



The use of Social Media and Marketing Analytics to improve Marketing Decision Making in Independent Apparel Retailers in Gauteng Townships

by

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DECLARATION

I, Mr. Willie Shemane Masia, hereby solemnly declare that the thesis *entitled "The Use of Social Media and Marketing Analytics to Enhance Marketing Decision-making among Independent Apparel Retailers in Gauteng"* is a product of my own independent effort. This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Commerce (MCom) in Marketing at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been previously submitted for any other degree or examination at this or any other academic institution.

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ABSTRACT

The South African apparel retail industry faces formidable barriers to entry due to financial constraints and societal challenges. Additionally, large national clothing retail conglomerates create intense competitive pressures on independent apparel retailers in townships. Consequently, effective competition and customer attraction necessitate the strategic utilisation of social media marketing by these township-based retailers. Extensive research highlights the apparel industry's adoption of social media platforms for communication and cost-effective promotional endeavours.

This study investigates how independent apparel retailers in Gauteng's townships leverage social media and marketing analytics to enhance their marketing decision-making processes, thereby securing sustained competitive advantages. Positioned within the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, this exploratory study employs a qualitative research approach. Data was collected through an online self-administered survey of fifteen independent township retailers, selected via non-probability sampling, and analysed using thematic analysis.

The findings reveal that township-based independent retailers predominantly utilise Facebook and Instagram as their primary marketing channels. Social media platforms facilitate direct customer interaction, enabling retailers to attract and engage customers through inquiries, polls, product showcases, and customer service interactions, thereby nurturing new leads.

This study aims to enrich the field of marketing management by elucidating the effective utilisation of social media and marketing analytics by independent retailers in township settings. The insights garnered hold potential value for policymakers in devising training policies that incorporate practical social media and marketing analytics tools, empowering township-based retailers to navigate the competitive landscape more adeptly.

Keywords: *Social media, Marketing analytics, Marketing-decision-making, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp*

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ABBREVIATIONS

AGOA:	Africa growth and opportunity act
BP:	Brand pages
BS:	Business strategy
BSM:	Benefits of social media
CA:	Competitive advantage
CAB:	Cognitive-affect-behaviour model
CBBDA:	Cloud-based big data analytics
CIO:	Chief information officer
CMME:	Clothing manufacturing micro-enterprises
CMO:	Chief marketing officer
CRM:	Customer relationship management
DCV:	Dynamic capabilities
DDC:	Digital dynamic capabilities
DOI:	Diffusion of innovation
DIT:	Diffusion of innovation theory
EC:	Environmental capabilities
EICT:	Emerging information and communication technology
EU:	European Union
FCP:	Frequency of Content Posts
GDP:	Gross domestic product
GVC:	Global value chain
HMDM:	Holistic marketing decision-making
HOT:	Hypothesis of trying
ISB:	Information sharing behaviour
ISMMA:	Integrated social media and marketing analytics
IT:	Information technology
MA:	Marketing analytic

MAA:	Marketing analytics adoption
MAC:	Marketing analytics capabilities
MACF:	Marketing analytics capability framework
MAU:	Marketing analytics usage
MDM:	Marketing decision-making
MDMC:	Marketing decision-making capabilities
OC:	Organisational capabilities
PM:	Performance management
RFID:	Radio frequency identification technology
ROMI:	Return on marketing investment
SMME:	Small micro medium enterprises
SME:	Small and medium enterprises
SM:	Social media
SML:	Social media leads
SMU:	Social media usage
SOR:	Stimulus-organism-response theory
SSA:	Sub-Saharan Africa
TC:	Technological capabilities
TCSM:	Technological capabilities in social media
TCPSM:	Type of content posted on social media
TOE:	Technology organisation environment
TS:	Technology strategy
UK:	United Kingdom
WM:	Web marketing
WOM:	Word of mouth

1. Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

The retail industry for clothing encompassed diverse apparel lines tailored to specific age and gender groups, including sections for infants, toddlers, men, women, boys, and girls (Suttle, 2019). It is important to highlight that the South African apparel sector poses significant challenges for new entrants, primarily due to economic and social limitations. Consequently, entrepreneurs such as Hakim Ngcongwane, the proprietor of *Critic Studios*, an apparel establishment in the Atteridgeville township of Tshwane (Pretoria), epitomised independent retailers who encounter substantial challenges in achieving competitive effectiveness (Mdoda, 2018).

As Nawas, Atif, and Rubab (2015) note, the fashion industry's strategic social media (SM) deployment is conspicuous. This channel serves as a medium for communication and facilitates cost-effective promotional strategies. Given the economic efficiency and convenience that online platforms offer for marketing products and services, it is important to acknowledge the crucial purpose of social media as a potent tool for independent retailers categorised as minor, micro, and medium enterprises (SMMEs). This recognition become particularly significant considering the resource constraints that such enterprises often encounter in the management of their operations (Shabbir, Ghasi, and Mehmood, 2016; Pourkhani, Abdipour, Baher, and Moslehpour, 2019).

In line with contemporary definitions, social media as the electronic medium for disseminating personal information, documents, music, videos, and photographs through web-based software or applications (Dollarhide, 2021). Furthermore, integrating social media (SM) within marketing channels underscores its efficacy as a tool for marketing analytics, thereby accentuating its value as a measurement instrument (Kaur and Kumar, 2020).

Marketing analytics involved three fundamental components, namely: data collection, organisation, and synthesis. This analytical process is designed to provide insights into marketing performance, ultimately aiming to optimise a business's return on marketing investment (hereafter RoMI) (Wedel and Kannan, 2016).

Substantiating this perspective, extant studies, including the work of Pugna, Miclea, Negrea, and Potra (2016), underscore the transformative influence of social media and marketing analytics on the decision-making processes of businesses, ultimately resulting in the sustained accrual of competitive advantage. This pivotal decision-making process involves a series of strategic actions used to attain broader marketing objectives. Işoraitè (2018) contends that the competitive advantage of an enterprise is the resultant outcome of strategic manoeuvres deployed in response to competitors. These strategic actions included resource allocation and operational strategies, where the enterprise's positioning strategy influenced their effectiveness. This paradigm finds corroboration in the dynamic capacity theory (Denrell and Powell, 2016; Shahri and Shahini, 2018).

The aim of this study was to explore the way in which independent clothing retailers in the townships of Gauteng utilise social media (SM) and marketing analytics (MA). Additionally, the research sought to develop the Integrated Social Media and Marketing Analytics (ISMMA) framework, which integrated two key theoretical frameworks, namely: Technology Organisation Environment (TOE) theory, and Dynamic Capabilities (DCs) theory.

1.2. Background of the study

Gauteng Province, as the most densely populated province in South Africa, is home to nearly 26.0 per cent (approximately 15.5 million citizens) of the country's residents (Statistics South Africa, 2020). It is worth noting that major retail players such as Woolworths, the Shoprite group, and Walmart drew a substantial share of their online traffic from social media sources, as highlighted by Brown (2017). When it came to online shopping preferences in South Africa, 60 per cent of online shoppers opted for desktop platforms, with 55 per cent and 38 per cent showing a preference for handheld e-commerce devices (Wadolowska, 2017; Trading Economics, 2021).

The current internet implementation rate in South Africa is recorded at 51.9 per cent, with projections indicating an increase to 59.5 per cent by 2021 (Wadolowska, 2017). Importantly, while internet adoption in South African townships lags behind the national average, individuals with internet accessed in these regions allocated substantial time to online activities (GfK, 2017).

Historically, prior to 1994, township retailers functioned as small, independent merchants, primarily serving the basic needs of low-income earners. Post-1994, township residents experienced rapid income growth, resulting in a significant increase in consumer spending, often referred to as 'inbound shopping' (Ligthelm, 2008). Additionally, research emphasised that townships serve as a significant hub for South Africa's middle-class population. The recognition of these opportunities had motivated large-scale retailers to explore the untapped potential within these townships, with the objective of expanding their market reach (Tustin and Strydom, 2006). Moreover, according to Kenosi (2020), the retail market in Gauteng's townships, South Africa, contributed roughly 10 percent to the province's gross domestic product (GDP).

Despite the challenges highlighted in this study, such as limited internet access and the high cost of data bundles, evidence suggests that township consumers who do have internet access exhibit a notable inclination to share information online. This behaviour underscored the importance for marketers to establish and maintain a robust online presence to effectively engage with this segment of the market (GfK, 2017). (GfK, 2017). Additionally, the challenges of providing a seamless consumer experience across diverse online and offline channels are noted in the research by Hansen and Sia (2015).

Scholarly investigations by Duffett (2015) and Brown (2017) concluded that utilising customer data for implementing input, recommendations, and participating in Facebook advertising yields positive results in influencing the purchasing behaviour of Generation Y in South Africa.

Furthermore, Nawas, Atif and Rubab (2015) underscore the dynamic nature of social media as a significant forecaster in the apparel sector. Ahmad et al. (2015) recommend that brands seeking to establish a reliable consumer base ought to be maintaining an active online presence, encouraging potential cooperation, enhancing customer communication, staying abreast of current internet trends, employing innovative marketing strategies, and remaining engaged with evolving technological online platforms.

In the autonomous retail milieu of township apparel in Gauteng, competition has intensified, as made evident through the participation of major retailers who are establishing malls and convenience centres within the township market (Kenosi, 2020). Research accentuates that marketing-related challenges assumed precedence over financial-related challenges among independent retailers in townships (Makhitha, 2016). Significantly, an extensive inquiry underscored the paucity of research addressing the critical intersection of social media usage and marketing analytics. This intersection was recognised as pivotal in enhancing decision-making processes for marketing strategies aimed at securing a competitive advantage (Yogesh, Dwivedi, Ismagilova, Hughes, Carlson, Filieri, Jacobson, Jain, Karjaluoto, Kefi, Krishen, Kumar, Rahman, Raman, Rauschnabel, Rowley, Salo, Tran, and Wang, 2021).

The findings of this study emphasise the pressing need for in-depth research offering a thorough understanding and a theoretical framework delineating the elements of social media and marketing analytics. Such studies were crucial in enabling proficient marketing decision-making, and to strengthen competitive capabilities, especially within the domain of independent apparel retailers operating in townships.

1.3. Statement of the research problem

The CMO Survey (2020) consistently showed that the impact of marketing analytics on company performance had remained low over the past eight years, with no significant improvement. This underscored the increasing importance of marketing analytics in the digital age. Given the suboptimal contribution of marketing analytics, it raised important questions about how marketers could effectively translate large volumes of data into actionable insights to develop successful growth strategies (Du, Netser, Schweidel, and Mitra, 2021).

Yogesh et al. (2021) highlighted a notable gap in empirical literature regarding the integration of social media and marketing analytics to enhance marketing decision-making and secure a sustained competitive advantage. This study aimed to fill this gap by examining how social media and marketing analytics were utilised to inform efficient marketing decisions, particularly among independent apparel retailers in townships.

The retail landscape in South Africa is highly challenging, marked by the proliferation of malls and the dominance of large national retail groups in the clothing sector. This intense competition significantly impacts independent apparel retailers in townships. Makhitha (2016) identifies competition and marketing as primary challenges for these retailers. Furthermore, Mathe (2019) notes that the Competition Commission of South Africa had recognised the difficulties small and independent retailers faced in adapting to a dynamic competitive environment shaped by prominent chain-store retailers operating in South Africa's townships.

To remain competitive, independent township apparel retailers need to expand their customer base and increase market share. Achieving this requires overcoming challenges associated with making data-driven marketing decisions using social media and marketing analytics. This study aims to identify the factors within social media and marketing analytics that enhanced effective marketing decision-making, ultimately impacting competitive advantage (Mathe, 2019).

The importance of marketing analytics in shaping marketing decisions and boosting competitiveness is increasingly recognised. However, a significant gap remained in scholarly discussions, particularly in understanding the nuanced applications of marketing analytics for gaining a competitive edge (Cao, Duan, and El Banna, 2019). The rise of digitisation had forced businesses to strategically navigate the social media landscape, adding urgency to addressing this research gap (Garrido-Moreno, García-Morales, King, and Lockett, 2020; Mansoor, 2016). The Technology Organisation Environment (TOE) Model, as employed by Mokhtar, Abu Hasan, and Masa Halim (2016), identifies those factors that motivated SMEs in Kelantan, Malaysia to adopt social media marketing.

Similarly, Matikiti, Mpinganjira, and Roberts-Lombard (2018) use the TOE model to explore the variables influencing travel companies and tour operators in South Africa regarding their attitudes toward social media marketing.

Furthermore, Tripopsakul (2018), Pateli, Mylonas, and Spyrou (2020), and Effendi, Sugandini, and Istanto (2020) advocate for the integration of the technological, organisational, and environmental (TOE) framework with various models to study and analyse the intentions and behaviours of SMEs concerning the implementation of social

media. Pateli et al. (2020) combined the TOE with TAM (Technology Acceptance Model) in their investigation.

On the other hand, Garrido-Moreno, García-Morales, King, and Lockett (2020) adopt the Dynamic Capabilities (DC) theory to analyse the specific processes by which the use of social media capabilities lead to improved performance. Similarly, Maklan and Knox (2009) elucidate the way in which customer relationship management (CRM) may be practically applied to implement the concept of dynamic capabilities, enhancing investment decisions through a framework and process-driven approach for managing dynamic capabilities in marketing. Additionally, Giampietri and Trestini (2020) assert that the technology organisation environment (TOE) paradigm may be applied to investigate the factors influencing firms' motivation to adopt web marketing (WM) for innovation-related purposes at the firm level.

Most, if not all, of the studies mentioned above had employed the TOE and DC theories in quantitative research. However, few had integrated both theories to explore the joint impact of social media and marketing analytics in shaping successful marketing decisions that yielded a sustained competitive advantage. Moreover, Gao et al. (2019) have advocated for a qualitative exploration of this phenomenon in future research endeavours.

1.4. Research objectives

1.4.1. Primary research objective

- To investigate the utilisation of social media and marketing analytics by independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships, with the aim of understanding how these tools improve marketing decision-making and contribute to achieving a sustained competitive advantage.

1.4.2. Secondary research objectives

- To formulate the integrated social media and marketing analytics (ISMMA) framework by utilising the technology organisation environment (TOE) theory and the dynamic capabilities model (DC).
- To assess the impact of analytics usage on decision-making processes.
- To evaluate whether marketing decision-making influences sustainable competitive advantages.

1.5. Research Questions

- How do independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships use social media and marketing analytics to improve their marketing decision-making and achieve a sustained competitive advantage?

This study will also focus on the following research sub-questions:

- What is the nature of the current use of social media and marketing analytics?
- How does marketing analytics usage drive marketing decision-making?
- How does marketing decision-making drive sustainable competitive advantages?

1.6. Preliminary Literature Review

The initial literature review elucidates the theoretical foundations of the conceptual model and its constituent variables: technological organisation environment (TOE) theory and dynamic capability (DC) theory. The study investigates five primary propositions and explores the theoretical underpinnings of each variable. These include technological capabilities in social media, organisational capabilities in the adoption of marketing analytics, environmental capabilities, marketing analytics capabilities, and marketing decision-making capabilities.

1.6.1. Social Media Capabilities (SMC)

Social media (SM), as defined by Dollarhide (2021), pertains to the electronic dissemination of personal information, documents, music, videos, and photos via web-based software or applications. Furthermore, social media marketing could be understood as the utilisation of social media platforms to engage online audiences, establish brand recognition, drive sales, and direct website traffic. Activities within social media marketing encompassed the creation of unique content, audience engagement, results analysis, and advertisement deployment (Sharma and Verma, 2018).

According to Goldstuck and Silumbwe (2020), insight into the prevalence of social media usage in South Africa revealed that a significant portion of the population engaged with platforms, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, WeChat, and Snapchat.

Businesses have increasingly transitioned towards social media platforms in order to enrich customer communication, enhance brand visibility, foster interactive engagement, and nurture brand loyalty. The dynamics of business performance involved active engagement and listening to customers, responsiveness to competitive pressures, and the strategic utilisation of external support (Fang, Li, and Bhatti, 2020).

1.6.2. Marketing Analytics Capabilities (MAC)

Marketing analytics (MA), as delineated by Wedel and Kannan (2016), involved the collection, management, and synthesis of data to extract insights into marketing performance, ultimately optimising return on marketing investment (ROMI). Dar et al. (2021) utilised the marketing analytics capability framework (MACF) in Pakistan, highlighting the growing significance of marketing analytics in Industry 4.0. The study emphasised the necessity for business managers to comprehend the nuances of marketing analytics to drive synergistic impacts on a company's marketing endeavours.

The novel business model, as presented by Purcarea (2018), centred on a holistic re-evaluation of the entire customer journey. This reassessment underscored the pivotal role of management perception (MP) in integrating organisational analytics into decision-making processes. Critical components for this integration included:

- securing management support;
- fostering a customer-centric culture with a focus on long-term customer value; and
- harnessing available data to assess customer culture.

The integration extended to implementing customer-centric metrics across the organisation to oversee customer perception, data quality, and data usage culture. As proposed by Purcarea (2018), this comprehensive approach was instrumental in aligning organisations with data-driven decision-making strategies.

1.6.3. Marketing Analytics usage (MAU)

Marketing analytics played a crucial role in elevating customer engagement and customising offerings to amplify customer satisfaction, as highlighted by Nagaraj (2020).

This process encompassed harnessing customer insight gleaned from feedback, and employing theme to modify offerings, ultimately augmenting overall customer contentment (Roya Rahimi and Metin Kosak, 2017).

Moreover, marketing data and analytics facilitated customer segmentation, acquisition, and retention, thereby nurturing enhanced customer relationships and elevated levels of customer satisfaction (Rather and Sharma, 2016).

The strategic implementation of marketing analytics has the potential to bestow a competitive advantage, as emphasised by Ransbotham and Kiron (2018). This underscored the significant role that marketing analytics plays in shaping a competitive edge for businesses.

1.6.4. Marketing Decision-making (MDM)

Marketing decision-making (MDM) traverses three fundamental organisational structures, namely: strategy and planning, execution and operations, and infrastructure. This multifaceted process involves elucidating the roles of marketing initiatives and establishing decision criteria throughout the organisation (Bruggen and Wierenga, 2010).

MDM manifests its significance across the marketing mix, encompassing product offerings, advertising strategies, messaging activities, pricing strategies, and distribution channel selections. This underscores the pervasive influence of MDM across various facets of marketing operations and its critical role in shaping organisational strategies (Bruggen and Wierenga, 2010; Patni, 2019).

1.6.5. Sustained competitive advantage (SCA)

A company achieves a competitive edge through the effective establishment of a substantial advantage. This competitive advantage resulted from strategic decisions that aligned with the organisation's preferred positioning strategy. The incorporation of dynamic capability (DC) theory into these strategies is paramount, as asserted by Išoraitė (2018), thereby consistently empowering companies to surpass their rivals. This highlights the integral role of dynamic capability theory in sustaining a competitive advantage over time, emphasising its strategic significance for organisational success.

