a result of this, potential customers are exposed to contents shared by their friends, and the chances of them being acquired as a customer are increased if they too are interested in the product. The ease with which customers are able to share/forward messaging was also noted as a success factor for mobile marketing initiatives Rettie et al, (2005).

Aligned to this are findings from a study conducted by Du, Ke, He, Chu, and Wagner (2019) studying the effects of mobile social media on customer acquisition. As in the

case of the current study, the digital marketing technique is found to have a positive relationship with customer acquisition. Beyond brand-building efforts, these mobile social media platforms are recognized as being instrumental in the acquisition of customers. Their inclusion in digital marketing strategies was encouraged by the authors.

Further support emanates from Schwartz, Ross, Bradlow, and Fader (2017), as their study looks into how a well-known digital marketing technique (display ads) affects customer acquisition. After testing a few ad creatives for display ads, it was found that the right ad creative within the right context leads to successful campaigns, which in turn aid customer acquisition. In addition to this, social media and data that were acquired from its platforms have also shown an ability to positively contribute to the acquisition of customers. Because of its ability to assist in qualifying customers, acquiring them, and eventually employing techniques that ensure retention, Facebook was recommended for the purposes of customer acquisition in a study done by Meire, Balling, and Van den Poel (2017). The authors, in their findings, draw links between the social media platform and its effectiveness in the acquisition of customers.

Grandhi and Chugh (2012) in a study conducted in the manufacturing and television industries looked into the value add of mobile CRMs. Their findings show that the implementation of mobile CRM applications played a role in managing customer relationships, increasing productivity, and most importantly acquiring customers while reducing the cost thereof. The paper gives further support for the speculation that mobile marketing influences customer acquisition.

One can therefore conclude that the research results for hypothesis 2, combined with observed studies in the area of mobile marketing and other digital marketing techniques as they relate to customer acquisition, show that mobile marketing does seem to influence customer acquisition within SMEs.

5.2.3 Sub-problem 3 - To investigate the influence of mobile marketing on sales within SMEs

The third sub-problem of this study was to understand the influence of mobile marketing on sales. This hypothesis was confirmed as this study finds that the link between mobile marketing and sales performance is significant and positive ($\beta = 0.41$; $t = 6.93$; $p < 0.01$). Consequently, hypothesis H3 was also supported. At $\beta = 0.41$, mobile marketing showed itself to have a stronger influence on sales when compared to other constructs that were hypothesized in the study. This is against the backdrop that while SMEs do not have large financial resources to implement aggressive marketing communication and promotion strategies, relatively less costly strategies such as mobile marketing can influence SMEs' sales performance greatly.

> **$H3_0$: There is no relationship between mobile marketing and sales within SMEs.**
>
> **H3a: There is a positive relationship between mobile marketing and sales within SMEs.**

These findings are consistent with findings from Merisavo and Vesanen (2006), who found mobile advertising to have a significant impact on sales. The influence on success was determined by factors such as the segmentation techniques that were being followed when sending out advertising messages. Furthermore, the effectiveness was further determined by the subject's usage of the mobile device. Mobile marketing campaigns sent out to customers who regularly accessed their phones were likely to yield higher results than those that did not. The study also advocates for more attention to be paid to the content used in mobile marketing, as it is important in whether the mobile advert is accepted and yield results in as far as purchase and an overall increase in sales are concerned. This is consistent with the finding by Kim and Jun (2008), where an integrated approach to mobile marketing was found to have a positive effect on sales. The authors also noted content, personalization, and location targeting as being key components to seeing results in this regard.

While the influence of mobile marketing on sales is under-researched, some scholars have (in recent studies) realized its importance and looked into its impact on sales. These scholars include Osinga, Zevenbergen, and van Zuijlen (2019), whose research serves as further support for this study. In the research on an aspect of mobile marketing called “mobile banner ads”, the researchers found mobile marketing efforts to have a significant impact on sales. Their study made use of large-scale geographical field experiment, and region-level time-series data, and found that there were still positive effects on sales after the mobile marketing campaign.

As in the case of the two previously discussed constructs, there is a dearth of studies that isolate mobile marketing in relation to its impact on sales. It is therefore worthwhile to examine other digital marketing techniques and the impact that they have had on sales. The bulk of these studies lie in the area of social media marketing, and as such, further support for these findings can be found in a study conducted by Momany and Alshboul (2016), where it was found that there was a positive relationship between social media marketing and online sales. As the firms in the study engaged more in social media marketing activities, they were able to increase their online sales.