1.7. Theoretical Grounding

1.7.1. Technology Organisation Environment (TOE)

The concept of technology organisation environment (TOE), initially introduced by Tornatsky and Fleischer (1990), captures the impact of the technical context within organisations on the adoption of technological innovations. The TOE framework provides a comprehensive exploration of the dynamics among the technical environment, organisational context (encompassing internal corporate factors), competitive environment, and business partners, as outlined by Jere and Ngidi (2021).

Numerous scholars, including Tripopsakul (2018); Pateli, Mylonas, and Spyrou (2020); and Effendi, Sugandini, and Istanto (2020), suggest that the TOE framework has been effectively utilised to assess the behavioural intentions of small businesses during the adoption of social media. Drawing from these scholarly insights, this study meticulously considers the constituent elements of the TOE framework when constructing the theoretical framework.

This emphasis on TOE becomes particularly pertinent when scrutinising the integration of social media and marketing analytics, given their status as cutting-edge technologies with significant relevance to locally owned garment businesses. This approach ensures a nuanced understanding of the contextual factors influencing the adoption of such technologies in the specific domain of locally owned garment businesses.

1.7.2. Dynamic Capability Theory

Dynamic capability (DC) theory, originally proposed by Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997), provides a framework for evaluating business competencies, with particular focus on the capacity to construct, realign, and adapt resources in response to rapidly changing environments.

This theoretical framework was applied in studies such as that of Chumphong, Srimai, and Potipiroon (2020) to investigate the role of resources within small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in achieving a competitive advantage amid a dynamically evolving business landscape. Consequently, this study integrates elements of the DC framework pertaining to marketing analytics and social media in order to examine their impact on decision-making processes and competitive advantage.

In conjunction with integrating TOE and DC theories, the study explored various dimensions, including technological capabilities encompassing audience listening, interactivity, visibility, and social media utilisation. Organisational capabilities highlight the role of marketing analytics and its alignment with management perspective, support, data accessibility, quality, and usage culture. Environmental capabilities considered factors such as competitive pressure, top management support within the organisational environment, and perceived utility in the technological context (Chumphong et al., 2020).

These factors collectively influenced the behavioural intentions associated with the adoption and utilisation of social media and marketing analytics (Abed, 2020). This comprehensive approach ensured a nuanced understanding of the interplay between technological, organisational, and environmental factors in shaping the adoption and utilisation of these technologies within SMEs.

1.8. Research Proposition

A conceptual framework was indispensable for the researcher, allowing for the establishment of a specific perspective and constrained the scope to pertinent data and variables. This framework proved invaluable in the analysis and interpretation of data, enhancing the comprehensibility of concepts and variables by reinforcing theoretical assumptions (Creswell, 2014). Drawing inspiration from the technology organisation environment (TOE) and dynamic capability (DC) frameworks, the following propositions were advanced:

1.8.1. Technological Capabilities

Technological capabilities have enhanced or increased marketing analytics usage (Maroufkhani, Tseng, Iranmanesh, Ismail and Khalid, 2020). Therefore, the below was proposed:

- *Proposition 1:* Technological capabilities, such as social media usage, interactivity, visibility, engagement, and customer listening, positively influence the likelihood of adopting marketing analytics.
- *Proposition 2:* Organisational capabilities, including management perception, management support, data availability, data quality, and a data use culture, positively influence the likelihood of adopting marketing analytics.

- *Proposition 3:* Environmental factors, such as competitive pressure and external support, significantly impact the adoption of social media and marketing analytics.
- *Proposition 4:* The use of marketing analytics enhances effective marketing decision-making.
- *Proposition 5:* Effective marketing decision-making enhances sustainable competitive advantage.

1.8.2. The Conceptual Framework

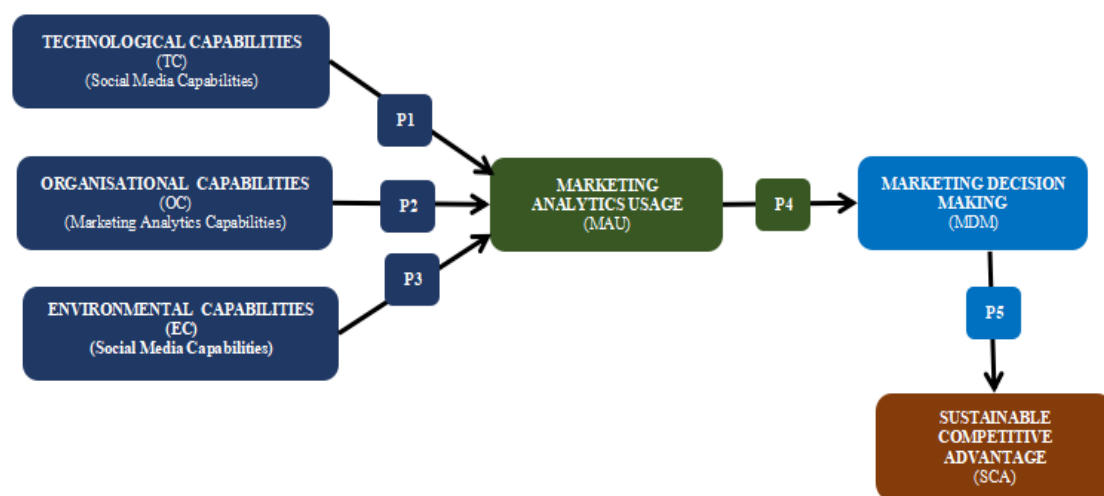


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

1.9. Methodology

1.9.1. Research approach and philosophy

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed in this study, detailing the research philosophy, approaches to theory development, research design, and other critical aspects that frame it. Additionally, it addresses the theoretical contribution, practical implications, ethical considerations, and the structure of the thesis (Creswell, 2014).

The research philosophy for this study is primarily interpretivism, which is a common approach in qualitative research (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, and Bristow, 2019; Bryman et al., 2014). This study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy to explore how independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships utilise social media marketing analytics in order to gain a competitive advantage.

Interpretivism aligns well with the research objectives, which centre on understanding the subjective experiences and decision-making processes of these independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships. Additionally, constructivism is directly applicable, as it supports the notion that reality is socially constructed through interaction and engagement (Malhotra et al., 2017; Malhotra, 2020).

The primary research question asks: 'How do independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships use social media and marketing analytics to improve their marketing decision-making and achieve a sustained competitive advantage?' Interpretivism emphasises the importance of meaning-making from the participants' perspective, which is crucial for understanding how they interpret and utilise social media analytics data to inform their marketing decisions (Creswell, 2009).

This research is qualitative, interpretivist and constructivist. It allows for an in-depth exploration of how social media and marketing analytics are used by the retailers to enhance their marketing decision-making and achieve a sustained competitive advantage. Interpretivism provides a strong foundation for this research, as it allows us to explore the subjective experiences and interpretations of independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships.

While online surveys are often associated with quantitative research, the study incorporates open-ended questions to capture the subjective experiences and thought processes of the retailers regarding social media analytics. This qualitative data will allow us to delve deeper into the 'why' behind their actions, rather than simply focusing on 'what' they are doing (Braun, Clarke, Boulton, Davey, and McEvoy, 2020).

Two primary approaches to theory development are considered, namely induction and abduction (Kennedy, 2018; Malhotra, 2020). For this study, the abduction approach is chosen, due to its compatibility with the existing theoretical framework, which is informed by technology organisation environment (TOE) and dynamic capabilities (DC) frameworks (Ramanathan, Philpott, Duan, and Cao, 2017).

These frameworks guide the study while remaining open to insights that may emerge from the collected data, allowing for the identification of additional constructs beyond the initial scope.

This abductive approach ensures a thorough exploration of the research phenomenon while accommodating new insights that may arise during the research process.

1.9.2. Research design

Qualitative studies typically employ exploratory and descriptive research designs (Creswell, 2009). Exploratory research approaches facilitated cost-effectiveness, high interaction level, and open-ended nature of the research process. The research aimed to comprehend a phenomenon without prior investigation, aligning with the exploratory nature of the study, as articulated by Rashid, Warraich, Sabir, and Waseem (2019). This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the research topic and facilitates a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

1.9.3. Research strategy

Qualitative studies typically employ exploratory and descriptive research designs. However, in this instance, experimental research approaches were chosen, due to their cost-effectiveness, high level of interaction, and the open-ended nature of the research process.

The research aims to comprehend a phenomenon without prior investigation, aligning with the exploratory nature of the study, as posited by Rashid, Warraich, Sabir, and Waseem (2019). This approach allows for a thorough exploration of the research topic and facilitates a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

1.9.4. Sampling design

This study employs a non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, in order to align with the qualitative nature of the research (Malhotra et al., 2017; Malhotra, 2020; Bryman et al., 2014). Purposive sampling is appropriate for this study as it allows for the selection of participants who possess specific characteristics relevant to the research, namely independent apparel retailers engaged in social media marketing.

The sample consists of fifteen participants aged 18 years and older from various townships in Gauteng, including Soweto, Tembisa, KwaThema, Mamelodi, Kagiso, Daveyton, Rabie Ridge, Alexandra, and Eldorado Park. This selection serves to ensure diverse representation of the target population within the study's context.

The determination of the sample size is guided by principles of qualitative research, which emphasise achieving data saturation, rather than statistical representativeness (Moser and Korstjens, 2018).

The sample size was chosen based on practical considerations, including accessibility of participants and feasibility of obtaining rich, detailed data. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences and perspectives, essential for addressing the study's research questions and achieving meaningful insights.

1.9.5. Data collection

The study gathers data through a self-administered online survey distributed to independent retailers aged 18 and above in the selected Gauteng townships. The survey aims to explore social media usage for marketing purposes. Various channels, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, word-of-mouth, and email, are employed to recruit participants. The research methodology excludes virtual meetings or interviews and refrains from posing personal questions that could compromise participants' privacy.

It is crucial to highlight that the research methodology upholds a stringent ethical stance by avoiding personal inquiries that might cause discomfort, such as questions about medical information, or requests for the disclosure of medical records. The study prioritises ethical considerations and ensures that participants' privacy and well-being are safeguarded throughout the research process.

1.9.6. Data analyses

Thematic analysis, which includes transcription, coding, categorisation, and theme identification, is employed to analyse the qualitative data, as outlined by Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017). The data analysis for this study utilises Atlas.ti online software, and follows a systematic process. This process involves data collection, transcription of audio and video files, coding of transcripts, establishment of categories and themes, and definition and naming of identified themes. By adhering to this structured approach, the study ensures consistency and rigour in the analysis of qualitative data.

The report presents the findings. The approach to data analysis used the Atlas.ti online software as an instrument for analysis. The data analysis procedure followed the following steps:

- Collecting the data
- Transcribing audio/video files
- Coding the transcripts
- Creating categories and themes
- Defining and Naming themes
- Producing the report

1.10. Contribution of the study

1.10.1. Theoretical Contribution

This study makes a significant contribution by developing a tailored theoretical framework for social media and marketing analytics specifically designed for township independent apparel retailers. A unique aspect of this study is the integration of the technology organisation environment (TOE) and dynamic capabilities (DC) theories. By addressing the scarcity of qualitative research in this domain, the study aims to uncover additional variables that could complement existing theories.

Aligned with previous literature exploring the impact of social media and marketing analytics on marketing decision-making and competitiveness in the retail environment, this research proves relevant due to the rapid technological advancements. Building upon the works of scholars such as Wedel and Kannan (2016), Sharma and Verma (2018), Tripopsakul (2018), Patni (2019), Pateli, Mylonas, and Spyrou (2020), Effendi, Sugandini, and Istanto (2020), Dollarhide (2021), and Dar, Bashir, Khan, Muhammad, Shafiq, Muhammad, and Ali (2021), this study underscores the critical need for a paradigm shift in skill sets demanded by the rapidly evolving technological landscape within the retail sector.

Moreover, this research serves to enrich the existing empirical literature by addressing gaps in our understanding of the interplay between social media, the burgeoning marketing analytics domain, decision-making processes within the marketing sphere, and the establishment of competitive advantage. Its specific focus on the independent apparel retail sector operating within the townships of Gauteng will offer unique insight

into a context that has received limited scholarly attention. In the broader field of marketing, findings from this study are poised to enhance our collective understanding, thereby injecting fresh perspectives into the essential realms of modern marketing practices.

1.10.2. Practical Contribution

The outcomes of the study offers valuable insights for independent township retailers, serving as a guide for the development of training programmes and tools aimed at effectively implementing social media and marketing initiatives. These insights are in line with the imperative for training and the enhancement of alignment between user needs and technology capabilities. The research findings reaffirm the assertions made in prior studies (Tripopsakul, 2018; Pateli, Mylonas, and Spyrou, 2020; Effendi, Sugandini, and Istanto, 2020) regarding the critical importance of training for independent clothing retailers in harnessing the potential of social media platforms.

1.10.3. Managerial Contribution

In an era of digitalisation, the study underscores the importance of marketing analytics and the challenges faced by marketers in effectively harnessing data for informed decision-making. It specifically concentrates on the pivotal role of social media in shaping online shopping behavior in South Africa.

For businesses, this insight emphasises the importance of a well-structured online presence, robust customer communication, and staying attuned to evolving internet trends. In order to thrive in the competitive South African market, companies must understand the impact of social media and marketing analytics on consumer behaviours.

1.10.4. Ethical Considerations

The research study adhered to all ethical data collection practices, upheld the standards of the research profession, and secured an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Witwatersrand's Ethics Committee. Participants were informed correctly of their voluntary participation and given the assurance of anonymity. The report included all the information required for moral practice (Morgan, 2016).

1.10.5. Structure of the Thesis

The qualitative research will follow this format (Duggappa, Sudheesh, and Nethra, 2016):

1. Chapter 1: Introduction
2. Chapter 2: Theories and Models in the area of study
3. Chapter 3: The Apparel Retail Industry: Global and African Perspective
4. Chapter 4: Research Methodology
5. Chapter 5: Findings
6. Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

1.11. Conclusion

This chapter set the foundation for this study by addressing the critical role of social media and marketing analytics in enhancing marketing decision-making and achieving competitive advantage, particularly for independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships. It provided a detailed exploration of the context, objectives, and theoretical underpinnings essential for understanding the study's scope and significance. The chapter began by outlining the challenging retail environment in South Africa, characterised by intense competition from larger retailers and limited resources for independent businesses. This backdrop underscores the need for independent apparel retailers in townships to leverage innovative tools, such as social media and marketing analytics, in order to remain competitive.

The context provided establishes the importance of this study and highlights the gap in existing research, specifically the lack of qualitative insights into how these tools are utilised by small retailers.

1.11.1. Research Objectives and Questions

The primary research objective of the study is to investigate how independent apparel retailers use social media and marketing analytics to enhance marketing decision-making and achieve a sustained competitive advantage. This objective is framed by secondary goals, including the development of the Integrated Social Media and Marketing Analytics (ISMMA) framework and the evaluation of the impact of analytics on decision-making and competitive advantage.

The research questions are designed to explore the nature of social media and marketing analytics usage, their influence on decision-making, and their role in achieving competitive advantage.

1.11.2. Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical grounding of the study is critical, with a focus on the Technology Organisation Environment (TOE) theory and dynamic capabilities (DC) theory. The TOE framework provides a comprehensive view of the technological, organisational, and environmental factors influencing the adoption of social media and marketing analytics. The DC theory offers insight into how firms can adapt and realign their resources to maintain a competitive edge. Integrating these theories allows for a nuanced understanding of how technological and organisational capabilities, along with environmental pressures, impact the effectiveness of marketing analytics.

1.11.3. Research Proposition

The study advances several propositions related to technological, organisational, and environmental capabilities, and their influence on marketing analytics usage and decision-making. These propositions are critical for understanding how various factors contribute to a firm's ability to harness marketing analytics effectively and achieve a competitive advantage. Each proposition addresses a specific aspect of the theoretical framework, providing a structured approach to investigating the research problem.

1.11.4. Methodology

The chapter details the research philosophy and methodology, emphasising an interpretivist and constructivist approach aligned with qualitative research. The abductive approach to theory development allows for flexibility and the incorporation of novel insights. The use of thematic analysis and purposive sampling ensures a deep exploration of the research questions, focusing on the experiences of independent retailers in Gauteng townships.

1.11.5. Contributions

The study aims to make significant theoretical, practical, and managerial contributions. Theoretical contributions include the development of a tailored framework for social media and marketing analytics.

Practical contributions involve providing insight for training and tool development for independent retailers. Managerial contributions emphasise the importance of understanding consumer behaviour and leveraging data for competitive advantage.

1.11.6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are addressed with a commitment to participant anonymity and voluntary participation. The study adheres to ethical standards and has received approval from the relevant ethics committee.

The chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the research context, objectives, theoretical foundations, and methodology. It sets the stage for a detailed exploration of how social media and marketing analytics can enhance marketing decision-making and competitive advantage for independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships. The integration of TOE and DC theories offers a robust framework for understanding the complexities of marketing analytics usage, while the methodological approach ensures a thorough investigation of the research questions. This foundational chapter highlights the study's relevance and potential impact on both academic literature and practical applications in the retail sector.

2. Chapter 2: THE GARMENT RETAIL INDUSTRY: GLOBAL AND AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

2.1. Introduction

The literature review chapter thoroughly examines the global, regional, and local dynamics within the garment retail industry. It systematically evaluates established research methodologies and procedures, meticulously applying various factors to each theory to ground this study in a robust theoretical framework. Additionally, the review conducts a comprehensive analysis of each variable outlined in the conceptual model, notably highlighting five critical propositions: TCSM, OC in marketing analytics adoption, EC, MAC, and MDMC.

Furthermore, the literature review critically assesses relevant theories, particularly discussing capabilities and development within the apparel sector from the perspective of the theories of TOE and DC. This scholarly review serves as the cornerstone for the subsequent empirical research, facilitating the exploration of the interplay between these variables in the context of the garment retail industry (Chigbu, Atiku, and Du Plessis, 2023).

2.2. Introduction to the apparel retail sector

The fashion segment was positioned to yield substantial revenue, reaching US\$8,219 million in 2021, with a projected annual growth rate (CAGR 2021–2025) of 13.08 per cent. This growth trajectory was expected to culminate in an anticipated market volume of US\$13,440 million by 2025. As highlighted by Nucamendi-Guillén, Moreno, and Mendosa (2018), the fashion retail industry is characterised by a short life cycle, high volatility, and low predictability. To thrive in this dynamic environment, adaptability and responsiveness are imperative (Nucamendi-Guillén et al., 2018).

According to Shang et al. (2021), the fashion industry ranks as the world's third-largest manufacturing sector, trailing only the automobile and technology sectors. This expansive industry churns out a staggering quantity of garments, exceeding 150 billion annually (Zhang et al., 2021).