Consistent with this is a study by Tajvidi and Karami (2017), where an examination was done to assess the impact of social media on sales for hotels in the United Kingdom that were defined as SMEs. The study found that the social media activity of the hotels has a positive relationship with the sales derived during the periods under review. This is consistent with findings from Ahmad, Ahmad, and Bakar (2018), whose predictions point towards social media ability to increase sales and overall firm performance. Similarly, this study made use of SMEs and also considered other entrepreneurs and small business owners

Furthermore, Lee, Lee, and Oh, (2015) in their study on the relationship between likes on social media platforms (Facebook) and sales performance, found that there was a relationship between likes and a subsequent increase in sales. In light of this and with social media platforms like Facebook making various advertising options available to firms (Erkan, Gokerik, & Acikgoz, 2019), it may be worthwhile for firms to consider how

they can optimize their Facebook ad creatives for mobile phones so as to get more page interaction (likes, comments, shares) on their pages/product/service offerings with the goal of increasing sales. Other studies on the effect of social media include Thach, Lease, and Barton (2016), who conducted a study within the wine industry and found that wineries that were making use of social media practices as part of their marketing strategy were seeing a positive impact on sales. These studies further supported the notion of digital marketing techniques such as social media, having a positive effect on sales.

Additional support for these findings can be found in another study conducted on a digital marketing technique referred to as online display ads. Johnson, Lewis, and Reiley, (2015) found the technique to have a positive impact on sales. The study considers an increase in-store sales and demonstrates a 3.6% increase in sales as a result of the digital marketing effort.

Despite it being important, the current study demonstrates a low rate of SMEs making use of content marketing as a digital marketing technique. The value of the digital marketing technique important for sales was demonstrated in a study done by Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, and Janakiraman (2016). The study considers the relationship between content that is generated by the firm (both promotional and non-promotional messaging) and sales. The content is considered across different platforms including social media and email marketing, both of which are popular digital marketing techniques. Findings point towards this firm generated content having a positive effect on the sales of the firm (Kumar et al., 2016).

Finally, the findings of this study are further supported by research that was conducted by Rotich and Mukhongo (2015). The study considered various digital marketing techniques, namely content marketing, email marketing, social media advertising, mobile marketing, and their impact on sales. Overall, all digital marketing techniques are found to have a positive impact on sales. Firms are encouraged to pay attention to whether or not the target audience is knowledgeable about their product offering. Demographics such as age and the customer’s familiarity with technology also play a

vital role and should be taken into consideration when digital marketing strategies are being formulated.

Thus, it was concluded from the study findings – combined with similar findings in prior studies looking at mobile marketing and other digital marketing technologies – that mobile marketing does appear to influence sales within SMEs

5.3 A discussion of the demographic results

5.3.1 Profile of respondents responsible for marketing within the SME

The research findings indicated that 56.3% of the respondents were business owners, while 11.4% of them had multiple roles within their SMEs. Only 31.5% of respondents indicated that they were marketing professionals. With the questionnaire having been targeted at people responsible for marketing within SMEs, there is evidence that people conducting marketing initiatives within SMEs are not necessarily people that have a good understanding of the discipline and its best practices. They may also not be fully aware of what recourse to take should there be issues with the initiatives that they are implementing. This notion is supported by research from (Cant & Wiid, 2013), where it was demonstrated that a lack of good marketing skills is a real challenge for South African SMEs.

Many of them find the process in its entirety overwhelming, showing a poor understanding of elements related to pricing, offering a variety of products, putting the business up against competition, and branding. In a study on marketing challenges faced by SMEs in South Africa, Van Scheers (2011) found that South African SMEs faced a unique challenge as there was a positive relationship between the lack of marketing skills that SME managers had and the rate of business failure. Many of these managers tend to have competing demands (recruitment, operations, business management, etc.). Although not hypothesized in the research model, it is important to understand the context within which the SMEs in this sample are operating. Not having

the right personnel to drive marketing initiatives, is likely to influence the results of marketing initiatives and their overall impact on the business.

5.3.2 Industry segments

Many of the SMEs in this study came from a wide range of industry segments such as healthcare, financial services, beauty, retail, and the automotive industry. This was done to ensure that the study had a varied sample, and that did not simply represent SMEs from a particular industry segment. Having a sample that looks into different industry segments offered an opportunity to show that the research is not biased. It is also believed that the research will further afford SMEs in the represented industry segments (and other industry segments), insights into how mobile marketing is being applied, and what the results may look like.

5.3.3 Types of mobile marketing techniques used

The study looked into the types of mobile marketing techniques being used by South African SMEs. Surprisingly, many SMEs had implemented a range of techniques, some of which are relatively new (e.g. mobile search ads launched by Google in 2016 and WhatsApp business launched in 2018). Of these, WhatsApp businesses ranked quite high with 96.8% of SMEs indicating that they were making use of WhatsApp business as a stand-alone, or as with a combination of other mobile marketing techniques such as location-based marketing codes, SMS/MMS, mobile application/app-based marketing. The use of relatively new mobile marketing techniques and the combination of different types of mobile marketing techniques points towards SMEs that are innovative and committed to finding the most suitable solutions to support their SMEs' marketing initiatives.

It can be said that, to a certain degree, the South African SMEs in this sample are market-oriented. Market-oriented businesses tend to have a competitive advantage as they can understand how competition, customers' needs, and as in this case, **technology** (and other factors) may affect their business (Kara, Spillan, & DeShields,

2004; Slater, 2001). Having a market-oriented outlook can be an important resource for SMEs who often have little to invest in marketing and other resources (Spillian & Parnel, 2006). Having noted the increasing mobile adoption rates and changes in their marketing landscape, these SMEs have adapted to accommodate these changes and remain competitive.

5.3.4 Length of use for mobile marketing techniques

Most of the SMEs (92.5%) specified that they had been making use of mobile marketing for over 12 months. It can be said that these are SMEs that have made use of mobile marketing for a considerable amount of time and as such, have had time to assess the merits and demerits of the techniques that they are using.

5.3.5 Manner in which mobile marketing initiatives are implemented

A total of 86.2% of the respondents specified that they were conducting their marketing activities in-house with 11.9% specifying that they were making use of a combination of in-house capabilities and advertising agencies. This points to the fact that some SMEs understand their shortcomings and are open to seeking out help from agencies who may have more experience.

5.3.6 Budgets allocated to mobile marketing

Budgets allocated to mobile marketing efforts indicated that 50% of the respondents allocated R50-R1000 while 46% allocated R1000-R10000. Other respondents (2.8%) indicated having spent between R10000 and R30000. This is consistent with literature that suggests that SMEs are spending considerable amounts of their marketing budgets on digital marketing efforts (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015).

5.3.7 Other digital marketing techniques being used

The study showed that SMEs were using different combinations of digital marketing technologies as part of their strategy. As expected, social media was being widely used

by SMEs, with 98% of them making use of social media as a stand-alone or in combination with other techniques. Unfortunately, other techniques that have been proven to work and are taking dominance within the digital marketing space were not being widely used. These include content (only 1.57% of respondents) and email marketing (only 3.9% of respondents) strategies that have proven to be a success when trying to enhance digital marketing strategies and retain customers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). This finding is also consistent with literature suggesting that SMEs are currently not making full use of digital marketing techniques/channels that are available to them (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015).

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study. To begin the process, the findings of the study are summarized and conclusions drawn from each of the hypothesized relationships. The recommendations are outlined and the theoretical and practical implications are also discussed. To conclude, the study limitations and suggestions for areas of future research were discussed.

6. 1. Conclusions of the study

This study aimed to understand the influence of mobile marketing on SME performance by looking into three constructs namely brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales. An online survey was sent out and a paper-based questionnaire was conducted. 254 South African SMEs were obtained from the identified sample. The study tested 3 hypotheses using structural equation modeling hypotheses which displayed significant relationships per testing as findings revealed that mobile marketing has a positive influence on brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales.

The research shows that in comparison to brand awareness, mobile marketing appears to have an even stronger influence on customer acquisition and sales. These are two factors that would be important for an SME looking to make decisions on how to allocate marketing resources for optimal results and business performance. This study is particularly important in the local South African context, where South African SMEs are faced with high rates of business failure as a result of the lack of marketing skills managers (Van Scheers, 2011). In understanding how mobile marketing affects various marketing objectives, SMEs can make better use of the technique to achieve business objectives that can aid business performance. Furthermore, these findings are significant as they can further be applied to similar developing markets that are new to digital marketing techniques.

6.2 Theoretical and Practical implications

6.2.1 Theoretical implications

Mobile marketing and brand awareness

A few research studies have looked into how mobile marketing influences brand awareness (Ghaleno et al., 2016; Okazaki & Taylor, 2008; Phumisak et al., 2012, Rettie et al., 2005) while other scholars have mainly focused on how social media and other digital marketing techniques affect brand awareness (Bilgin, 2018; Chan et al., 2016; Çizmeci & Ercan, 2015; Kapoor & Si, 2014). From a theoretical viewpoint, this study adds to the current understanding of digital marketing techniques as they relate to brand awareness. Mobile marketing in particular is highly under-researched, especially within the SME and the emerging market sector. Therefore, this research adds to the academic body of knowledge regarding a digital marketing technique that is gaining momentum as a result of increasing mobile adoption rates. With prior studies mainly being done in developed countries, this study (with a focus on South African SMEs) goes beyond a developed country context and could possibly be implemented in other emerging markets.