While the Asia Pacific region has experienced the most significant growth at four per cent, the United States, China, and Japan remain the three largest apparel markets

globally. This trend underscores the persistent global demand for clothing and footwear (Shahbandeh, 2021).

A noteworthy observation by McKinsey and Company (2020) is that, despite the growth of online retail, over 70 of fashion category purchases continue to occur through offline channels. This insight into consumer behaviour underscores the enduring importance of physical retail in the per cent fashion industry.

2.3. A review of the apparel industry internationally

Drawing on the work of Nikhashemi, Jebarajakirthy, and Nusair (2019), there are discernible non-linear relationships between willingness to pay more, word-of-mouth communication, propensity to spend extra, and continuous buying intentions in the retail apparel sector. This research highlights the critical importance of providing customers with a pleasurable shopping experience, as demonstrated by the intricate connections between these factors (Nikhashemi et al., 2019).

In the British fashion industry, around 890,000 people, equivalent to about half the population of Idaho, are employed across various sectors, including retail, manufacturing, brands, and design-related activities (Zhang, Zhang, and Zhou, 2021). This industry's vast scale and substantial impact within the broader economic landscape underscore the significance of gaining insights into its size and diversity. Understanding these aspects is crucial for a comprehensive grasp of the dynamics and challenges of the British fashion business. The key takeaways from this research emphasise the pivotal role of customer-centric strategies in navigating the fiercely competitive landscape of fashion retail.

2.3.1. Global market performances

The United Kingdom distinguishes itself in European fashion consumption by purchasing more clothing per person (pp) than any other nation. In comparison to other European countries, the UK's consumption surpasses Germany at 16.7 kg (pp), Denmark at 16.0 kg (pp), France at 9.0 kg (pp), Italy at 14.5 kg (pp), and the Netherlands at 14.0 kg (pp).

This robust fashion consumption has propelled the UK's fashion industry to experience accelerated growth, significantly outpacing the overall economy, with a 5.4 percent

growth rate in 2016 compared to the national average of 1.6 per cent. In 2017, this thriving industry generated a substantial revenue of £32 billion, underscoring its robust performance (Zhang et al., 2021).

According to Statista (2021), the projected market volume of the global apparel industry could reach US\$5,849 million by 2021, highlighting the substantial scale of the industry. Globally, China emerges as a dominant player, set to generate significant revenue of US\$382,775 million in 2021, with an average revenue per user (ARPU) in the Apparel segment for 2021 at US \$24.33. The apparel segment was expected to surge in users, reaching 386.0 million by 2025, with a user penetration of 20.0 percent in 2021 (Statista, 2021).

As of 2019, China led the world as the primary apparel exporter, holding a substantial market share of approximately 30.8 per cent. Following in the global export rankings were the European Union, Bangladesh, and Vietnam. A notable segment within the apparel market was children's clothing, constituting around 20 percent of the overall apparel market in 2018, with a projected value growth reaching \$85 billion by 2021 (Shahbandeh, 2020; Statista, 2021).

The Indian garment market forecasts a growth rate of 11 percent in the designated year, with the market's estimated worth expanding to nearly 1.7 trillion Indian rupees by 2028 (Statista, 2021).

However, the apparel industry faced challenging times, anticipating a decrease from \$35.8 billion in 2019 to \$31.4 billion in 2020, resulting in a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of -12.32 percent. The dual impact of the global pandemic and reduced economic activity contracted the market (Markets, 2020).

Despite these challenges, the global apparel market is set to embark on a trajectory of expansion, with an increased estimated value from 1.5 trillion US dollars in 2020 to over 2.25 trillion by 2025, signifying significant growth prospects (Shahbandeh, 2021; Popovic Sevic, Slijepevi, and Ili, 2021).

Within this competitive landscape, a prominent fashion brand has made a mark with 2,213 stores in 93 physical locations and 39 online, ranking 35th in global brands in 2020. Its brand worth, estimated at \$14.862 billion in 2020, demonstrated noteworthy

performance compared to the previous year's figure of nearly \$17 billion (Popovic Sevic, Slijepcevi, and Ili, 2021). The H&M group is another significant player in the fashion industry, operating more than 3,900 stores across 61 markets, including franchise locations (Shahbandeh, 2021).

2.3.2. Global market challenges

The fashion retail sector grapples with a series of challenges, as detailed by Radonic (2021). These challenges revolve around the proliferation of consumerism, the necessity of cultivating a distinctive shopping experience, and the intricacies of inventory management. The modern consumer, driven by abundant choices, multi-channel accessibility, and an insatiable appetite for novelty and creativity, wields considerable influence. This empowerment engenders complexities across the supply chain, posing significant hurdles for businesses aspiring to differentiate themselves in this competitive landscape and capture the attention of discerning customers.

Critical areas demanding immediate attention within the fashion retail industry include adaptability and operational excellence in stock visibility, operations planning, and inventory intelligence (Radonic, 2021). Consequently, brands in this sector have initiated novel strategies to navigate these challenges. Many apparel companies actively pursue measures to mitigate potential losses, encompassing lease renegotiations, the preservation of physical stores, and the strategic utilisation of surplus inventory (Subashini, Kanchana Devi, and Kavitha, 2020).

The ramifications of counterfeiting extend beyond material goods. Although the marketing sphere often provides profound insights into counterfeit products, such knowledge sometimes fails to translate to the realm of counterfeit retail establishments. This understudied facet of the service sector is the focus of investigation in the research conducted by Rosenbaum, Cheng, and Wong (2016).

Their inquiry delves into the prevalence of dishonest practices among Southeast Asian retailers, a subject heretofore underserved by scholarly exploration (Rosenbaum et al., 2016). By shedding light on this underappreciated domain, the research aims to enhance comprehension regarding the challenges posed by fraudulent stores within the region.

A study by Rosenbaum et al. (2016) reveals an intriguing revelation, as consumers express satisfaction with existing counterfeit servicescapes. Paradoxically, certain counterfeit retail and service enterprises have cultivated a dedicated customer base. In a somewhat ironic twist, Rosenbaum et al. argue that service organisations contemplating innovation and expansion should consider these counterfeit enterprises as potential partners. This strategic approach becomes imperative when managing protracted, costly litigation processes (Rosenbaum et al., 2016).

The fashion retail sector houses many SMEs, as outlined by Gonda, Gorgenyi-Hegyes, Nathan, and Fekete-Farkas (2020). However, these SMEs grapple with the inherent risks of the expansive global value chain despite their presence. The prevailing landscape has ushered in heightened competition across various sectors, with the garment industry being no exception. The differential demand growth rates are decelerating within industrialised nations, precipitated by the intensifying competitive environment. As wages and incomes rise in developing countries, the dynamics of both the demand and supply sides of the market transform, prompting corporate strategies to adapt and evolve (Gonda et al., 2020).

The impact of the international value chain on the Vietnamese garment export industry received scholarly scrutiny in the work of Dao, Minh, Hai, and Thi (2021). Despite marked growth rates and incremental progress along the global textile value chain, Vietnamese suppliers heavily rely on low-cost labour and imported materials. Consequently, they face the formidable challenge of cultivating new competencies to preserve global competitiveness in the face of evolving global economic landscapes.

2.4. An overview of the state of the apparel retail industry performance in Africa

A burgeoning fashion industry has taken root in Ghana, Uganda, and Zambia, propelled by a youthful generation of female designers and entrepreneurs, as observed by Langevang (2016).

The thriving sector serves as a focal point for entrepreneurial endeavour, aligning with the aspirations of individuals keen on advancing socio-economic, cultural, and personal development (Langevang, 2016).

Furthermore, the African fashion, apparel, and textile industry, as outlined by Yamama (2021), demonstrate substantial promise with an estimated market value of \$31 billion in 2020, positioning it as the continent's second-largest economic sector after agriculture.

The fast-fashion business model, explicated by Yamama (2021), represents an agile response to the ever-evolving fashion landscape. This model swiftly adapts to the latest fashion trends and styles, ensuring apparel production caters to consumers' immediate and evolving demands. Achieving these hinges on a marketing approach that facilitates the rapid transition of clothing from the fashion runway to retail outlets. Streamlining critical supply chain elements is pivotal in making this approach feasible (Yamama, 2021).

Drawing attention to the Nigerian fashion and design industry, Onyeator (2019) cites statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics (2015) that underscore its substantial contribution to the country's rebased GDP in 2015, amounting to slightly over N2 trillion. Strydom and Kempen (2021) posit that emerging entrepreneurs and targeted skill-specific training can empower African women, helping them advance towards three critical sustainable development goals: poverty eradication, gender equality, and empowerment.

Larger shelf-apparel retailers such as *H&M*, *Uniqlo*, *Primark*, *Topshop*, and *Next*, as emphasised by Yamama (2021), effectively churn out vast quantities of apparel, epitomising the rapid-response approach to fashion production.

Ethiopia's textiles and apparel sector have garnered considerable governmental attention, with the overarching objective of establishing itself as a global sourcing hub, a development highlighted by Khurana (2018).

Notably, research findings by Adikorley, Thoney-Barletta, Joines, and Rothenberg (2017) underscore Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) as a competitive sourcing region. This competitive advantage emanates from the region's favourable cost structure, characterised by low labour costs, in conjunction with the duty-free benefits accorded under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Despite the propitious circumstances, several impediments hinder a significant upswing in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) sourcing. The recommended course of action by SSA governments entails actively enhancing the business environment, fostering robust supply chains, and cultivating local fabric sourcing (Adikorley et al., 2017).

2.4.1. The African market performances

The wear and shoes/sneakers market within Sub-Saharan Africa, estimated at \$31 billion, is highlighted by Gbadamosi (2016), drawing upon data from Euromonitor. This market features notable brands, such as Nigeria's Maki Oh, endorsed by prominent figures like Beyoncé, as well as Jewel by Lisa and Ikiré Jones, which are making significant strides in establishing themselves as global names beyond the confines of the region (Gbadamosi, 2016). Additionally, Douglas (2016) emphasises the considerable role of Mauritius as Africa's premier exporter and producer of clothing, contributing to a substantial \$761.3 million in apparel exports.

As elucidated by Douglas, the garment sector is a vital component of Lesotho's economy, with clothing accounting for a remarkable 60% of all exports from the country. Moreover, 80% of Lesotho's workforce is engaged in manufacturing, underlining the industry's socio-economic significance.

Douglas (2016) also points out that the textile industry in Ethiopia, characterised by cost-effectiveness, has been attracting interest from foreign retailers. Over the past six years, Ethiopia's textile sector has multiplied by 51%. Retail giants like Tesco and H&M source clothing from this market.

Additionally, PVH Corp, the owner of the Calvin Klein brand, has established a substantial manufacturing facility within Ethiopia's Hawassa Industrial Park, strategically located 275 kilometers southeast of Addis Ababa (Douglas, 2016).

Douglas (2016) further reveals that the African Development Bank anticipates the continent's fashion industry will yield \$15.5 billion in revenue within the next five years. While this is a substantial sum, it represents only a modest portion of the global market, valued at \$1.3 trillion.

2.4.2. The African market challenges

The African clothing and fashion sector, despite its considerable potential, remains in its infancy. According to the AfDB, only 0.5 per cent of the world's textile production originates from the top ten textile-exporting countries, highlighting the sector's relatively limited global footprint.

Despite Africa contributing 10 per cent to the world's cotton production, the region predominantly exports raw materials to Asian markets, thus reaping limited value from its resources (Douglas, 2016). This predicament is exacerbated by high operational and logistical costs, coupled with scant government support, creating substantial obstacles to business growth within the sector (Douglas, 2016). Consequently, most African fashion SMEs find themselves in dire need of increased funding, enhanced business acumen, and more robust financial support to transcend their current small-scale operations (Douglas, 2016).

Furthermore, emerging proprietors of CMMEs, as delineated by Strydom and Kempen (2021), necessitate sustained general business support alongside targeted, field-specific guidance tailored to the nuances of their operations. Such essential assistance could be facilitated through strategic collaborations with higher education institutions, fostering the creation of incubation hubs in conjunction with businesses (Strydom and Kempen, 2021).

Additionally, Aboagyewaa-Ntiri and Mintah (2016) attribute the declining state of the clothing sub-sector in Africa to a myriad of factors, including limited access to capital, outdated technology, supply chain complexities, and challenges within textile manufacturing (Aboagyewaa-Ntiri and Kwabena Mintah, 2016).

A noteworthy contribution to the literature on apparel entrepreneurship and fashion-based entrepreneurship education, as posited by Strydom and Kempen (2021), lies in the provision of in-house apparel apprenticeships. The initiatives play a pivotal role in bolstering the economic sustainability of CMMEs, imparting indispensable skills and facilitating knowledge transfer (Strydom and Kempen, 2021).

In addressing the multifaceted challenges inherent in marketing fashion products in Ghana, it is imperative that the government and financial institutions extend

comprehensive support across various developmental stages, spanning pre-start-up, start-up, and growth phases. Such concerted efforts would serve to alleviate the operational burdens confronting fashion enterprises (Danso, Nuworkpor, Jonathan, and Aboagyewaa-Ntiri, 2018). Danso et al. (2018) underscores the pivotal role of creativity and innovation in fostering the prosperity of fashion businesses, particularly in domains such as marketing, textile design, and fashion product development.

Moreover, they advocate for the integration of effective social media strategies by apparel retailers and businesses to augment product promotion, alongside the imperative of infrastructure development, which holds the potential to lower production costs and enhance product quality (Danso et al., 2018).

2.4.3. The state of South African apparel retail industry

The recently enacted Textile, Footwear, and Clothing Master Plan, orchestrated by the government, aspires to raise the proportion of domestically manufactured fashion in retail from 44% to 65% by the year 2030. This deliberate strategic initiative carries the potential to create an additional 120,000 jobs, thereby broadening employment opportunities across the industry's entire value chain to reach a total of 330,000 (Berman-Jacob, 2020).

2.4.4. The performance of the industry

The South African apparel retail market is stratified according to age and gender, addressing diverse consumer segments including infants, toddlers, men, women, boys, and girls, as outlined in the 2021 Apparel Retail in South Africa report. This market segment has demonstrated strong performance, with the sector amassing total revenues of \$9.8 billion in 2018. Notably, from 2014 to 2018, the industry experienced a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.7 per cent (Flanders Investment & Trade, 2016; Apparel Retail in South Africa, 2021).

2.4.5. Factors Contributing to Industry Growth

According to Wadolowska (2017), South Africa presently boasts an internet penetration rate of 51.9 per cent, a figure anticipated to rise to 59.5 per cent by 2021. It is noteworthy that 60 per cent of South African online shoppers prefer desktops, with 55 per cent and 38 per cent opting for mobile eCommerce and tablets, respectively

(Wadolowska, 2017; Statistics South Africa, 2020; Trading Economics, 2021). For retailers such as Woolworths, the Shoprite group, and Massmart, harnessing social media to augment online traffic holds significant importance (Brown, 2017).

The burgeoning township populations, coupled with economic development, have triggered increased consumer spending and the emergence of a growing middle class marked by "inbound shopping" (Ligthelm, 2008). National retailers have been drawn to this demographic shift, seeking to tap into this burgeoning market (Tustin and Strydom, 2006).

According to Kenosi (2020) the substantial contribution of the township retail market to Gauteng's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), constituting approximately 10% of the province's GDP. Township consumers are actively engaged in online information sharing, viewing digital channels as an extension of their daily routines, underscoring the necessity for marketers to establish a robust digital presence (GfK, 2017).

Social media assumes a pivotal role in shaping the consumer landscape, with consumers increasingly relying on these platforms for brand engagement, product information, and purchasing decisions (Sollo, Filieri, Rialti, and Yoon, 2020). The effective use of customer data, feedback, and social media strategies can significantly influence the buying behavior of Generation Y in South Africa (Duffett, 2015; Brown, 2017). Recommendations by Ahmad et al. (2015) stress the importance of effective social media practices for brands aiming to build a reliable consumer base, encompassing an active online presence, collaboration, improved customer communication, staying abreast of internet trends, innovative marketing, and leveraging evolving technological online outlets.

2.4.6. Projected Online Shopping Trends

As projected by Wadolowska (2017), the number of online shoppers in South Africa is expected to reach approximately 24.79 million by 2021. The prevailing internet penetration rate of 51.9 per cent in the country is anticipated to ascend to 59.5 per cent (Wadolowska, 2017).

Examining the online shopping preferences, it is observed that 60 per cent of users prefer desktops, whereas 55 per cent and 38 per cent opt for mobile or tablet platforms, signifying a varied landscape of online shopping preferences (Wadolowska, 2017).

2.4.7. Challenges of the studied industry in South Africa

Independent township apparel retailers in Gauteng are confronted with formidable competition emanating from large retailers making inroads into the township market, particularly within malls and convenience centres (Kenosi, 2020). These retailers grapple with notable challenges in the realm of marketing, often overshadowing their financial concerns (Makhitha, 2016).

The South African fashion industry poses formidable barriers to entry, encompassing both financial constraints and societal intricacies that independent retailers must adeptly navigate (Mdoda, 2018).

The landscape marked by the proliferation of malls and the presence of established national retail chains exerts substantial competitive pressure on independent retailers, impeding their capacity to adapt to the dynamic milieu within South Africa's townships (Mathe, 2019).

2.5. The use of social media and marketing analytics in the apparel retail industry

2.5.1. The role of social media in fashion

According to McKinsey and Company (2021) the trends were already gaining momentum pre-pandemic; however, the crisis catalysed a shift in digital shopping behaviors, enabling consumers to champion communities (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

Reflecting on luxury fashion online store adoption, Mu, Lennon and Liu (2020) note online sales growth that has consistently outpaced offline sales growth, leading to heightened expectations for service growth in both digital and in-store channels (Mu et al., 2020).

Social media's role, as asserted by Harris (2017, 77), is to aid fashion firms in understanding their customers' choices, preferences, and sources of inspiration. By

using crowdsourcing to gather data and encouraging comments for direct customer involvement, social media helps in establishing a reputation and profile to attract customers, admirers, and supporters, playing a pivotal role in virally spreading brand news to a wide audience (Harris, 2017, p. 77). Despite social media being deemed crucial in contemporary business by Felix, Rauschnabel, and Hinsch (2017), the literature on social media marketing remains limited, often focusing on isolated topics such as strategies for efficient communication.

In their study, Kawaf and Istanbuluoglu (2019) reveal that there are sixty million active company pages on Facebook, with two billion monthly active users. Over two and a half million businesses utilise Facebook advertising, and 75% of brands pay to promote postings (Kawaf and Istanbuluoglu, 2019). Hsiao, Wang, Wang and Kao's (2020) research indicates that well-known national brands positively influence the appeal of private labels in the fashion sector, subsequently impacting sales of private label goods. This research aids in understanding the impact of business-to-business (B2B) social media marketing on brand competition in the fashion sector.