Mobile marketing and customer acquisition

This study also adds to the body of literature that looks into customer acquisition. Marketers and researchers alike, when studying the customer lifecycle, have tended to focus more on customer retention. While customer retention is important, very little research has been done to consider customer acquisition, which is the first and arguably the most important step of the customer life cycle (Gupta, 2003; Negahban, Kim, & Kim, 2016; Thomas, 2001). Research in this space is becoming important with customers becoming less loyal, and competition between organizations having increased drastically over the years (Ang & Buttle, 2006; Fazlzadeh, Tabrizi, & Mahboobi, 2011). Therefore, there should be a greater focus on methods to acquire customers and build meaningful relationships with them. Digital marketing offers various

options that can be explored in this regard. A few of these have been studied with a lot of the research being in the area of social media.

Given the dearth of studies in the area of mobile marketing and customer acquisition, this current study is important as it contributes to the theoretical understanding of mobile marketing, and customer acquisition constructs. Furthermore, it offers an academic explanation toward the influences of mobile marketing on customer acquisition.

Mobile marketing and sales

The relationship between marketing/advertising and sales has been studied since antiquity, and it is an important area of study as firms are ultimately interested in making financial gains and improving business performance (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Sugathan & Kozhikode, 2018). This study therefore adds to the existing body of literature that looks into advertising/marketing practices as they relate to sales. With the results showing that mobile marketing has a strong influence on sales, the key outcome generated from this study is that digital marketing techniques such as mobile marketing can lead to an increase in sales. This is especially important within the emerging market context, where potential customers are likely to own a mobile device before they own a personal laptop. SMEs in geographical regions such as South Africa would greatly benefit from research like this, giving insights into marketing options directly linked to sales growth.

6.2.2 Practical contributions

The results of this study show that mobile marketing is an effective instrument for SMEs looking to create brand awareness around their products/services and acquire customers in an effort to meet marketing objectives/improve business performance. Marketers faced with a range of digital marketing techniques (many of which they may not fully understand) are in a better position to confidently incorporate mobile marketing into their digital marketing strategies so as to attain a level of brand awareness. Furthermore, with most respondents spending between R50-R1000 of marketing budgets on their mobile marketing efforts, it is evident that the digital marketing

technique is one that is not overly expensive. As such, this study makes it clear that mobile marketing is a technique that marketers in SMEs should consider capitalizing on for their brand building and customer acquisition efforts.

Most importantly, the research sheds light on the influence of mobile marketing on sales. SMEs tend to be resource-strapped and do not always have the resources they need to invest in different digital marketing techniques. Not having the necessary skills and resources may result in marketing objectives not being attained and possibly act as a deterrent for adopting alternative digital marketing techniques. It need not be so, as this research at least confirms the effectiveness of one digital marketing technique. Furthermore, given the fundamental importance of increasing sales, this research is instrumental for the growth of SMEs as it confirms they can expect a return on investment when implementing mobile marketing strategies and therefore improving overall SME performance. Having said this, SMEs need to familiarize themselves with the different mobile marketing and digital marketing techniques so as to realize success. The suggestion is made in light of the fast-paced nature of changes in digital marketing (and mobile marketing itself) and the need to explore a combination of digital marketing techniques.

Additionally, the study's usefulness is enhanced by the fact that it covers SMEs from a broad range of industry segments as such, it applies to a range of SME marketers.

Furthermore, the study suggests that managers/marketers need an exploration of other digital marketing techniques. Many of the SMEs in the study said they were making use of social media marketing and mobile marketing. However, only 1.5% said they were making use of content marketing and only 3.4% said they were making use of email marketing. This is unfortunate despite the fact that email marketing has been shown to be the number one digital marketing tool/technique for the retention of customers (Chaffey & Ellis- Chadwick, 2016). In as much as this study looked at the acquisition of customers, being able to retain them is equally as important. Email marketing allows for this at a relatively reasonable cost. Furthermore, irrespective of the digital marketing platform being used, content marketing is noted as being important in achieving digital

marketing objectives (Bilgin, 2018; Kumar et al., 2016; Merisavo & Vesanen, 2006). To this end, the research has further implications for managers, suggesting that marketers/people responsible for marketing within SMEs be cognizant of the various digital marketing techniques that are available to them and be able to use them in a way that matches their marketing objectives.

Lastly, the research presents practical implications for agencies as it demonstrates that there is an opportunity for marketing/advertising agencies to capitalize on SMEs. A majority of the SMEs (86.2.%) indicated that they had conducted their mobile marketing initiatives in-house with the remaining 13.8% having made use of agencies or a combination of in-house and agency. This is an opportunity for marketers in marketing/advertising agencies to capitalize on this segment and tailor-make solutions that will be affordable and assist these SMEs in attaining their business objectives through digital marketing options like mobile marketing.

6.3 Policy implications

The recommendations below are made in light of: (a) the findings from the descriptive statistics and (b) findings from the hypothesized relationships.

6.3.1 Marketing Skills of professionals responsible for marketing need to be looked into

The questionnaire requested that the people responsible for marketing within organizations be responsible for the completion of the questionnaire. Of the respondents, 56.3% were SME owners, 31.5% were managers/professionals, and 11.4% had multiple roles within organizations, while 0.4% were managers and/or salespeople. It was evident that in the main, SME owners are the people who are mainly responsible for the execution of marketing strategies. In addition to this, they may have other competing responsibilities (e.g. operations, recruitment, sales, etc.). This is coupled with the fact that South African SMEs have been noted as having poor

marketing skills that stop them from attaining business objectives (Cant & Wiid, 2013; Van Scheers, 2011).

To this end, it was suggested that government look into instituting a policy that requires agencies like the small enterprise development agency (SEDA) to institute training programs to educate SME owners (and other relevant professionals within SMEs) on developments in the area of marketing. While SMEs in the sample (mainly urban) may be able to complete online training courses, others that are not in very urban parts of the country (Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape) may not necessarily have the same access. South African SMEs play an important role in the economy, and upskilling them on marketing means avoiding business failure. Therefore, it is something that should be investigated.

6.4 Limitations of the study & Suggestions for future research

6.4.1 Limitations of the study

The bulk of the data were collected within the Gauteng province which is (in comparison to other provinces) relatively urban. It is expected that SMEs within this area, and possibly other metropolitan cities such as Durban and Cape-Town would be aware of developments within the digital marketing space and that studies in those areas would yield similar results. This cannot be said for SMEs that are located in rural or less urban parts of South Africa. As such, the generalization of all SMEs within the South African market might be slightly inaccurate.

6.4.2 Suggestions for Future Research

- This research only considers mobile marketing as it relates to three constructs (brand awareness, customer acquisition, and sales), and the relationship between the constructs (as a result of mobile marketing) was not explored. Future research could look into how the other constructs relate to each other after mobile marketing initiatives/campaigns have been put in place, i.e. is there

a significant relationship between brand awareness and sales, or customer acquisition and sales as a result of mobile marketing initiatives. This is because while gaining brand awareness and acquiring customers is good, SMEs might also want to understand how it ultimately affects sales/SME performance. Additionally, an examination of a wider range of variables may add to an understanding of mobile marketing as an evolving digital marketing technique.

- The current study looks at different mobile marketing options (WhatsApp/WhatsApp business, location-based marketing, Mobile search ads, mobile applications, and SMS/MMS) as a collective . With technological advances and the likelihood that more options will become available, it would be worthwhile to single out a particular mobile marketing technology and see how it affects the identified constructs. This may make decisions easier for marketers who are already faced with a plethora of options.

- Throughout the research, SMEs are noted as being the bedrock of many economies, employing large sectors of the population in different markets. It may be worthwhile to run this study in a similar emerging market to determine what the results would be.

- There is a consensus that content marketing is becoming important for digital marketing strategies, and that organizations having a clear content-marketing strategy may find themselves lagging behind (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). This research did not look into the aspect of content as such future research could look into the content types that SMEs can employ as part of their mobile marketing strategies so as to achieve maximum results.

6.5 Conclusion

The findings of this study point towards South African SMEs that perceive an opportunity in adopting mobile marketing as a technique through which they can build brand awareness, acquire customers, and improve their sales so as to improve their

business performance. The findings have both theoretical and practical implications as mobile marketing is understudied in relation to the identified constructs. Managers and marketers within SMEs also get an opportunity to explore (with certainty) another digital marketing technique that can be used to enhance marketing strategy. There is room for further study as mobile marketing continues to evolve.

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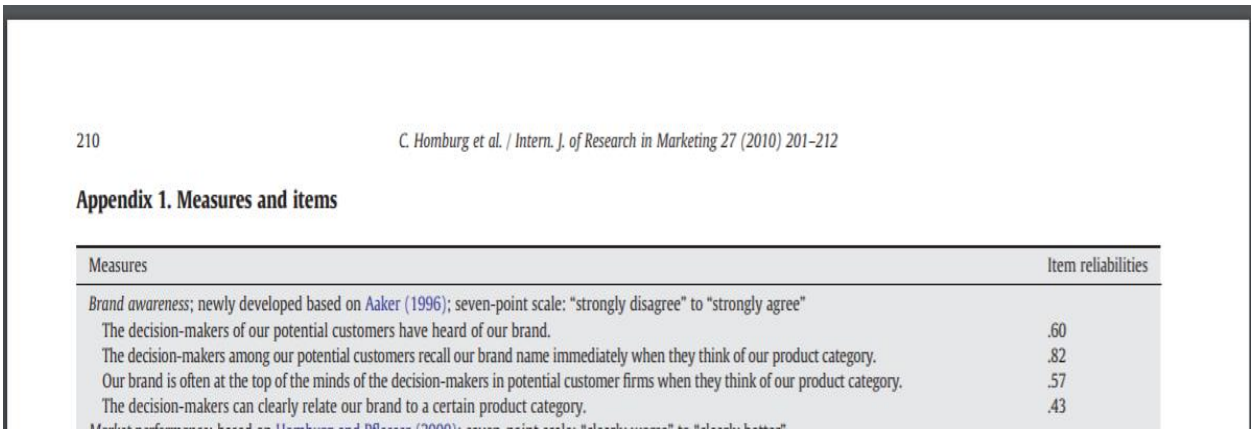
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Appendices