Work by Casaló, Flavián, and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2020) state that Instagram is the most popular site in the fashion sector, with this trend expected to continue. Instagram data suggests that a user's creativity and distinctiveness are essential qualities for an opinion leader, and opinion leadership significantly affects customer attitudes and intentions (intention to follow fashion advice posted) toward the influencer and the fashion industry (Casaló et al., 2020).

Research by Zollo, Filieri, Rialti, and Yoon (2020) note that consumers primarily use social media to create brand communities, obtain information on brands, and inform their purchasing decisions.

To enhance Millennials' overall brand experience and evaluate brand equity in social media contexts, luxury brand managers can develop social media marketing tactics (Zollo et al., 2020). Arrigo, Liberati, and Mariani (2021) report 2.45 billion monthly active users on Facebook (FB) in September 2019, indicating an 8% annual increase. With a penetration rate of 78.4% of the Italian population, internet usage in Italy is still growing, where Italians with Facebook accounts make up about 56% of the population.

Furthermore, Arrigo et al. (2021) contend that social media serves as a channel for consumers to engage with brands for various purposes, including promotions, customer service, entertainment, and brand engagement. Consequently, businesses view social media as an effective marketing tool that influences marketing practices and strategies. Arrigo et al. assert that the introduction of social media has altered the marketing communication media landscape, sometimes replaced traditional channels and occasionally complemented them (Arrigo, Liberati and Mariani, 2021).

2.5.2. Marketing Analytics in Fashion

Marketing analytics plays a pivotal role in comprehending consumer behaviour and enhancing decision-making processes (Pantano, Giglio, and Dennis, 2018). Within the realm of the fashion sector, Google Trends (GT) stands out as a valuable platform for consumer analytics. The data analytics capabilities of GT offer profound insights into the patterns of fashion demand, thereby providing a foundation for further exploration in this domain (Silva, Hassani, Madsen, and Gee, 2019). The transformative impact of big data analytics on business models is particularly evident in the fashion retail industry.

The utilisation of big data has the potential to optimise various facets of fashion enterprises, ranging from trend prediction and waste reduction, to enhancing customer experience, refining marketing strategies, and bolstering quality control measures (Silva et al., 2020).

2.5.3. Social Media Capabilities (SMC)

Social media assumes a pivotal role for businesses in connecting with their designated audience and forging brand communities. The social media landscape in South Africa encompasses various platforms, including WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, WeChat, and Snapchat (Goldstuck and Silumbwe, 2020). Utilising brand pages on these social media sites, businesses aim to amplify customer engagement, augment brand visibility, and cultivate customer loyalty (Fang, Li, and Bhatti, 2020).

2.5.4. Marketing Analytics Capabilities (MAC)

As outlined by Wedel and Kannan (2016), marketing analytics entails the collection and synthesis of information to gain profound insights into marketing performance. The increasing adoption of marketing analytics by businesses aims to optimise marketing strategies and enhance decision-making processes (Dar et al., 2021). Big data analytics play a crucial role in fortifying marketing operations, providing businesses with a competitive edge (Silva et al., 2020). The realm of marketing analytics contributes to improved and innovative customer engagement (Nagaraj, 2020). It encompasses customer insight, utilising feedback to tailor offerings that enhance overall customer satisfaction (Roya Rahimi and Metin Kosak, 2017). The utilisation of marketing data and analytics facilitates customer segmentation, acquisition, and retention by fostering engagement and delivering offerings that elevate customer relationships and satisfaction (Rather and Sharma, 2016). Marketing analytics serves to enhance customer equity, potentially leading to a significant competitive advantage (Ransbotham and Kiron, 2018).

2.5.5. Marketing-decisions-making Capabilities (MDMC)

MDM exerts influence over diverse facets of a business, encompassing product offerings, advertising, pricing, and distribution channels (van Bruggen and Wierenga, 2010). The implementation of MDM is imperative for shaping marketing strategies and optimising organisational decision criteria (Van Bruggen and Wierenga, 2010).

2.6. Sustained competitive advantage

As outlined by Işoraitè (2018), achieving a sustained competitive advantage entails establishing a considerable lead over competitors through strategic actions that effectively allocate costs and operational strategies. The efficacy of this approach is attributed to the organisation's selected positioning strategy, grounded in DC theory.

2.7. Theoretical Groundings

2.7.1. TOE framework

The TOE framework introduced by Tornatsky and Fleischer (1990), serves as a paradigm for studying organisational-level aspects. It focuses on corporate executives,

research and development managers, and policymakers. The TOE framework introduces several pivotal concepts:

- *Technological Context*: This denotes the utilisation of state-of-the-art technology.
- *Organisational Context*: This pertains to internal issues within a company, encompassing aspects like management, employees, products, and services.
- *Environmental Context*: The effects of three critical factors within the competitive landscape and partnerships significantly influence an organisation's adoption of new technology.

As outlined by Tornatsky (1990), the framework comprehensively examines the process of technological innovation, its causation, and the subsequent impact on industry structure, training, and job design. Several scholars, such as Jere and Ngidi (2021), Piaralal, Nair, Yahya, and Karim (2015), and Depietro, Wiarda, and Fleischer (1990), have contributed to this understanding.

2.7.2. DC Theory

Zollo and Winter (2002) describe DC to involve the consistent adaptation and alteration of operational procedures within an organisation to enhance its efficiency. It encompasses a learned and reliable pattern of group behaviour.

The RBV theory and DC theory are complementary and antagonistic theories, as proposed by Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997). According to these theories, a competitive advantage can be attained by efficiently utilising resources and capabilities in response to quickly changing surroundings. Leveraging DC theory, research undertaken by Tejumade and Adeniran (2012) and Atanassova and Clark (2015) has sought to delve into how these dynamic capabilities influence SMEs in their pursuit to establish a competitive advantage within a rapidly evolving business landscape.

Based on Dao, Truong Quang Minh, Hai, and Thi's (2021) assessment of how the global value chain has influenced the development of dynamic skills in the Vietnamese garment industry, their research aims to comprehend the strategic decisions of Vietnamese apparel exporters through the lens of dynamic capabilities to enhance competitiveness. This study reveals two forms of dynamic competence development

and identifies various GVC-dependent, and home-country institutional restrictions derived from a qualitative analysis of six cases.

A discussion of the findings follows, providing insights into the convoluted logic of dynamic capability development, policy implications, and possible directions for future investigation. Within the purview of this study, which endeavours to consolidate TOE and DC, distinct dimensions of interest are delineated:

- *Technological Capabilities*: Focusing on utilising social media, encompassing capabilities related to interactivity, visibility, engagement, and customer feedback.
- *Organisational Capabilities*: Adopting marketing analytics, including management perception, support, data availability, data quality, and data utilisation culture.
- *Environmental Capabilities*: Exploring the impact of competitive pressures and external support in social media.

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter conducted a thorough examination of the literature pertaining to the apparel retail industry, encompassing global, regional, and local perspectives. The review rigorously analysed established research methodologies and systematically applied various factors to each theory, grounding this study in existing research. Each variable within the conceptual model is elucidated with detailed explanations. The chapter introduced and discusses five key propositions, namely Technological Capabilities in Social Media (TCSM), Organisational Capabilities (OC) concerning the adoption of marketing analytics, Environmental Capabilities (EC), Marketing Analytics Capabilities (MAC), and Marketing Decision-Making Capabilities (MDMC). The literature review integrated these theories, namely the Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) theory and Dynamic Capability (DC) theory, within the context of capabilities and development within the garment sector.

3. Chapter 3: THEORIES AND MODELS IN THE AREA OF STUDY

3.1.Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive assessment of the relevant theoretical and empirical literature that forms the theoretical framework for the study. Primary focus is placed on the historical evolution of two pivotal theories, namely the technology organisation environment (TOE) theory and the dynamic capability (DC) theory, which serve as the foundational underpinnings for this research. The examination delves into the historical development and progression of these theories, elucidating their core principles, constituent elements, overarching themes, and fundamental constructs. Additionally, the chapter critically evaluates the strengths and limitations of these theories, drawing from an analysis of previous research that has applied these theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, it highlights the rationale behind utilising these theories and their relevance to the context and objectives of the present study.

3.2.Theoretical Background

According to Creswell (2014), the use of theory is a crucial element in research design. Below is a summary of some of the main the theories utilised across different research methodologies.

3.2.1. Quantitative Research:

- *Role of theory:* In quantitative studies, theories are often used to frame the research questions and hypotheses. They provide a lens through which the relationships between variables are examined.
- *Placement of theory:* Theories are typically presented in the introduction or literature review sections. They guide the development of hypotheses and the selection of variables.
- *Forms of theory:* Theories in quantitative research can take various forms, such as models or frameworks that predict outcomes based on certain conditions.

3.2.2. Qualitative Research

Creswell (2007) introduces qualitative research as an approach that seeks to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.

This type of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.

2.2.2.1. Propositions in Qualitative Research

In the context of qualitative research, propositions are statements or assertions that guide the research. They are often used in the development of a conceptual framework or theoretical model. Here are some key points regarding propositions in qualitative research as discussed by Creswell (2007).

3.2.2.1.1. Role of Propositions

Propositions help to focus the research by specifying relationships between variables that the researcher expects to find. They are akin to hypotheses in quantitative research, but are typically more open-ended and exploratory.

3.2.2.1.2. Development of Propositions

Propositions are often derived from a review of the literature, preliminary observations, or theoretical frameworks. They reflect the researcher's expectations and guide the data collection and analysis process.

3.2.2.2. Use in Different Approaches

- *Grounded Theory*: Propositions in grounded theory emerge from the data as the researcher identifies patterns and relationships during the coding process. These propositions then form the basis for theory development.
- *Case Study*: In case study research, propositions help to narrow the focus of the study by specifying what is to be examined within the context of the case.
- *Phenomenology and Ethnography*: While these approaches may not always explicitly use propositions, they still involve the identification of themes and patterns that guide the understanding of the phenomenon or culture being studied.

2.2.2.1.4. Iterative Process

In qualitative research, the development of propositions is often an iterative process. Researchers may refine or revise their propositions as they gather more data and deepen their understanding of the research context.

2.2.2.1.5. Guiding Data Collection and Analysis

Propositions help to direct the researcher's attention to specific aspects of the data, making the analysis more focused and structured. They also provide a basis for comparing different cases or themes.

Creswell (2007) emphasises the importance of being flexible and open to new insights that may emerge during the research process. Qualitative research is inherently iterative and evolving, and propositions should be seen as tools to guide inquiry rather than fixed hypotheses to be tested.

3.2.3. Mixed Methods Research

- *Role of Theory:* In mixed methods research, theories can play a role in both the qualitative and quantitative components. They help integrate the two approaches and provide a comprehensive framework for the study.
- *Placement of Theory:* Theories are used throughout the research process, from the formulation of research questions to the interpretation of results. They help bridge the qualitative and quantitative findings.
- *Forms of Theory:* Theories in mixed methods research can be complex, combining elements from both qualitative and quantitative traditions to provide a holistic understanding of the research problem.

According to Creswell (2014) emphasis is placed on the choice and use of propositions depending on the research approach and the specific context of the qualitative study. Propositions help researchers make sense of their data, guide their analysis, and contribute to the broader body of knowledge in their field.

This study employs propositions grounded in three fundamental theories: the cognitive-affect-behaviour (CAB) model, the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory, and the diffusion of innovation (DOI) theory.

These theoretical frameworks are pivotal in achieving the study's overarching objective, which is to elucidate how retailers influence consumer behaviours and attitudes.

The key dimensions under examination include innovativeness, engagement, advocacy, overall experience, satisfaction, and retention. Collectively, these theories form the conceptual foundation for the empirical investigation conducted in this study (Creswell, 2007).

3.3. Technology Organisation Environment (TOE) framework

The TOE theory, first developed by Tornatsky and Fleischer in 1990, serves as a foundational framework in this study. It operates at the organisational level, concentrating on issues relevant to corporate executives, research and development managers, and policymakers (Tornatsky and Fleischer, 1990). A key aspect clarified by the TOE framework is the intricate interplay among three principal contexts: organisational, technological, and environmental. These contexts play a pivotal role in influencing the adoption, implementation, and utilisation of innovation, as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

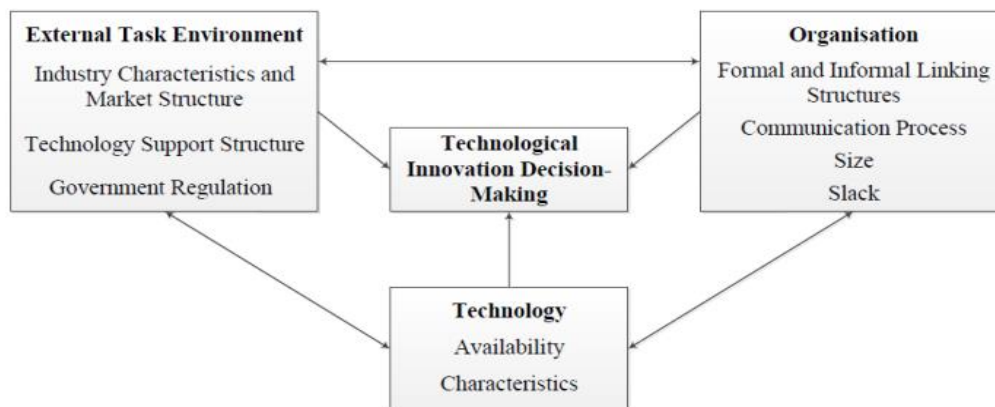


Figure 2.1: Tornatsky and Fleischer (1990) TOE Framework

The TOE framework encompasses several fundamental concepts, as delineated by Tornatsky and Fleischer (1990) as follows:

- *Technological Context*: pertaining to the utilisation of technology, representing one of the three primary factors that significantly shape an organisation's adoption of innovative technology.
- *Organisational Context*: encompassing internal company considerations, including management, employees, products, services, and structural attributes. These elements exert substantial influence on the innovation adoption process.
- *Environmental Context*: encompassing the broader external ecosystem, including competitors and business partners. It significantly influences how an organisation approaches innovation.

The TOE framework provides a comprehensive examination of the technological innovation process, offering insights into the mechanisms and reasons behind innovation occurrences. Furthermore, it illuminates the multifaceted impact of innovation on various aspects, including industry structure, training methodologies, and job design (Jere and Ngidi, 2021; Tornatsky, 1990; Piaralal et al., 2015; Zhang and Xiao, 2017: 7-8).

3.3.1. The Technological Context

The technological context relevant to a company is a crucial element within the corporate landscape, encompassing all technologies pertinent to the organisation. This context includes existing technologies, even those not yet adopted in the market. The adoption of technologies is crucial, aligning with the organisation's broader technological development framework as influenced by various established constraints (Collins et al., 1988).

Untapped technological advancements play a distinct role in influencing innovation, delineating the boundaries of achievable outcomes, and revealing avenues for enhancing flexibility and adaptability through technological integration.

The term "radical" innovations, as proposed by Ettlie et al. (1984), encompasses three distinct categories that trigger disruptive, non-linear transformations, significantly diverging from existing technologies or procedures.

These innovations typically extend beyond the corporate domain. For example, the 1980s witnessed the widespread adoption of personal computers, replacing mainframe computers across numerous industries. Similarly, the early 2000s marked the inception of the transition to cloud computing, constituting a shift that extended to the supermarket sector, with the widespread adoption of barcode scanning.

The process of technology adoption unfolds over a dynamic temporal dimension, where industries characterised by incremental technological advancements allow for a gradual, cumulative adoption trajectory (Tushman and Anderson, 1986). Conversely, in sectors where technological advancements bring abrupt and profound changes, businesses must act decisively to integrate novel technologies to sustain and enhance their competitive standing.

When evaluating disruptive technologies, businesses must discern whether a tech-application is "competence-enhancing" or "competence-destroying" (Tushman and Anderson, 1986). Breakthroughs in expertise render existing technologies and specialised knowledge obsolete, while innovations in expertise empower organisations to evolve upon their expert knowledge.

Major industry upheavals are often the consequence of these disruptive, competence-eroding innovations. For instance, the advent of cloud computing could disrupt existing competencies. Companies' adept at managing their information systems may find that this skill is now optional, and a source of competitive distinction. Conversely, deploying radio frequency identification (RFID) technology enhances competency. Enterprises proficient in resource and asset tracking traditionally relied on bar-coding technology can leverage this expertise (Sriram et al., 2021). The same databases that record item data via RFID tags and digital RFID scanners offer new operational efficiencies by obviating manual barcode scanning (Sriram et al., 2021).

Consequently, businesses must meticulously assess the ramifications of adopting an innovation. Some innovations profoundly impact the company and its respective industry, while others have significantly less influence.

3.3.2. The Organisational Context

The organisational context encompasses various aspects and assets within a firm, such as personnel connections, internal communication channels, scale of operations, and surplus resources. These factors wield significant influence over decision-making processes, with strategies fostering creativity through linkages across internal organisational units or beyond internal boundaries (Blader, Patil and Packer, 2017). Innovations' adoption correlates positively with informal linking agents like product champions, boundary spanners, and gatekeepers. Cross-functional teams and employees with formal or informal affiliations to other departments or partners in the value chain exemplify such mechanisms.

Researchers have explored the relationship between organisational structure and innovation adoption, noting a positive correlation with elevated adoption rates in naturally built, localised structures (Vagnani, Gatti, and Proietti, 2019). In these configurations, teams take precedence, employee roles exhibit flexibility, and lateral communication is encouraged. Mechanistic structures with formal reporting relationships, centralised decision-making, and well-defined roles are better suited for the implementation phase, while organic and decentralised systems are considered more appropriate for the adoption phase (Zaltman et al., 1973).

Cultural norms and communication procedures within an organisation play a pivotal role in fostering or stifling creativity. Senior management can encourage creativity by creating an environment embracing change in line with the company's mission and vision (Tushman and Nadler, 1986). Leadership style and communication practices indicate the organisation's stance on innovation. An innovation-oriented organisation highlights progress history conveys the value of creativity, rewards inventive efforts, and nurtures an executive team equipped with skills to articulate a compelling future vision. Slack and size are prominent elements influencing innovation within the organisational context.

Slack resources are associated with a propensity for adoption in research, yet innovation can occur without them, and their mere presence does not guarantee innovation (Tornatsky et al., 1983). While beneficial, slack is not a prerequisite nor a sufficient condition for innovation to emerge (Tornatsky and Fleischer, 1990).

Size, subject to extensive inquiry, does not conclusively link directly to innovation. Larger organisations tend to adopt innovations more, but scholars advocate for more precise measurements of organisational factors instead of using size as a substitute. The case of the Harley-Davidson Motor Company exemplifies a deliberate cultivation of an organisational context conducive to innovation adoption, highlighting the importance of interconnected functional teams and a preference for self-managed teams over hierarchical structures (Austin et al., 2003).