Appendix A - Measurement scales used in the study

Homburg et al (2010) - Brand awareness measures



Appendix 1. Measures and items

Measures	Item reliabilities
Brand awareness; newly developed based on Aaker (1996); seven-point scale: "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"	
The decision-makers of our potential customers have heard of our brand.	.60
The decision-makers among our potential customers recall our brand name immediately when they think of our product category.	.82
Our brand is often at the top of the minds of the decision-makers in potential customer firms when they think of our product category.	.57
The decision-makers can clearly relate our brand to a certain product category.	.43

Sales measures Homburg et al (2010) & Tallon (2001)

Appendix 1. Measures and items

Measures	Item reliabilities
Brand awareness; newly developed based on Aaker (1996); seven-point scale: "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"	
The decision-makers of our potential customers have heard of our brand.	.60
The decision-makers among our potential customers recall our brand name immediately when they think of our product category.	.82
Our brand is often at the top of the minds of the decision-makers in potential customer firms when they think of our product category.	.57
The decision-makers can clearly relate our brand to a certain product category.	.43
Market performance; based on Homburg and Pflesser (2000); seven-point scale: "clearly worse" to "clearly better"	
Over the last three years, how has your SBU performed relative to your competitors with respect to customer loyalty?	.34
Over the last three years, how has your SBU performed relative to your competitors with respect to the acquisition of new customers?	.45
Over the last three years, how has your SBU performed relative to your competitors with respect to achieving your desired market share?	.72
Over the last three years, how has your SBU performed relative to your competitors with respect to achieving your desired growth?	.54
Return on sales; seven-point scale: "clearly worse" to "clearly better"	
Over the last three years, how has your SBU performed relative to competitors with respect to return on sales?	n/a[a]

Continued

Does Information Technology . . .	Low Impact 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High Impact
Product & Service Enhancement	
PSE1 Enhance the value of products/services by embedding IT in them	
PSE2 Decrease the cost of designing new products/services	
PSE3 Reduce the time to market for new products/services	
PSE4 Enhance product / service quality	
PSE5 Support product / service innovation	
Sales & Marketing Support	
SMS1 Enable the identification of market trends	
SMS2 Increase the ability to anticipate customer needs	
SMS3 Enable sales people to increase sales per customer	
SMS4 Improve the accuracy of sales forecasts	
SMS5 Help track market response to pricing strategies	
Customer Relations (Outbound Logistics)	
CR1 Enhance the ability to provide after-sales service and support	
CR2 Enhance the flexibility and responsiveness to customer needs	
CR3 Improve the distribution of goods and services	
CR4 Enhance the ability to attract and retain customers	
CR5 Enable you to support customers during the sales process	

Table 4
Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Construct Validity

Chi-Square Difference Tests Across Nested CFA Models	1	2	3	4	Final CFA Model
Model χ^2	5,278.5	3,792.5	2,212.08	1,428.3	1,134.7
Model df	461	376	249	237	237
Difference in χ^2	—	1,486	1,580.42	783.78	316.34
Difference in df	—	85	127	12	—
Is the chi-square difference with previous model significant?	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Creating Opportunity			**Factor Loadings**		
We have a formalized value proposition that is very compelling to our prospects.	0.59	0.60	0.61	0.62	0.62
Specific criteria have been established to define an acceptable prospect for our company.	0.60	0.62	0.63	0.64	0.64
Our salespeople have a solid understanding of our customers' business needs.	0.67	0.63	0.62	0.61	—
Our salespeople are experts in our products and services.	0.54	—	—	—	—
We consistently follow a standardized process to qualify opportunities.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71
Our salespeople are always held accountable for converting leads to closed business.	0.62	0.63	0.63	0.62	0.62
Understanding Customers					
We have a disciplined process that is consistently used to pursue all large deals.	0.62	0.59	—	—	—
Our organization collaborates across departments to pursue large deals	0.53	—	—	—	—

Rodriguez et al (2012) Customer acquisition

We have an established procedure to know when to stop investment in large deals.	0.53	—	—	—	—
In a large deal, we always gain access to key decision makers.	0.67	0.67	—	—	—
We have a formal process for utilizing executive-to-executive selling.	0.62	0.60	—	—	—
We clearly understand our customers' issues before we propose a solution.	0.70	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71
Win or lose, we get accurate feedback on all proposals from our customers.	0.69	0.71	0.77	0.77	0.77
When we give price concessions, we always get comparable value in return.	0.62	0.63	0.66	0.66	0.66
When we lose a significant sales opportunity, we always know the reason why.	0.65	0.67	0.75	0.74	0.74
Our salespeople immediately communicate with management when something unexpected happens to jeopardize a sale.	0.60	0.62	0.63	0.63	0.63
Relationship Management					
Our organization regularly collaborates across departments to manage strategic accounts.	0.59	0.58	—	—	—
We always review the results of our solution with strategic accounts.	0.75	0.75	0.73	0.72	0.72
When we lose a strategic account, we always know the reasons why.	0.67	0.67	0.69	—	—
We jointly set long-term objectives with our strategic accounts.	0.75	0.76	0.77	0.78	0.78
We have relationships and dialog at the highest executive levels with all our strategic accounts.	0.71	0.72	0.72	0.73	0.73
We regularly engage our strategic accounts in our product/service planning process.	0.69	0.69	0.68	0.71	0.71
Our salespeople are definitely effective at producing year-over-year revenue growth from existing customers.	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62
Specific criteria have been established to define a strategic account in our company.	0.60	0.60	—	—	—
Relationship Sales Performance					
Compared to last year, new account acquisition has increased.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.77	0.77
Compared to last year, the number of qualified opportunities/leads has increased.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.76	0.76
Compared to last year, our customer retention rate has increased.	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.54	0.54

	1	2	3	4	Final CFA Model
Creating Opportunity	**Factor Loadings**				
Outcome-Based Performance					
Compared to last year, our productivity per salesperson has increased.	0.75	0.75	0.75	—	0.76
Compared to last year, our average account billing (or average purchase per customer) has increased.	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.73	0.73
In terms of revenue, how well is your sales organization currently performing compared to last year?	0.81	0.81	0.81	0.83	0.83
Compared to last year, quota achievement for our sales force has increased.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.74	0.74
Social Media					
Our use of social media has significantly increased as a tool to identify new business opportunities.	0.87	0.87	0.87	0.87	0.87
Our use of social media has significantly increased as a tool to identify decision makers.	0.87	0.87	0.87	0.87	0.87
The use of social media for business purposes in our organization is encouraged.	0.78	0.78	0.78	0.78	0.78

Note: Italicized items are final items used in model estimation.

Rodriguez et al (2012)

Appendix B

Industry segments

Food	10
Gaming	1
Garden Service	4
Health	15
Hospitality	7
IT	13
Logistics	5
Manufacturing	2
Marketing	1
Meat	3
Mining	1
Music	1
Real Estate	2
Retail	23
Petroleum	1
Plastic	1
Security	3
Tourism	2
Trade	23
Marketing Services	2
Dog grooming	1
Retail-Toys	2
Retail Liquor	1
Insurance	1
Recruitment	1

Appendix C - Combinations of mobile marketing solutions selected by respondents

This section demonstrates the different combinations of mobile marketing techniques that SMEs are making use of.

1	Location based marketing
2	Mobile applications & App based marketing
3	Mobile applications & App based marketing, Location based marketing
4	Mobile applications & App based marketing, Search Advertising
5	Search Advertising
6	SMS/MMS, Location based marketing
7	SMS/MMS, WhatsApp / WhatsApp business
8	SMS/MMS, WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, Location based marketing
9	SMS/MMS, WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, Location based marketing, Search Advertising
10	SMS/MMS, WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, Mobile applications & App based marketing
11	SMS/MMS, WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, Mobile applications & App based marketing, Location based marketing
12	SMS/MMS, WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, Mobile applications & App based marketing, Location based marketing, Search Advertising
13	SMS/MMS, WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, Mobile applications & App based marketing, QR Codes
14	SMS/MMS, WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, Mobile applications & App based marketing, Search Advertising
15	SMS/MMS, WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, Search Advertising
16	WhatsApp / WhatsApp business
17	WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, Location based marketing
18	WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, Location based marketing, Search Advertising
19	WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, Mobile applications & App based marketing
20	WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, Mobile applications & App based marketing, Search Advertising
21	WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, QR (Quick response) codes
22	WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, QR (Quick response) codes, Location based marketing
23	WhatsApp / WhatsApp business, Search Advertising

Appendix D - Combination of responses for different digital marketing options- 23 Unique responses for 254 respondents

Appendix E- Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this easy 5-part survey. This study investigates the influence of mobile marketing **(any advertising activity that promotes products and services via mobile devices, such as tablets and smartphones)** on SME performance. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous and will only be reported as a collective combined total.