3.3.3. The Environmental Factors

The environmental context comprises factors such as the regulatory environment, industry composition, and the presence or absence of technological service providers. Intense competition is linked to a greater inclination to adopt innovation (Mansfield, 1968; Mansfield et al., 1977). Prominent actors within the value chain can actively stimulate innovation among other participants (Kamath and Liker, 1994).

In terms of the industrial life cycle, sectors experiencing robust economic growth tend to exhibit faster rates of innovation. However, innovation strategies can be straightforward in mature or declining industries (Tornatsky and Fleischer, 1990). Some enterprises perceive industry downturns as opportunities for transformative endeavours, such as efficiency enhancement projects or diversification into new business segments. Other businesses may, conversely, curtail their investments in innovation to reduce costs. Empirical research is essential to substantiate claims regarding the interplay between the industrial life cycle and the adoption of innovation.

The financial burden associated with innovation can be substantial, particularly in industries like construction, where novel materials require rigorous testing before implementation, or in agriculture, where new crop varieties require approval and trademarking. A similar situation arises in the banking sector, where privacy laws might impede banks from introducing innovative methods for customers to access their account information. Consequently, governmental regulations hold the potential to either foster or hinder innovation.

The interplay of environmental, organisational, and technological factors presents opportunities and constraints for technological innovation (Tornatsky and Fleischer, 1990). These factors collectively influence the organisation's level of technological innovativeness, as depicted in Figure 2.1.

3.3.4. Issues impacting development

The technology organisation environment (TOE) framework, originally referred to as a general theory by Shi and Kraemer (2005), has maintained its adaptability over time, accommodating various aspects without necessitating significant modifications. This flexibility arises from the diverse variables and metrics it incorporates for each study context, allowing it to coexist with alternative theories of innovation adoption.

Notably, it aligns well with the diffusion of innovations hypothesis (DOI) by Rogers (1995), seamlessly integrating competing theories. Empirical research, like the study conducted by Awa, Ukoha, and Igwe (2016), supports the substantial influence of TOE factors on adoption, emphasising their statistically significant direct association.

This study, integrating TOE and Dynamic Capabilities (DC), focuses on technological, organisational and environmental capabilities in the context of social media and marketing analytics. Examining the TOE framework in the adoption of ERP software by SMEs in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, provides valuable insights. Independent retailers can leverage this model for investment decisions and targeted marketing campaigns. Moreover, the TOE framework has been applied in research on SMEs' adoption of social media, emphasising its relevance (Awa et al., 2016).

Several factors influencing e-business adoption have been explored, including firm size, perceived security risks, compatibility, benefits, formalisation level, and senior management support. Compatibility, company size, technology competence, critical mass, relative advantage, and observability impact mobile service acceptance and social media adoption. Factors influencing social media usage in public institutions include top management support, while determinants for social media marketing encompass relative advantage, structural assurance, entrepreneurial orientation, and institutional pressures (Awa, Ojiabo and Emecheta, 2015).

Various studies indicate that engaging with social media significantly influences factors such as complexity, managerial support, bandwagon pressure, and competitive pressure. Concerns about assimilating TOE theory and information and communication technologies (ICT) are expressed by managers. Finally, factors such as customer pressure, owners' attitudes toward IT, age, owners' IT knowledge, management support, relative advantage, and external pressure are identified as critical determinants in adopting big data (Nguyen and Petersen, 2017).

3.4. Dynamic Capability Theory

Dynamic capability (DC), as defined by Sollo and Winter (2002), represents a structured pattern of collective organisational actions aimed at consistently creating and modifying operational procedures to enhance overall effectiveness (Zollo and Winter, 2002). Teece, Pisano and Zhuen (1997) further elaborate on DC theory, positioning it as an extension of and response to the challenges posed by rapidly changing environments within the resource-based view (RBV).

3.4.1. Dynamic Capabilities as a Source of Competitive Advantage

The theoretical construct of DC is recognised as a potential source of competitive advantage (Teece, Pisano, and Zhuen, 1997). This theoretical framework finds practical application in studies conducted by scholars such as Tejumade and Adeniran (2012) and Atanassova and Clark (2015), exploring how SMEs can leverage their resources amid swiftly transforming environments.

3.4.2. Impact of Global Value Chain Development on Dynamic Capabilities in the Vietnamese Apparel Export Sector

Dao, Truong Quang Minh, Hai and Thi (2021) explore the impact of global value chain development on dynamic capabilities within the Vietnamese apparel export sector, identifying two distinct forms of dynamic capability development and various institutional constraints related to global value chains (GVCs) and home countries through qualitative analysis of six case examples, offering a hybrid model of dynamic capability development.

3.4.3. Dynamic Capabilities and Sustainability Standards in South Africa's Tourism Sector

Surmeier (2020) focuses on dynamic capabilities within the context of global value chain (GVC) research on South Africa's "Fair Trade in Tourism" standard. Departing from previous studies, this methodological research considers how sustainability standards can facilitate capacity development and social enhancement at the organisational level within the tourism labour domain.

3.4.4. Initial Conceptualisation and Definition of Dynamic Capabilities

The initial conceptualisation of DC by Teece (1997) emphasised an organisation's ability to integrate, cultivate, and reconfigure both internal and external capabilities to navigate a perpetually changing landscape. Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) provided a comprehensive definition encapsulating a set of distinct and identifiable processes, such as product development, strategic decision-making, and alliance formation.

3.4.5. Entrepreneurial Perspective on Dynamic Capabilities

From an entrepreneurial perspective, Sahra et al. (2006) characterised DC as the capacity to adapt an organisation's resources and methodologies in accordance with the vision and judgments of its key decision-makers. Managerial competencies in designing and refining business models play a pivotal role in a company's DC in seizing new opportunities (Teece, 2007a, 2007b).

3.4.6. Challenges and Uniqueness of Dynamic Capabilities

DCs are inherently challenging to replicate, rooted in the distinct attributes of entrepreneurial managers and the established routines and culture of the organisation (Teece, 2014a). Complex systems, such as robust DC, serve as valuable general-purpose resources, establishing a solid foundation for long-term competitive advantage (CA). It is noteworthy that the more deeply ingrained a capability is within the organisation, the less it is confined to the top management team.

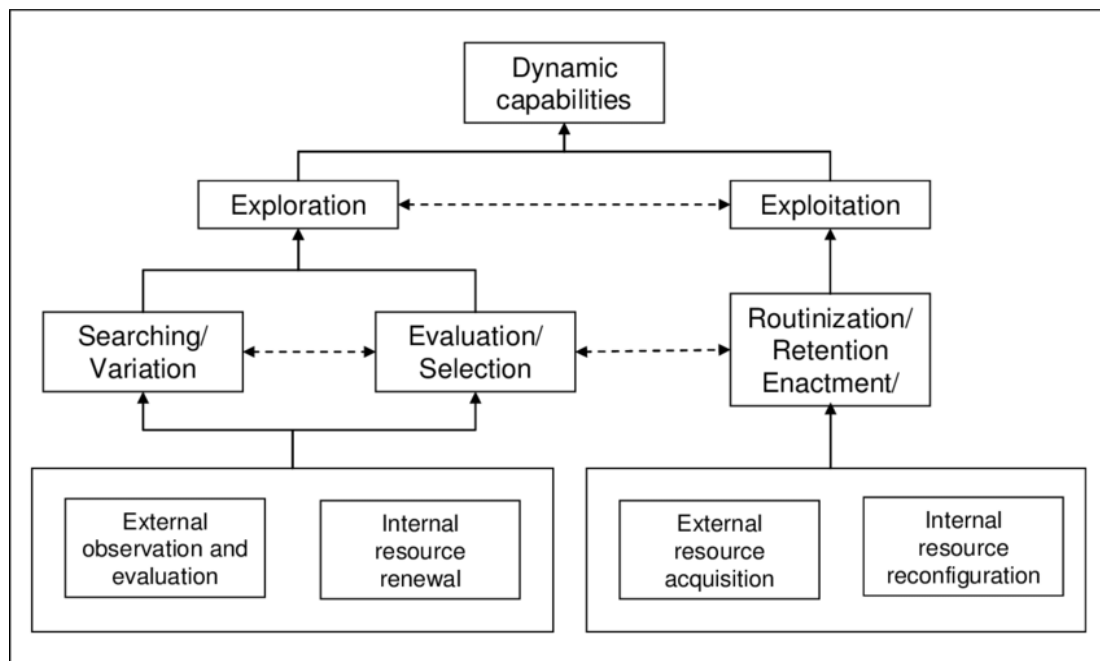


Figure 2.2 - A dynamic capability framework (Madsen 2010)

3.4.7. Dimensions and Categories of Dynamic Capabilities

Madsen (2010) proposed a comprehensive perspective on developing dynamic capabilities, emphasising two primary dimensions. The first dimension relates to balancing current and future activities, while the second involves pursuing novel opportunities and optimising existing resources. These dimensions define four primary categories of dynamic capabilities, highlighting their multifaceted nature.

3.4.8. Adapting Dynamic Capabilities to Organisational Contexts and Environmental Changes

Different forms of dynamic capabilities come into play depending on specific organisational circumstances. Some may be crucial under conditions of significant environmental change, emphasising the capacity for generating innovative ideas derived from external observation and evaluation. Understanding and managing dynamic capabilities require recognising the organisational and administrative processes, procedures, systems, and structures underpinning each type of capability (Teece, 2007). This perspective applies to both general dynamic capabilities and dynamic sustainability capabilities (Mousavi et al., 2019; Strauss et al., 2017).

3.4.9. Sustainability Dynamics in Family Businesses: Balancing Economic, Social, and Emotional Goals

Entrepreneurs in family businesses often demonstrate strong sustainability dynamic qualities, prioritising material wealth and non-material values and accomplishments. Family businesses emphasise economic performance, family satisfaction, and the preservation of socio-emotional wealth, which goes beyond mere profit maximisation. They contribute significantly to the economy, upholding societal values and sometimes engaging in social entrepreneurship (Filser et al., 2019; Kraus et al., 2018; Zellweger et al., 2013).

3.4.10. Research Gaps and Contributions in Dynamic Capabilities within Family Businesses

Despite the recognised importance of dynamic capabilities, especially in family businesses, limited research exists in this domain. The literature has contributed significantly to understanding and advancing dynamic capabilities, portraying these as pivotal tools for maintaining competitive advantage. Research has explored applications across diverse industries, providing evidence of successful implementations through case studies (Gomes-Mejia et al., 2007, 2011). Family businesses are inclined to uphold societal values such as social responsibility, fairness, respect, trust, and honesty, and some may even engage in social entrepreneurship (Adro et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2020; Hota et al., 2020; Saebi et al., 2019). Family businesses significantly contribute to the economy, constituting a substantial portion of commercial entities, GDP, and private jobs in several European countries (EFB European Family Businesses, 2012).

The limited research on dynamic capabilities within family businesses, as highlighted by the references provided (Barros et al., 2016; Camison-sornosa et al., 2020; Chirico and Nordqvist, 2010; Chirico and Salvato, 2008; Chirico et al., 2012; Daspit et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2013; Wang, 2016), underscores the need for further exploration in this area. While there has been significant progress in understanding and advancing the concept of dynamic capabilities, particularly in relation to maintaining competitive advantage, the specific context of family businesses remains relatively underexplored.

It directs organisations in establishing dynamic capabilities within dynamic contexts, explores their applications across diverse industries, and presents evidence of successful implementations through case studies. Empirical and conceptual contributions that denote, create, exhibit, analyse, and elucidate dynamic capabilities in various contexts provide invaluable insight.

3.4.11. Expanding Knowledge on Dynamic Capabilities: Insights from High-Tech and Strategic Management Research

Extant research has considered into high-tech industries, strategic management, knowledge management, and organisational learning (Zollo and Winter, 2002; Marsh and Stock, 2006; Ho and Tsai, 2006; Helfat and Peteraf, 2003). The study augments the body of knowledge established by influential works, such as those of Teece et al. (1997), Eisenhardt and Martin (2000), Helfat and Peteraf (2003), and Zhou and Li (2009).

Organisations ought to consistently cultivate, integrate, and reconfigure their capabilities and resources to adapt to their environment and sustain a competitive advantage (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). Dynamic capabilities stand out as a prominent research area in management, given their significance, historical context, and evolution (Di Stefano, Peteraf, and Verona, 2010; Di Stefano, Peteraf, and Verona, 2014; Easterby-Smith, Lyles, and Peteraf, 2009). The exploration of dynamic capabilities often revolves around how organisations construct and reshape their resource base so as to better align with their environment.

A distinctive aspect of the dynamic capability's perspective is that adaptation frequently relies on organisational routines—repeatable patterns of behaviour intertwined with interdependent organisational activities (Di Stefano et al., 2014; Helfat and Peteraf, 2003; Pierce, Boerner, and Teece, 2002; Winter, 2003).

Although the hierarchy of dynamic capabilities has gained broad acceptance (e.g., Ambrosini, Bowman, and Collier, 2009; Easterby-Smith et al., 2009; Easterby-Smith and Prieto, 2008; Robertson, Casali, and Jacobson, 2012), there is still a shortage of empirical research delving into the role of second-order dynamic capabilities alongside first-order dynamic capabilities (Peteraf et al., 2013).

Dynamic capabilities have garnered significant attention in knowledge and innovation research since the pioneering works of Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) and Teece et al. (1997). However, scholars such as Arend and Bromiley (2009) note that the literature remains fragmented.

3.4.12. Fragmentation in Theoretical Frameworks and Conceptualisations of Dynamic Capabilities

Multiple dialogues on dynamic capabilities emerge can be complementary but are not always rooted in the same theoretical framework. Various definitions and conceptualisations of dynamic capabilities exemplify this fragmentation (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009). By categorising these conceptualisations based on desirable outcomes, such as achieving competitive advantage or effectively adapting to environmental changes, it is possible to classify and organise them into meaningful categories (CA). Recent meta-analyses present contradictory empirical evidence regarding the correlation between dynamic capabilities and competitive advantage (Peseshkan, Fainshmidt, Nair, Lance Frasier, and Markowski, 2015).

Initially, Teece et al. (1997) aimed to explore how organisations could maintain a competitive advantage in highly dynamic environments, with dynamic capabilities seen as a driver of long-term achievements. However, contemporary research only partially corroborates this. The broader literature distinguishes conceptual frameworks more aligned with this perspective from those that diverge. Wang and Ahmed (2007) take an approach akin to that of Teece et al. (1997), which falls within the former category.

Dynamic capabilities, as outlined by Wang and Ahmed (2007) and Teece et al. (1997), encapsulate an organisation's continuous drive to blend, reconfigure, refresh, and regenerate its abilities and assets. These capabilities foster the development of specialised skills, such as creativity and innovation that enhance the organisation's ability to perform successfully, and adapt and reconfigure its competencies in response to changing environments, all aimed at achieving and sustaining competitive advantage.

Researchers (Nambisan et al., 2017) identify digital technologies as methods, procedures, and standards facilitating the effective integration of digitalisation into real-world processes.

A defining feature of digitalisation is the increased collaboration among businesses and sectors due to digital technology (Chen, Chiang, and Storey, 2012). Digitalisation has ushered in two qualitative shifts, namely: representation and networking.

3.5. Literature review of major themes

The literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the key themes that are central to the two theoretical foundations of this study: TOE (Technology-Organisation-Environment) theory and DC (Dynamic Capabilities) theory. The research investigates and analyses five interconnected themes closely aligned with these theoretical frameworks.

The selected themes are associated with the core theories of the study and encompass various aspects related to social media capabilities, marketing analytics usage, marketing decision-making, sustained competitive advantage in social media, and organisational capabilities relevant to adopting marketing analytics. Additionally, the study explores environmental capabilities, marketing analytics capabilities, and marketing decision-making capabilities.

3.5.1. Social Media Capabilities

Overall, social media capabilities provide a foundation for understanding the role of social media in the context of electronic communication, marketing strategies, and its prevalence in South Africa. An emphasis on customer engagement and the impact of external factors underscores the dynamic nature of social media in the business landscape.

- a) *Definition of social media:* social media is defined as a platform for the electronic exchange of personal information, documents, music, videos, and photos. This exchange is facilitated through web-based software or applications (Dollarhide, 2021).
- b) *Social Media Marketing:* Social media marketing involves using social media platforms to engage online audiences, build brand identity, boost sales, and drive web traffic (Sharma and Verma, 2018). Strategies for social media marketing include creating and sharing high-quality content, engaging with followers, analysing performance, and running advertisements (Sharma and Verma, 2018).

- c) *Social Media Usage in South Africa*: South Africa is noted for substantial social media usage, with a significant portion of the population actively participating in platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, WeChat, and Snapchat (Goldstuck and Silumbwe, 2020).
- d) *Business Utilisation of social media*: Businesses frequently employ brand pages on social networking sites, including Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. These platforms are used to enhance customer communication, brand positioning, interactivity, visibility, and the cultivation of customer-brand relationships (Goldstuck and Silumbwe, 2020).
- e) *Influencing Factors on Social Media Usage*: Customer engagement, competitive pressures, and external support are identified as factors influencing social media usage (Fang, Li, and Bhatti, 2020).

3.5.2 Social Media Usage in Entrepreneurship

The practical value of social media for entrepreneurs, particularly young and student entrepreneurs, while highlighting the need for further exploration of the business factors influencing social media adoption, especially in specific contexts such as Malaysia. The identified factors affecting adoption provide insights into the dynamics of social media use in entrepreneurship.

- a) *Value for Entrepreneurs*: social media is deemed valuable for young entrepreneurs and startup owners due to its effectiveness and cost-efficiency. It serves as a platform for disseminating information about goods and services, engaging with competitors, and reaching potential customers (Van der Westhuisen and Goyayi, 2019; Wang, Liang, Mahto, Deng, and Zhang, 2020).
- b) *Role in Student Entrepreneurship*: social media has become a crucial tool for student entrepreneurs, allowing them to connect with clients and promote their products and services.
- c) *Limited Exploration in the Malaysian Context*: The text notes a gap in research regarding the business factors influencing social media as a business platform for student entrepreneurs, especially within the Malaysian context (Noorshella, Abdullah, Aswin, and Rajennd, 2019).

- d) *Factors Affecting Social Media Adoption:* Research suggests that performance anticipation significantly influences social media adoption among student entrepreneurs. Other factors include perceived trust, enjoyment, and danger. Social influence is identified as a positive moderator in the relationships between enabling conditions and social media adoption (Noorshella et al., 2019).

3.5.3 Environmental and Organisational Influences

The role of risk and trust in social media adoption suggests that governmental promotion of social media as a business tool can contribute to building trust. The adoption of social media is also recognised as crucial for SMEs in enhancing their competitiveness in the global market. Understanding the factors influencing the adoption of social media by MSMEs is highlighted as a key area of importance.