Kindly pay attentions to the instructions and please answer every question. The success of this project depends on fully completed questionnaires. Although some of the questions appear similar, they have been deliberately framed in the manner for statistical purposes. The questionnaire should take between 10-15min or less to complete. Should you have any questions about the research, please contact the undersigned.

Participants- This survey needs to be completed by the person responsible for marketing within your organisation

Abena Larbi-Odam

Wits Business School, Johannesburg

Email: abena.larbiodam@gmail.com

SECTION A

We start this section by asking some questions about your business.

1. Please indicate your role within the organisation		
i	Owner	☐
ii	Marketing Manager/Marketing Professional	☐
iii	Multiple Roles	☐
iv	Other/ Please specify below	

2. In the space below please specify what industry segment your business falls under?
Specify here [ ]

3. Which of the following mobile marketing techniques does your company make use of?		
i	SMS/MMS	☐
ii	WhatsApp / WhatsApp business	☐
iii	Mobile applications & App based marketing	☐
iv	QR (Quick response) codes	☐
v	Location based marketing	☐
vi	**Search advertising** (Mobile search Ads that are designed to appear on Google searches when people search using their mobile phones)	☐

4. How long have you been making use of mobile marketing		
i.	0-6 months	☐
ii	6-12months	☐
iii	12 months and longer	☐

5. Please indicate how mobile marketing activities have been conducted to date?		
i.	Mobile marketing done independently/inhouse	☐
ii	We have made use of a marketing/advertising agency	☐
iii	We have worked independently/inhouse and made use of marketing/advertising agencies	☐

6. How much of your budget has been allocated to mobile marketing?		
i.	R50- R1000	☐
ii	R1000-R10 000	
iii	R10 000- R30000	☐
iv	R30000- more	☐

7. What other digital marketing channels do you use if any? Select all that Apply Alternative digital marketing channel		
i.	**Social media marketing -**(The use of social media, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn to market to/engage with customer)	☐
ii	**Email marketing** (The use of email to communicate marketing messages to a group/set target of customers)	☐
iii	**Influencer marketing** (Promoting products/services through individuals who have gained prominence (high following) on social media	☐
iv	**Search Engine Optimization (SEO) –** (which is the process of optimizing your website to get organic, or un-paid, traffic from the search engine results page)	☐
v	**Affiliate marketing** – (The referral of your product or service through affiliates/affiliate programs. Affiliates share product info on a blog, social media platforms, or website. Affiliates earn a commission)	☐
vi	**Content marketing**- (The creation and sharing of online material (such as videos, blogs, and social media posts) that does not explicitly promote your brand but is intended to stimulate interest in its products or services).	☐

SECTION B

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following questions.

1. Brand Awareness As a result of our mobile marketing efforts:		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
BA1	We believe our potential customers have heard of our brand.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
BA2	We believe our potential customers recall/remember our brand name immediately when they think of our product category.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
BA3	Our brand is often at the top of mind for our potential customers when they think of our product category.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
BA4	Our potential customers can clearly relate our brand to a certain product category.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7

SECTION C

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following questions.

2. Impact on sales Mobile marketing has...		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
SA1	... enabled us to increase sales per customer	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
SA2	... allowed us to improve monthly sales predictions	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
SA3	... increased our SMEs ability to identify individual customer needs and sell the right products to them	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
SA4	... helped our SME understand customer response to pricing	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
SA5	... enabled us to see a return on sales (profit) over the last year.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7

SECTION D

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following questions.

3. Customer acquisition		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
CA1	Our use of mobile marketing has significantly increased as a tool to identify new customers	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6	☐7
CA2	Compared to last year, our mobile marketing efforts have increased the number of new opportunities/leads	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6	☐7
CA3	Compared to last year, our mobile marketing efforts have allowed us to increase new customer acquisition	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6	☐7
CA4	We have acquired new customers through our mobile marketing efforts.	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6	☐7
CA5	We have seen an increase in more customers interacting with our business, as a result of our mobile marketing efforts	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5	☐6	☐7

SECTION B

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following questions.

1. Brand Awareness (Homburg et al 2010))		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
BA1	We believe our potential customers have heard of our brand.	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6	□7
BA2	We believe our potential customers recall/remember our brand name immediately when they think of our product category.	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6	□7
BA3	Our brand is often at the top of mind for our potential customers when they think of our product category.	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6	□7
BA4	Our potential customers can clearly relate our brand to a certain product category.	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6	□7

SECTION C

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following questions.

2. Impact on sales (Tallon et al 2001) ; Homburg et al (2010) **Mobile marketing has…**		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
SA1	… enabled us to increase sales per customer	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6	□7
SA2	… allowed us to improve monthly sales predictions	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6	□7
SA3	… increased our SMEs ability to identify individual customer needs and sell the right products to them	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6	□7