- a) *Risk and Trust as Key Factors:* The use of social media as a business platform is influenced by two principal factors: risk and trust. These factors play a crucial role in shaping the adoption and engagement of individuals and businesses on social media platforms (Noorshella et al., 2019).
- b) *Governmental Promotion for Trust:* Noorshella et al. (2019) suggest that governmental organisations can contribute to fostering trust within the system by promoting social media channels as business programmes. This promotion is seen to positively influence the adoption of social media by student entrepreneurs.
- c) *Role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs):* SMEs are highlighted as pivotal contributors to economic development. The adoption of social media channels is emphasised as a critical technological adaptation for enhancing competitiveness in the global market for SMEs (Handayani and ER, 2019).
- d) *Importance of Understanding Adoption Precursors:* Given the role of SMEs in economic development, understanding the precursors to their adoption of social media is deemed of utmost importance. This understanding can provide insights into the factors influencing the adoption of social media platforms by businesses, particularly in the context of MSMEs.

3.5.4 The Application of TOE Framework

TOE theory is acknowledged for its applicability in the IS field, providing insights into IT development dynamics, and serving as a valuable tool for understanding the factors influencing the adoption of ICT, including social media as a business platform.

The theory's versatility is demonstrated through its application in various studies by different scholars.

- a) *TOE Theory Overview:* TOE theory is recognised as a well-established framework for investigating the evolution of IT and identifying critical antecedents in IS.
- b) *Application in IT Development:* Scholars such as Awa, Ojiabo, Ukoha, Igwe (2017), Handayani and Mahendrawathi (2019), Malak (2016), Josephine LL Chong and Olesen (2017), and Sharfina Febbi Handayani and Mahendrawathi Er (2019) have explored the application of the TOE theory. This suggests that the TOE framework has been utilised by researchers to study various aspects of IT development.
- c) *Insights into IT Dynamics:* The TOE framework is praised for providing valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of IT development. It helps in understanding the relationships between IT and organisational as well as environmental factors.
- d) *Conceptualising Factors for IT Adoption:* The theoretical foundation of TOE facilitates a comprehensive conceptualisation of the factors that drive the adoption of information and communication technologies (ICT). This makes TOE a valuable tool for investigating the acceptance of social media as a business platform in different contexts.

3.5.5 Contextual Considerations for MSMEs

The section highlights the need for research that considers the unique challenges and contextual variations in developing countries, especially in the realm of MSMEs adopting SMMT. The adoption of the TOE framework contributes to a better understanding of the factors influencing SMMT adoption in these contexts.

- a) *Reliance on Western Research:* The decision-making processes of MSMEs in developing countries, especially regarding the adoption of SMMT, often depend

on research findings from Western contexts. This approach may not adequately address the unique cross-context variations in organisational structures and managerial capabilities in developing countries.

- b) *Challenges in Tailored Guidance:* The reliance on research from Western contexts creates a gap in tailored guidance for SMMT adoption in emerging countries. Tailored guidance is crucial for considering the specificities of successful SMMT adoption by MSMEs in diverse cultural and economic environments.
- c) *Need for Research in Emerging Economies:* Ese, Chinedu-Ese, and Awa (2021) emphasise the need for research in emerging economies, particularly focusing on MSMEs. They argue that research in these contexts is essential for developing integrated frameworks that consider the unique factors influencing SMMT adoption by MSMEs.
- d) *Application of TOE Framework:* Ese, Chinedu-Ese, and Awa (2021) contribute to the field by adopting the TOE framework to explore the factors affecting MSMEs' adoption of SMMT. The TOE framework is used to understand critical elements influencing SMMT adoption, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the adoption process.
- e) *Expanded TOE Framework:* The work by Ese, Chinedu-Ese, and Awa (2021) results in an expanded TOE framework that accommodates the specific factors influencing the adoption of SMMT by MSMEs. This expanded framework aims to cater to the diverse needs and challenges faced by MSMEs in emerging economies.

3.5.6 Examining NGOs Adoption of Social Media

In the examination of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and their adoption of social media, a study conducted by Abubakar et al. (2017) in northwest Nigeria is discussed.

There is limited empirical research on the utilisation of social media by women's NGOs, especially in regions such as northwest Nigeria.

Abubakar et al. (2017) conducted a study to identify the variables influencing the use of social media by women's NGOs. The study focuses on understanding the factors affecting the adoption of social media by NGOs in the specified region.

The study employed the TOE framework, ISB variables, and diffusion of innovation (DOI) theory to evaluate the factors influencing the adoption of social media by women's NGOs.

The research resulted in the creation of an integrated model featuring twelve variables. This model aims to comprehensively capture the various factors influencing the adoption of social media by women's NGOs.

The findings of the study suggest that environmental factors emerge as the most significant predictor of the adoption of social media by women's NGOs. This indicates that the external context plays a crucial role in influencing the adoption decisions of NGOs.

Organisational factors and information-sharing behaviour characteristics were identified to significantly influence the implementation of social media by women's NGOs. These internal aspects of organisations play a substantial role in shaping their approach to social media adoption.

Interestingly, the study found technology to be the least reliable predictor in the context of women's NGOs adopting social media. This suggests that technological factors may not be the primary drivers in their decision-making processes.

3.5.7 SMEs and Social Media Adoption in Sri Lanka

Limited research has been conducted on the utilisation of social media by small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in Sri Lanka, as highlighted by Al (2019). Nonetheless, the acknowledged importance of information and communication technologies in augmenting productivity and competitiveness within these organisations remains prominent. The impact of such technologies varies based on factors such as the organisation's size, geographical location, developmental stage, and specific technological preferences.

Al (2019) specifically considers the acceptance of social media by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Sri Lanka, examining the influencing factors within a TOE framework.

The research findings indicate that several elements, including relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, observability, competitive intensity, bandwagon pressure, and competitive pressure, significantly contribute to shaping the adoption of social media by SMEs in Sri Lanka. On the contrary, factors such as CEO innovation, top management support, and trialability do not exert a noteworthy influence on the integration of social media within these SMEs.

3.5.8 Role of Social Media in the Hospitality Industry

Contemporary literature within the hospitality sector notably emphasises the importance of Web 2.0 technologies, particularly social media. These technologies play a critical role in enhancing search engine functionality, managing customer data, and overall user experience (Aggeliki, Pateli, Adamantia, Mylonas, Naoum, and Spyrou, 2020). Recognising how these technologies can contribute to an enterprise's digital strategy is gaining increasing attention. In a study conducted by Aggeliki et al. (2020), seven factors influencing the adoption of social media by organisations are identified.

This research integrates the TOE framework with the DIT and categorises the influencing factors into organisational, environmental, and technological aspects. Technological factors are identified as significantly impacting organisational adoption of social media (Aggeliki et al., 2020).

3.5.8 Adoption of Social Media by Independent Clothing Merchants

Despite the demand for more exploration into the use of social media by SMBs in developing nations, this investigation specifically centres on the integration of social media by independent clothing merchants in townships. The foundation of this study rests on TOE theory, as a consistently applied construct in studying the adoption of new technologies across businesses and organisations.

This research delves into the nuanced factors linked with social media adoption, spanning diverse contexts and organisational types. It concentrates on the impact of the TOE framework, aiming to shed light on the intricate relationships among technology, organisation, and the environment in the realm of embracing social media by various entities. Ultimately, this contributes to a comprehensive understanding of this dynamic field.

3.5.9 TOE Marketing Analytics

According to the research conducted by Johnson, Musellec, Zihi, and Zahay (2019), managers perceive marketing big data analytics as powerful tools and capabilities that have the potential to guide the development of product innovations and marketing strategies, while safeguarding brands from significant risks.

The study also reveals that the utilisation of dynamic learning capabilities for advocating the deployment of big data analytics varies across different organisational levels, contingent upon the champion's position within the organisation.

Manohar's research (2020) highlighted an ongoing hesitation among businesses to employ data analytics for strategic decision-making. Surprisingly, there remains a dearth of studies addressing the utilisation of large-scale data analytics in the context of organisational decision-making despite its pivotal importance.

Consequently, a significant knowledge gap exists concerning the contextual factors that influence the utilisation of big data analytics in shaping strategic decisions post-adoption.

To address this gap, Manohar (2020) anchored the conceptual framework of the Technology Organisation Environment (TOE) paradigm in their research. This framework served as a foundation for investigating the environmental and organisational factors contributing to the reluctance to adopt data analytics for strategic decision-making following the integration of big data analytics. The study revealed that technological, environmental, and organisational factors substantially influence data-driven strategic decision-making and identified specific variables that either facilitate or hinder data-driven strategic decision-making.

The rapid emergence of big data has ushered in new avenues for enhancing organisational performance. However, healthcare organisations in less affluent nations are still in the nascent stages of adoption.

A study conducted among healthcare professionals in Malaysia took a comprehensive approach to understanding this adoption process. Grounded in a theoretical framework aligned with the TOE theory, the study aimed to assess the readiness of healthcare

institutions in developing countries to integrate big data into their core business processes.

This research highlighted the substantial effect of organisational, technological, and environmental factors on the pace of extensive data adoption within the healthcare sector. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the TOE theory has challenges, often stemming from the inherent complexities of technological advancements.

For technology professionals, this study provides an instructive example of how TOE-related issues can significantly impact the adoption of big data in healthcare organisations, emphasising the importance of considering a holistic perspective encompassing technological, organisational, and environmental factors in adopting big data, particularly in healthcare settings.

3.5.10 Marketing Analytics Capabilities

As per the definition by Wedel and Kannan (2016), marketing analytics encompasses the collection, management, and synthesis of data to gain insights into marketing performance, crucial for optimising ROMI (Wedel and Kannan, 2016). The landscape of knowledge and practices in digital marketing has evolved significantly in both consumer and industrial contexts over the past two decades. However, there remains a gap in understanding how organisations have organised and configured this knowledge and practice, a gap acknowledged by Herhausen, Mioevi, Morgan, and Kleijnen (2020).

In their study, Herhausen et al. (2020) identify four key themes determining the spectrum of current and future marketing capabilities demanded by industrial enterprises: channels, social media, digital partnerships, and digital technology.

Within this framework, two distinct capacity gaps are identified. The practice gap signifies the misalignment between managers' "actual" activities and their "ideal" digital marketing capabilities.

In contrast, the knowledge gap highlights a significant disconnect between industrial enterprises' adoption of digital marketing strategies and the scholarly research supporting these strategies (Ghaleb, Dominic, Fati, Muneer, and Ali, 2021). Building on these findings, Herhausen et al. (2020) proposes an agenda for further research on the potential of digital marketing.

While the role of marketing analytics in generating insights from big data to enhance marketing decision-making and competitiveness is crucial, there is a need for more academic investigation into this domain. Cao, Duan, and El Banna's (2019) study explores how firms leverage marketing analytics (MA), marketing decision-making (MDM), and product development management to develop sustainable competitive advantages (CA) through their capabilities in detecting, seizing, and reconfiguring.

It also examines the influence of marketing analytics on various marketing-related processes, revealing a positive impact on goods development management and marketing decision-making, while influencing sustained competitive advantage. Moreover, the limited availability of data hinders decision-making and related processes in marketing.

In their study, Buhalis and Volchek (2021) highlight the increasing complexity of marketing communications as technology integrates with company strategy, leading to a heightened demand for improved marketing performance analytics. Their 2021 study examines empirically derived categories of marketing attribution alongside theoretically defined facilitators and the potential of data-driven analytics, calling for a systematic reference book outlining and describing marketing attribution techniques.

Furthermore, Buhalis and Volchek's study (2021) emphasises modern attribution techniques by considering specific aspects of the customer journey, enhancing the accuracy of value attribution. It sheds light on the significance of integrating marketing analytics in fostering long-term competitive advantage.

In healthcare, Ho and Huang's study (2020) identifies the challenge of balancing patient value delivery with resource efficiency amidst rising healthcare expenditures and demand for high-quality healthcare. Hospitals are under pressure to strike this balance, requiring close cooperation between operations and marketing, as they are directly involved in generating patient value.

The study reveals that hospitals' ability to provide patient value heavily depends on intangible marketing assets, emphasising the crucial role of intangible marketing capabilities and operations in influencing US hospital performance (Ho and Huang, 2020).

3.5.11 Marketing Analytics usage

The implementation of marketing analytics, as highlighted by Nagaraj (2020), has resulted in increased and more active customer engagement, characterised by creativity. Marketing analytics integrates consumer insights, allowing businesses to leverage customer feedback and customise products for enhanced customer satisfaction (Roya Rahimi and Metin Kosak, 2017).

By fostering customer involvement and implementing solutions that enhance customer relationships and overall satisfaction, marketing data and analytics play a pivotal role in customer segmentation, acquisition, and retention (Rather and Sharma, 2016). Consequently, marketing analytics contributes to improving customer equity, ultimately providing a competitive advantage (Ransbotham and Kiron, 2018).

While certain factors like word-of-mouth, legal restrictions, environmental constraints, and media coverage may not receive widespread attention, they can significantly impact a company's brand image, as indicated by Tiwary, Kumar, Sarraf, Kumar, and Rana (2021).

In business-to-business (B2B) transactions, the adoption of social media (SM) is limited, primarily due to uncertainty about how different social networking sites can effectively promote brands. However, the potential for B2B marketers to gather valuable client information through social media is substantial. Tiwary et al. (2021) conducted a study examining social media usage in the B2B setting based on the analysis of 294 selected publications.

The research revealed that, compared to businesses operating in the business-to-consumer (B2C) domain, many B2B enterprises need to fully capitalise on the potential benefits of social media. Nevertheless, social media can help B2B marketers establish a global brand presence, extending their reach globally and assisting them in identifying potential clients and establishing connections with global supply chain service providers (Tiwary et al., 2021).

France and Ghose (2019) define marketing analytics as a multifaceted domain, merging insights from diverse disciplines such as operations research, marketing, expert systems, and statistics. Researchers in marketing analytics have a unique opportunity

to offer a comprehensive analysis of this domain, serving as the foundation for trans-disciplinary future endeavors within the realms of intelligent and expert systems. These endeavours encompass diverse aspects such as segmentation, visualisation, and class prediction, primarily focusing on the interconnections between various disciplines and advancements in handling modern, massive, and complex datasets (France and Ghose, 2019).

3.5.12 Marketing Analytics usage in TOE framework

A study conducted by Kakatkar and Spann (2019) on digitalisation in the retail sector highlights the increasing availability of event-based tracking data that elucidates customer behaviours. This data encompasses various aspects, from online clickstreams to offline sensors monitoring consumers.

The researchers emphasise the urgent need for more robust data privacy regulations, increased focus on consumer privacy and awareness, and anticipate that data may gradually become accessible to retailers only in a fragmented and anonymised form, without specific individual customer identification (Kakatkar and Spann, 2019).

Given the significant lack of research on customer analytics within the retail industry, Kakatkar and Spann (2019) utilise anonymised and fragmented event-based (AFE) tracking data, contributing to the current knowledge database in three distinct yet interconnected ways. Firstly, they delineate and emphasise the significance of AFE data compared to other forms of data at the aggregate and individual levels. Secondly, they demonstrate the feasibility of leveraging AFE data analysis techniques to extract variations and derive valuable variables from raw data.

Finally, Kakatkar and Spann (2019) propose that businesses can use this method of AFE data analysis to uncover intriguing customer behaviour patterns applicable across various online and offline retail scenarios.

The management and extraction of insights from social media data, as suggested by Mariani, Arrigo, and Liberati (2021), present distinct challenges that differentiate it from the analysis of traditional transactional data.

Social media platforms yield voluminous, diverse, and rapidly evolving data, intensifying the complexity of their analysis. The complexities of extracting valuable

knowledge from social media data underscore specific challenges, with statistical analysis and the synthesis of intricate information emerging as primary concerns in this context.

Based on Arrigo et al. (2021) focus user preferences on a social media platform, the aim is to assist companies in making informed decisions regarding their marketing communication strategies. The target audience for the research comprised Italian Facebook users interested in health and pharmaceutical products.

The findings revealed a robust correlation between user profiles and the choice of marketing communication channels.

According to Arrigo, Liberati, and Mariani (2021), the procedure involves a two-step approach to devising an effective marketing strategy, with the initial step involving identifying the target audience and selecting the most suitable marketing message channel.

3.5.13 Marketing-decisions-making

The research conducted by Halaj and Brodrechtova (2018) involves a qualitative examination of marketing decisions made by key stakeholders in the EU's forest biomass sector, specifically focusing on Austria, Finland, and Slovakia. The study emphasises that a combination of factors, including national and EU policies, logistical considerations, and technical constraints, primarily influences the marketing choices of industry participants. While variations in marketing decision-making processes are common across businesses, forest chip manufacturers exhibit notable disparities, particularly in the selection and execution phases of the marketing framework.

These differences encompass dimensions such as promotion, personnel, processes, and tangible evidence. The study highlights that heating plants, which execute slightly different marketing decisions, play a significant role in influencing the marketing strategies of forest companies and contractors. This interaction demonstrates how the principles of 7C and 7P intertwine with the resulting demand dynamics for forest chips (Halaj and Brodrechtova, 2018).

The integration of social media (SM) into marketing communications poses challenges for organisations and may impact their competitiveness, as indicated by Valos,

Maplestone, Polonsky, and Ewing (2017). In their comprehensive 2017 study, Valos et al. present a sequential decision-making framework tailored for marketers, designed to navigate uncertainties related to selecting and implementing social media platforms in marketing strategies. The study employs an experimental methodology to explore the complexities surrounding social media implementation (Valos et al., 2017).

In their article entitled *B2C Marketing Communication in Social Media: Fashion Industry Specifics*, Davidaviciene, Davidavicius, and Tamosiuniene (2019) illuminate the pivotal role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in contemporary marketing. Technological shifts have brought about changes in the behaviours of customers and businesses.

The authors use a case study from the fashion sector to scrutinise the distinct decisions made by businesses regarding marketing communication via social networks. Their research aims to uncover strategies for optimising these decision-making processes to enhance brand awareness, and foster greater consumer engagement.

Through their study, Davidaviciene et al. (2019) delineate the unique features of marketing communication, including the media platforms facilitating meaningful dialogue between organisations and their audiences, ultimately leading to enhanced sales performance and heightened engagement.

3.6 Sustained competitive advantage

In the context of corporate competitiveness, it is crucial to consider the multifaceted factors that contribute to a company's competitive advantage, as emphasised by Išoraitė (2018).

This competitive edge is the result of strategic initiatives undertaken by a company, often rooted in its positioning strategy and seamlessly integrated with DC theory. Companies meticulously craft these strategic measures to surpass competitors and establish a distinctive presence in the market.

The empirical exploration of specific TOE variables and their impact on recognising the strategic significance of private portals, particularly in the context of competitiveness, is of utmost importance (Fadellelmoul, 2020). This empirical inquiry

sheds light on the intricate interplay of these variables and their broader implications for corporate competitiveness.

A comprehensive study conducted in Malaysia aimed to scrutinise the challenges faced by SMEs in the face of social and technological barriers and the proactive measures taken to achieve enduring competitive advantages and enhanced commercial performance (Haseeb, Hussain, Kot, Androniceanu, and Jermisittiparsert, 2019). The research involved managerial personnel from Malaysian SMEs, seeking their insights into the social and technological impediments hindering the attainment of sustainable competitive advantages.

The outcome of this research highlighted the crucial role played by social media and technological factors in enhancing long-term competitive advantages and corporate performance.

The significance of strategic alignment comes to the foref, particularly in emphasising the favourable impacts of social and technological elements on long-term competitive advantage.

The conclusions drawn from this study provide practical insights for practitioners, enabling them to formulate strategies aligned with the imperatives of long-term competitive success and sustained financial prosperity (Haseeb et al., 2019).

3.6.1 Sustained competitive advantage - Dynamic Capabilities

When considering sustained competitive advantage and the concept of DC, there is a noticeable scarcity of research that explores the intricate interplay between big data, marketing analytics, and a business's marketing capabilities as drivers of competitive advantage. As highlighted by Cao, Tian, and Blankson (2021), this research gap signifies a crucial avenue for future investigations.

Likewise, the findings from the study by Haseeb et al. (2019) emphasise the essential role of social and technological factors in strengthening long-term competitive advantage and improving corporate performance. Their research illuminates the importance of strategic alignment in accentuating the positive impacts of social and technological elements on sustained competitive advantage. This insight holds significant practical value for industry practitioners, enabling them to devise strategies

that consider both long-term competitive advantage and financial success (Haseeb et al., 2019).

The understanding of methods used to enhance marketing capabilities through big data and marketing analytics has progressed, thanks to the work of Cao, Tian, and Blankson (2021). The outcomes elucidate how big data can enhance marketing analytics and how these insights can resonate across a company's marketing strategy, execution, brand management, customer relationship management (CRM), and product development management. Furthermore, it offers valuable recommendations for companies leveraging big data and marketing analytics to enhance their marketing capacities (Cao, Tian, and Blankson, 2021).

To identify the variables contributing to sustained competitive advantage, scholars have sought to elucidate them, as evidenced by the study conducted by Elsharnouby and Elbanna (2021). By providing empirical evidence on how human capital, dynamic marketing skills, and market dynamics impact competitive advantage in the hotel industry, Elsharnouby and Elbanna (2021) has made a noteworthy addition to the body of literature in marketing and hospitality management (Elsharnouby and Elbanna, 2021).

The findings underscore the paramount significance of human capital in establishing competitive advantage, both directly and indirectly, through potent marketing capabilities. Elsharnouby and Elbanna's research from 2021 posit that the market dynamics in the hotel industry utilise market sensing capabilities to establish the relationship between human capital and competitive advantage (Elsharnouby and Elbanna, 2021).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter assessed the relevant theoretical and empirical literature that serves as the underpinning for the study's theoretical framework. The chapter primarily centred on the historical origins of TOE and DC.

Lastly, the chapter evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of these theories, incorporating insights from previous studies that have employed them, their underlying rationale, and their applicability to the present study.

4. Chapter 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to explore the experiences and perspectives of independent apparel retailers in Gauteng regarding their use of social media marketing for competitive advantage. The study aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of how these retailers approached social media marketing, the challenges they encountered, and the factors influencing their decision-making processes. A qualitative approach, utilising an online survey, was chosen to gather in-depth insights from a diverse sample of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The objective of this study was to explore the experiences and perspectives of independent apparel retailers in Gauteng regarding their use of social media marketing strategies for competitive advantage. This research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these independent retailers approached social media marketing, the challenges they faced, and the factors influencing their decision-making processes. The study focused on a select group of participants to obtain in-depth insights into their digital marketing practices.

4.1.1. Theoretical Framework

This research was guided by constructivism, which posits that knowledge and meaning are constructed through social interactions and personal experiences. Constructivism was particularly well-suited to this study as it emphasised understanding participants' subjective experiences and interpretations. This theoretical framework supported the exploration of how independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships constructed their social media marketing strategies based on their individual and contextual factors.

4.1.2. Qualitative Approach

For this research, an online survey was employed in order to collect data on digital marketing practices among small business owners in Johannesburg. This approach was chosen in order to gather a wide range of responses from a diverse sample of participants, allowing for the exploration of various experiences and perspectives on digital marketing.

4.1.3. Rationale for Using an Online Survey

The online survey method facilitated the collection of qualitative data from a larger number of respondents compared to in-person interviews or focus groups. It provided a cost-effective and efficient means to reach participants across different geographical locations. Additionally, the online survey allowed participants to provide detailed responses at their convenience, which can lead to more thoughtful and comprehensive answers.

4.1.4. Suitability of the online survey approach

The use of online surveys in qualitative exploratory studies has gained prominence across various fields. Researchers have found this approach to be well-suited for capturing diverse experiences and contexts, particularly when investigating digital marketing practices. Smith et al. (2018) emphasized the value of online surveys for identifying general trends and challenges in the digital marketing landscape among independent retailers in Gauteng's townships. While not as in-depth as case studies or interviews, online surveys provide valuable insights into the practices and difficulties faced by retailers, offering a comprehensive overview of their digital marketing strategies. Johnson and Lee (2019), Williams (2020), and Brown and Adams (2021) further underscore the importance of adapting online survey methods to explore nuanced aspects of marketing practices. As researchers continue to navigate the digital terrain, the suitability of online surveys remains a powerful tool for qualitative exploration.

Therefore, the use of an online survey in this study was appropriate for capturing a wide range of qualitative data, which was then analysed to uncover significant patterns and themes related to digital marketing strategies.

4.1.5. Analysis of Survey Data

The data collected from the online survey were analysed using thematic analysis. This method involved coding the textual responses into categories, identifying patterns and themes that emerged from the data, and interpreting these themes to understand the participants' experiences and perspectives on digital marketing. The thematic analysis enabled the identification of key trends and insights from the survey data, despite the broader reach of the online survey.

4.2 Research philosophy and Approaches

4.2.1 Research Philosophy

According to Saunders et al. (2018, 2019), a research philosophy comprises a set of beliefs regarding the nature of reality and knowledge, which guides the research process. This study adopts the concept of the "research process onion," introduced by Saunders et al. (2018, 2019), to clarify the various approaches and strategies in research methodology. The research onion presents five key philosophical research paradigms, namely postmodernism, interpretivism, positivism, critical realism, and pragmatism. Saunders et al. (2018, 2019) emphasise that it is essential for researchers to establish a philosophical framework to provide a coherent structure for their investigation.

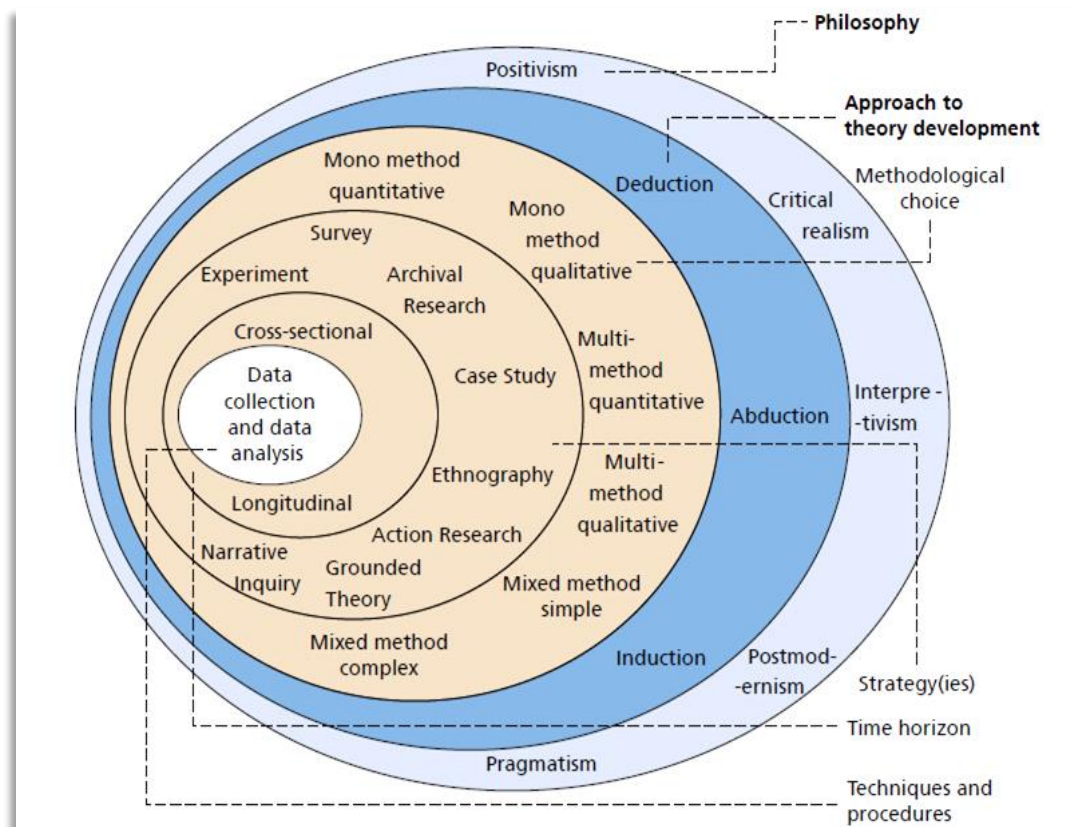


Figure 4.1. The research onion (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 2018).

In this study, the research philosophy is based on both interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, focusing on the subjective meanings and socially constructed realities of participants. This dual philosophical stance aligns with the inductive approach, where theory is developed from the observation and analysis of empirical data.

To address the examiner's feedback regarding the theory-building process, it is important to integrate both deductive and inductive reasoning. Kovacs et al. (2005) suggest that a theory-building study ought to begin with the testing of existing theories (deductive approach) and subsequently build new theories based on the findings (inductive approach).

4.2.1.1. Deductive Reasoning

The initial phase of the study involves deductive reasoning, where existing theories are tested against the collected data. In this context, the study examines how the integration of social media and marketing analytics influences marketing decision-making for independent apparel retailers. The TOE framework and DC theory provide the theoretical foundation for this examination. By applying these established theories, the study aims to either validate or refute their applicability in the specific context of independent apparel retailers.

4.2.1.2. Inductive Reasoning

Following the deductive phase, the study employed inductive reasoning to build new theories grounded in the empirical data collected. Through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observations, the study gathered rich, contextual insights into the experiences and perceptions of the participants. Thematic analysis is then used to identify patterns and themes that emerge from the data. This inductive process allows for the development of new theoretical insights or the refinement of existing theories, contributing to a deeper understanding of the role of social media and marketing analytics in marketing decision-making.

4.2.1.3. Integrating Deductive and Inductive Approaches

By integrating both deductive and inductive approaches, the study ensured a comprehensive examination of the research problem. The deductive phase tested the relevance of existing theories, while the inductive phase generated new theoretical insights from the empirical data. This combined approach aligns with the recommendations of Kovacs et al. (2005), providing a robust and nuanced understanding of the research topic.

4.2.2 Comparison of five philosophical research positions in research

Philosophy	Ontology	Epistemology	Axiology	Research Method
Positivism	Existence as genuine, external, and autonomous Acknowledgment of a singular, universal truth Structured and organised granularity of entities	Utilisation of the scientific method Emphasis on observable and quantifiable facts Development of law-like generalisations Numerical data Contribution to causal explanation and prediction	Research devoid of inherent values The researcher maintains a detached, neutral, and independent stance regarding the subject of the research A commitment to upholding an objective standpoint	Usually characterised by deductive reasoning, a high degree of structure, large sample sizes, measurement, and the employment of quantitative analytical methods, while accommodating a variety of data sources for analysis.
Critical Realism	Hierarchically layered (comprising the empirical, the actual, and the genuine) Externally autonomous Immutable Objective structural elements Causal mechanisms	Embracing epistemological relativism Recognising knowledge as historically situated and impermanent Acknowledging that facts are products of social constructs Contributing to historical causal explanations	Research imbued with values The researcher acknowledges the influence of worldviews, cultural experiences, and upbringing, which can introduce bias Efforts are made to mitigate bias and errors The researcher strives for the highest possible degree of objectivity	Retroductive in nature, involves a comprehensive historical analysis of existing structures and evolving agency. It encompasses a diverse array of methods and data types tailored to the specific subject matter.
Interpretivism	Intricately layered and multi-faceted Shaped by cultural and linguistic social constructs Encompassing numerous	Critiquing the oversimplification of theories and concepts Prioritising narratives, stories, perceptions, and interpretations Advocating for the development of new insights and worldviews as a	Research entwined with values Researchers are integrated into the subject of study, introducing subjectivity The interpretation by researchers plays a pivotal role	Typically characterised by an inductive approach, involving small sample sizes, in-depth examinations, and qualitative methods of analysis, while accommodating a variety of data

	interpretations, meanings, and realities Characterised by the continuous flow of processes, experiences, and practices.	valuable contribution	in the research's value Researchers are encouraged to engage in reflexive practice to enhance their contributions.	interpretations.
Post Modernism	Nominal Complex, a rich and Socially constructed through power relations Some meanings, interpretations, realities are dominated and silenced by others The influx of processes, practices and experiences.	Challenging the validation of truth and knowledge by dominant ideologies Emphasising the importance of addressing gaps, silences, and the marginalised or suppressed meanings, interpretations, and voices Uncovering power dynamics and the endeavor to question prevailing perspectives as a valuable contribution.	Research shaped by values Researchers and research intertwined with power dynamics Certain research narratives are suppressed and muted, potentially at the cost of other researchers' critically reflexive work.	Typically, deconstructive – reading texts and realities against themselves In-depth investigations of anomalies, silences and absences Range of data types, typically qualitative methods of analysis.
Pragmatism	Elaborate and multi-dimensional, external 'Reality' is the tangible outcome of concepts The ongoing dynamics of processes, experiences, and practices.	The pragmatic significance of knowledge within distinct contexts Defining 'true' theories and knowledge as those facilitating effective actions.	Research guided by values Research is initiated and sustained by the researcher's uncertainties and convictions Emphasis on researcher reflexivity.	Following research problem and research question Range of methods: mixed, multiple, qualitative, quantitative, action research Emphasis on practical solutions and outcomes.

Table 4.1. Comparison of five philosophical research positions in research (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 2019).

As shown in Table 4.1, the positivist philosophy primarily utilised a deductive research methodology characterised by a high level of structure, large sample sizes, precise measurements, and a preference for quantitative analytical methods (Saunders et al., 2019). Conversely, interpretivism, which leaned towards inductive reasoning and emphasised smaller sample sizes and in-depth investigations, typically employed qualitative analytical methods (Saunders et al., 2019). Accordingly, this study embraced an interpretivist research philosophy, aligning with its approach focused on theory-building.

4.2. Research Philosophy

This study adopted an interpretivist and constructivist research philosophies, which aligned with the qualitative nature of the investigation. The interpretivist approach allowed for a deep understanding of the subjective experiences and perspectives of independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships. The constructivist perspective supported the exploration of how social media and marketing analytics were perceived and utilised within the specific context of these retailers.

4.2.1 Research Approach

This research adopted a qualitative methodology. As outlined by Alase (2017), qualitative research is a methodology that strengthens researchers' ability to explore and enabled a thorough examination of research subjects. Table 4.2 functioned as a tool to distinguish between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

4.2.1.1 Comparing Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methodologies

Method	Quantitative	Qualitative
Orientation to the role of theory in research	Hypothesis testing	Theory generation
Reasoning	Deductive	Inductive
Epistemological orientation	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontology orientation	Objectivism	Constructivism
Axiology orientation	Neutral and independent	Subjective researcher interpretations
Data Collection	Experiments, Surveys	Interviews, Case Study
Data concepts	Numerical	Verbatim, words

Table 4.2 is adapted from Bryman and Bell (2011) and Saunders et al. (2018; 2019).

4.2.1.2 Abductive Approach

The study employed an abductive approach to theory development, which combined elements of both deduction and induction. This approach allowed for flexibility and the incorporation of new insights as they emerged from the data. The abductive approach was particularly suited to theory building in dynamic and complex environments, such as the retail sector in South Africa.

4.2.1.3 Deductive Component

4.2.1.3.1 Existing Theories

4.2.1.3.1.1 Technological Organisation Environment (TOE) theory

In their study, Junior, Oliveira, and Yanase (2019) delved into the adoption stages (evaluation, adoption, and routinisation) of ERP systems equipped with business analytics functionality within the agricultural context. This qualitative investigation utilised three theoretical frameworks, namely: the TOE Framework, the DOE, and the inter-organisational relations (IOR) theory (Junior, Oliveira, and Yanase, 2019). In Nigeria, Ese, Chinedu-Ese, Bello, Inegbedion, Nwanji, and Asamu (2019) conducted a qualitative study that uncovered the supportive role of mobile marketing tools in sales promotion techniques for SMEs. This research involved semi-structured and unstructured interviews, utilising thematic analysis to scrutinise the collected data.

Within this study, the concept of the value anticipation context was incorporated as a vital component of an extended TOE framework. The findings illuminated variations in the utilisation of mobile marketing technologies among small and medium businesses, influenced by factors associated with the expanded TOE framework (Ese et al., 2019). Ajimoko (2018) extensively investigated the criteria influencing IT professionals in SBEs when considering the implementation of cloud-based big data analytics (CBBDA).

This study leveraged three crucial technology adoption theories: diffusion of innovation theory, the technology acceptance model, and the TOE framework. The research involved one-on-one interviews as part of its exploratory qualitative approach, employing semi-structured questionnaires (Ajimoko, 2018).

It is important to highlight that there is a need for more qualitative research employing online surveys within the context of the TOE theory in the existing literature. Among qualitative inquiries rooted in TOE theory, the prevalent approach often involved conducting one-on-one interviews, utilising semi-structured questionnaires (Ajimoko, 2018).

4.2.1.3.1.2 Dynamic Capabilities (DC)

According to Coraiola, Suddaby, and Foster (2017), organisations cultivated DCs in order to ensure competitiveness. Employing an interpretative approach, their study reconstructed historical capacities for adapting to environmental change and creatively explored collective memory to envision potential scenarios and outcomes (Tadeu, 2017).

The research conducted by Ese Sunday and Chinedu-Ese Vera (2018) explored the adoption of ICT, and delved into the intricate and dynamic process of dynamic capabilities and ICT adoption. Using a qualitative methodology, the researchers closely examined the dynamic landscape surrounding the acceptance of EICT within SMEs in the United Kingdom. This methodological approach provided a profound and nuanced understanding of the opportunities and challenges inherent in technology use within this industry.

In rapidly evolving technological and market contexts, a misalignment often arose between strategy and operational execution, particularly in technology-based industrial companies and utility organisations (e.g., electricity and telecommunications). McAdam, Bititci and Galbraith (2017) addressed this pervasive issue, particularly in the transition toward deregulated markets. They proposed that DC provided a perspective for assessing constraints in PM and technology.

The alignment between business strategy (BS) and technology strategy (TS) at Level 1 was underpinned by dynamic capabilities (DC) and performance management (PM), as outlined by McAdam et al. (2017). The study also delved into Level 2 alignment, exploring the coordination of technology strategy with operational technology (OT) processes and practices. Consequently, the theory-building process underscored the necessity for PMDCs, indicating the need for their development (McAdam et al., 2017).

The study contributed to qualitative research employing online questionnaires focused on DC. In most qualitative investigations grounded in the DC theory, researchers typically opted for one-on-one interviews and utilised semi-structured questionnaires (Akpobi, 2017). McAdam et al. (2017) examined the alignment of business strategy (BS) and technology strategy (TS) at Level 1, employing an inductive approach involving DC and PM. Their study also delved into integrating TS with operational technology (OT) procedures, performance routines, and practices at Level 2 alignment, all orchestrated through DC and PM (McAdam et al., 2017).

The study was grounded in the TOE framework and DC theory. The TOE framework provided a comprehensive view of the technological, organisational, and environmental factors influencing the adoption of social media and marketing analytics. DC theory offered insights into how firms could adapt and realign their resources to maintain a competitive edge. Based on these theories, several propositions related to the use of social media and marketing analytics by independent apparel retailers were proposed.

4.3. Research Proposition

In this section, a series of research propositions were presented to guide the investigation into the use of social media and marketing analytics among independent apparel retailers in Gauteng's townships. Propositions served as foundational elements in qualitative research, offering a preliminary framework that helped structure the inquiry and facilitated a deeper exploration of the phenomena under study (Chigbu, 2019).

Propositions were essential in this research context for several reasons. Firstly, they provided a structured approach to examining the complex interplay of technological, organisational, and environmental factors that influenced the adoption and utilisation of marketing analytics. By proposing specific relationships and influences, these propositions helped clarify the research focus and directed the subsequent data collection and analysis efforts (Maroufkhani et al., 2020).

Secondly, propositions bridged the gap between theory and empirical investigation. They were grounded in existing theoretical frameworks and literature, such as the TOE framework and DC theory, ensuring that the study was theoretically informed and aligned with established knowledge (Junior, Oliveira, and Yanase, 2019). This alignment not only enhanced the validity of the research, but also contributed to the ongoing scholarly discourse by potentially extending or refining these theories in the context of social media and marketing analytics (Ese et al., 2019).

Thirdly, propositions facilitated the identification of key areas where practical interventions might be required. By highlighting potential enablers and barriers to the effective use of marketing analytics, these propositions could inform strategic decisions by apparel retailers and other stakeholders aiming to leverage digital tools for competitive advantage (Ajimoko, 2018).

In summary, the inclusion of research propositions was vital for structuring the investigation, ensuring theoretical coherence, and identifying practical implications. The following propositions were formulated based on a comprehensive review of the literature and aimed at uncovering the nuanced dynamics of social media and marketing analytics usage in the retail sector. These propositions guided the empirical phase of this study, providing a clear direction for data collection and analysis, ultimately contributing to a richer understanding of the research problem.

Each research proposition was independently formulated to address specific aspects of the technological, organisational, and environmental factors outlined in the research objectives. These propositions were structured as standalone statements, ensuring clarity and focus, without being automatically linked to the theoretical explanations provided in previous propositions. This approach allowed for a systematic exploration of the factors influencing the use of marketing analytics.

4.3.1. The Scientific Proposition

According to Chigbu (2019), propositions bear resemblance to hypotheses. Despite not intending to establish a relationship between two concepts through experimentation, a proposition plays a vital role in suggesting the potential for such a connection. Relying on existing research, informed assumptions, and supporting data, a proposition seeks to substantiate a claim. It serves as a valuable instrument for delving deeper into a question, serving as a preliminary step before engaging in scientific inquiries that might unveil additional evidence or innovative research methods to test a theory.

4.3.2. The Valid use of Proposition

Chigbu (2019) argues that propositions play a vital role in the scientific process by suggesting potential connections between two ideas, thereby paving the way for intriguing research avenues. In situations where it is challenging to formulate specific hypotheses supporting further speculation, common assumptions become a valuable tool. This is particularly relevant in complex sociological and economic systems (Chigbu, 2019), where conducting experimental tests may be cost-prohibitive or difficult. Additionally, Chigbu (2019) highlights the reliance on hypotheses in fields such as archaeology and paleontology, even when only limited concrete evidence is available.

4.3.3. The drawbacks of Proposition

In a scientific context, challenging or disproving a claim can be difficult, particularly when it lacks a basis in testable evidence. For a proposition to gain credibility, it must demonstrate both persuasiveness and internal coherence (Popper, 2005).

Claims that appear internally consistent and persuasive may still be proven incorrect or false when new testable evidence emerges. This process of falsification is crucial in science, as it allows for the refinement or rejection of ideas based on empirical evidence (Lakatos, 1978). Consequently, overturning deeply entrenched ideas that have been widely accepted for an extended period can be challenging, even when confronted with compelling counterarguments from other scholars (Kuhn, 2012).

4.3.4. The Valid Uses for Propositions

In the scientific process, propositions play a crucial role by suggesting potential connections between ideas, thus paving the way for engaging research avenues. They function as common assumptions, especially in cases where formulating robust hypotheses proves challenging. This importance is particularly evident in complex sociological and economic systems where experimental testing may be prohibitively expensive or logistically difficult (Sutton & Staw, 1995).

The rationale for employing propositions is particularly significant in such scenarios. For instance, fields like archaeology and paleontology often rely on propositions and hypotheses due to the nature of their evidence, which may be limited or difficult to obtain (Baker et al., 2019). These disciplines underscore the significance of propositions even in the presence of constrained empirical evidence, highlighting their role in advancing scientific understanding (Tilley, 2020).

4.3.5. Outline Research Propositions

Technological advancement has positively influenced the utilisation of marketing analytics (Maroufkhani, Tseng, Iranmanesh, Ismail, and Khalid, 2020), where consequently, the following propositions are made:

4.3.5.1. Proposition 1

- Technological capabilities, such as social media usage, interactivity, visibility, engagement, and customer listening, positively influence the likelihood of adopting marketing analytics.

4.3.5.2. Proposition 2

- Organisational capabilities, including management perception, management support, data availability, data quality, and a data use culture, positively influence the likelihood of adopting marketing analytics.

4.3.5.3. Proposition 3

- Environmental factors, such as competitive pressure and external support, significantly impact the adoption of social media and marketing analytics.

4.3.5.4. Proposition 4

- The use of marketing analytics enhances effective marketing decision-making.

4.3.5.5. Proposition 5

- Effective marketing decision-making enhances sustainable competitive advantage.

4.4. Research design

This research employed a qualitative methodological approach, firmly rooted in the interpretivist and constructivist epistemological frameworks. Interpretivism, characterised by its focus on understanding the subjective experiences and perspectives of participants, was particularly suitable for this qualitative research (Schwandt, 2017). Constructivism emphasised the significance of context and the ways in which individuals constructed their understanding of the world, highlighting the importance of context in shaping knowledge (Flick, 2018).

Together, these approaches supported an in-depth exploration of how independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships utilised social media and marketing analytics (Braun and Clarke, 2021; Houghton & Dorrington, 2019).

4.4.1. Qualitative method

In the scientific process, propositions play a crucial role by suggesting potential connections between ideas, thereby paving the way for engaging research avenues. They function as common assumptions, especially in cases where formulating robust hypotheses proves challenging. This importance is particularly evident in complex sociological and economic systems where experimental testing may be prohibitively expensive or logistically difficult (Sutton & Staw, 1995).

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4.4.2. Reasons for Adopting an Interpretivist and Constructivist Paradigm, Qualitative, and Inductive Approach

This study adopted an interpretivist and constructivist perspective in order to deeply explore the experiences and perceptions of independent apparel retailers, as detailed in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. The research employed qualitative methods for data collection and analysis, which are consistent with the approaches outlined by Bryman and Bell (2015) and Saunders et al. (2019). Qualitative research emphasises the collection and processing of in-depth, contextual data, and follows a research process model influenced by interpretivism and constructivism, which embodies an inductive and subjective research approach (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Saunders et al., 2019).

The key objective of this methodology was to allow the study's conclusions to naturally emerge from the essential themes identified in the raw data, thereby avoiding the imposition of a rigid methodology (Saunders et al., 2019).

By integrating interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, the study aimed to provide a rich, contextualised understanding of how independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships utilised social media and marketing analytics to enhance marketing decision-making and achieve sustained competitive advantage.

4.4.3. The five categories of research design

Research design category	Research design process
Descriptive research design	A descriptive research design entails the researcher's intent to elucidate the specific context under investigation. This methodological approach, known as a theory-based descriptive research design, is cultivated through systematic data collection, analysis, and presentation. Using a descriptive design empowers the researcher to expound upon the study's causal factors and

	mechanisms.
The experimental research design	Experimental research aims to analyse cause-and-effect relationships by investigating the influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable. For instance, a researcher may explore the correlation between an independent variable, pricing, and a dependent variable, such as brand loyalty or consumer satisfaction.
The correlational research design	Correlational research is a fundamental non-experimental approach researchers employ to establish associations between two interrelated variables. This method necessitates the involvement of two distinct groups. Researchers avoid making assumptions and instead employ statistical analytical methods to ascertain and evaluate a connection between these two distinct variables.
The diagnostic research design	A diagnostic research design examines a specific subject or phenomenon to ascertain its underlying cause. This diagnostic approach assists the researcher in gaining insights into the elements contributing to challenging situations.
The explanatory research design	An explanatory research design harnesses a researcher's perspectives and insights on a subject to delve deeper into their hypotheses. Explanatory research elucidates the "what," "how," and "why" of study questions, shedding light on previously unexplored aspects of the topic.

Table 4.3. five categories of research design

- Table 4.3 presented an array of five distinct research design types. The descriptive research design, characterised by its theory-based approach, involved systematically gathering, analysing, and presenting acquired data, with a primary focus on characterising the scenario or case under investigation.
- In contrast, the causal design thoroughly investigated the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable, establishing a cause-and-effect relationship within the research framework.
- Correlational research design, as a non-experimental method, facilitated the exploration of links between closely related variables, necessitating the involvement of two separate groups for a comprehensive investigation.
- Moreover, the diagnostic research approach aimed to evaluate the fundamental cause of a specific subject or occurrence.

Finally, it was noted that for qualitative studies, the most appropriate research designs were explanatory and descriptive, as observed in the works of Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir, and Waseem (2019).

In line with the current study, following the selection of the research subject and the formulation of research questions, the combined employment of both exploratory and descriptive research approaches was evident, as articulated by Sawsan, Abutabenjeh, and Jaradat (2018). The choice of these research designs was attributed to their cost-effectiveness, heightened interactivity, and the nature of the research, as highlighted by Rashid et al. (2019).

4.4. Research strategy

4.5.1. Overview of the Types of Research Strategies

Several research strategies were considered for a qualitative study, including:

- *Experiment*: Used for rigorous investigations under closely monitored conditions, with the aim of modifying one element of the test procedure while keeping other components constant.
- *Survey*: Served as a valuable tool for gathering comprehensive data from numerous participants, involving sample selection and the crafting of relevant questions.
- *Case Study*: Focused on the complex structures and relationships within organisations, proving particularly useful for industrial marketing research.
- *Action Research*: Employed a systematic inquiry approach designed to identify practical solutions to everyday challenges, integrating complex dynamics into social contexts.
- *Grounded Theory*: Involved developing theory through systematic data collection and analysis, characterised by an ongoing and interconnected process.
- *Ethnography*: Relied on detailed, nuanced, and context-rich instances as primary data sources, utilising techniques such as interviews, observations, and participant observations.

- *Cross-Sectional Studies*: Observed both exposure and outcomes of study participants simultaneously, useful for evaluating the prevalence of various conditions in clinical and population research.

Given the nature of the study, a survey was deemed the most appropriate strategy to achieve the research objectives. The researcher employed surveys as a valuable instrument for gathering data, which involved selecting a sample and crafting relevant questions and topics. The surveys efficiently enabled the comprehensive collection of data from numerous participants (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

The study employed a qualitative methodological approach, firmly rooted in both interpretivist and constructivist epistemological frameworks. Interpretivist and constructivist epistemologies were characterised by their inductive orientation, focus on small sample sizes, in-depth exploration, and the use of qualitative analytical techniques.

4.5.2. Problem Definition

The first step in the research process involved clearly defining the research problem. This study addressed the gap in empirical literature concerning the impact of integrating social media and marketing analytics on marketing decision-making for independent apparel retailers. In particular, the research problem centred on understanding how these tools were utilised to gain a competitive advantage in a challenging retail environment characterised by competition from larger retailers and limited resources.

4.5.3. Development of the Problem Approach

To address the research problem, the study integrated the TOE framework and Dynamic DC theory. The TOE framework provided a comprehensive view of the technological, organisational, and environmental factors influencing the adoption of social media and marketing analytics. DC theory offered insights into how firms could adapt and realign their resources to maintain a competitive edge. This integrated theoretical approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of the impact of marketing analytics on decision-making and competitive advantage.

4.5. Formulation of the Research Design

Given the interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, the study employed a qualitative research design. Interpretivism emphasises understanding the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals. This paradigm is grounded in the belief that reality is socially constructed and can only be understood from the perspective of those experiencing it. Consequently, interpretivist research aimed to explore and interpret the complexities of human behaviour, social interactions, and cultural contexts (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Constructivism, on the other hand, posited that knowledge was constructed through human experiences and interactions. This paradigm focused on how individuals constructed meaning from their experiences and the world around them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Charmaz, 2014). Constructivist researchers sought to understand how individuals interpreted their experiences, and how these interpretations influenced their actions and perspectives.

The combination of these paradigms supported the use of a qualitative research design, which involved collecting non-numerical data through methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observations.

Qualitative research was well-suited to exploring complex phenomena in natural settings, providing rich, contextualised understandings of participants' experiences and the meanings they attached to their actions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Patton, 2015).

By employing a qualitative approach, the study aimed to delve deeply into the experiences of independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships, focusing on their use of social media and marketing analytics. This approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of how these retailers perceived, interpreted, and utilised these tools in their marketing practices, allowing for a nuanced understanding of their behaviours and strategies.

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marketing practices, allowing for a nuanced understanding of their behaviours and strategies.

4.6.3. Data Collection

Data were collected from independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships through purposive sampling, which involved selecting participants who were actively using social media and marketing analytics in their marketing practices. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that selects participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Data collection was conducted using a self-administered online survey created with Google Forms. This method provided a systematic and organised way to gather responses from a dispersed group of independent retailers. The online survey format facilitated the efficient collection of qualitative data from a broad geographic area, overcoming logistical constraints associated with in-person data collection.

According to Sharma and Sharma (2018), data collection methods can include digital tools, manual entry, or automated systems, depending on the study's nature. This phase ensured that the collected data was both relevant and representative of the research objectives.

Survey links were distributed to participants through various online messaging platforms, including Facebook Messenger, Instagram Messenger, Twitter Messenger, WhatsApp, and email.

Participants had the option to either accept or decline the invitation to participate in the survey or disregard the communication altogether. The primary sources of survey responses were Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook Marketplace.

4.6.2. Data Collection Methods

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4.6.3. Using Online Survey to Collect Data

An online survey was used as the preferred data collection method, addressing prevalent misconceptions associated with qualitative research. The intention was to highlight the adaptability and diverse utility of these approaches, offering benefits to both researchers and participants. This perspective aligns with the views of Braun et al. (2020) and Malhotra et al. (2017).

4.6.4. Justification for Using Online Surveys

The decision to utilise online surveys for data collection in this study aligned with contemporary practices and demonstrated the method's effectiveness in qualitative research. Recent studies highlight several advantages of online surveys, particularly in gathering data efficiently and engaging diverse participant groups.

For instance, Toepoel et al. (2021) examine the effectiveness of different survey layouts and found that traditional online surveys were highly effective for qualitative research, especially when completed on computers. Their study underscored the flexibility and

adaptability of online surveys, making them suitable for collecting detailed qualitative data across various devices and platforms.

Additionally, Sakshaug, Vicari, and Couper (2019) explored strategies for maximising participation rates in web surveys. Their findings indicated that online surveys could achieve high response rates with minimal bias, particularly when appropriate follow-up methods were employed. This supported the notion that online surveys could effectively reach and engage a broad audience, ensuring comprehensive data collection.

Furthermore, Kalleitner, Mühlböck, and Kittel (2022) demonstrate the utility of online surveys by examining the impact of non-material incentives on response rates and biases. Their work confirms that online surveys, when designed thoughtfully, could maintain high response rates and data quality, making them a reliable tool for qualitative research.

Moreover, Mancosu, Ladini, and Vezzoni (2019) provide insight into the attentiveness of online respondents, showing that online surveys may effectively control and assess respondent engagement. This was particularly beneficial for qualitative research, where the depth and quality of responses were crucial.

These studies illustrate the viability and advantages of using online surveys in qualitative research, supporting the methodological choices made in this study. The adaptability, efficiency, and broad reach of online surveys made them an ideal tool for gathering rich, qualitative data from diverse participant groups.

4.7. Development and pre-testing of the questionnaire

4.7.1. Questionnaire tool

Google Forms is an online application designed to facilitate the creation of standardised content for delivery to respondents in a user-friendly digital format.

The screenshot displays a web-based survey interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Questions', 'Responses' (with a count of 10), and 'Settings'. The main title is 'Academic Research Study' with a subtitle 'Online Survey'. Below this, a section titled 'The use of social media and marketing analytics to improve marketing decision making' contains a welcome message and a thank-you note. The survey asks for consent to participate, with 'Yes' and 'No' radio button options. A section titled 'SECTION A: Demographics' includes a question 'At: What is your age?' with three checkbox options: '18-24', '25-34', and '35-44'. A vertical sidebar on the right contains icons for a home page, a list of questions, a 'Tr' (translate) icon, a document icon, a play button icon, and a list icon.

Figure 4.2. Online Survey Distribution Process

For the facilitation of data collection, survey links were distributed to participants through various online messaging platforms, including Facebook Messenger, Instagram Messenger, Twitter Messenger, WhatsApp, and email.

Participants, upon clicking the links, were given the option to either accept or decline the invitation to participate in the survey. They also had the choice to disregard the communication, indicating that they had read the message but opted not to respond. The primary sources of survey responses, in descending order, were Facebook Marketplace, Instagram, and Twitter.

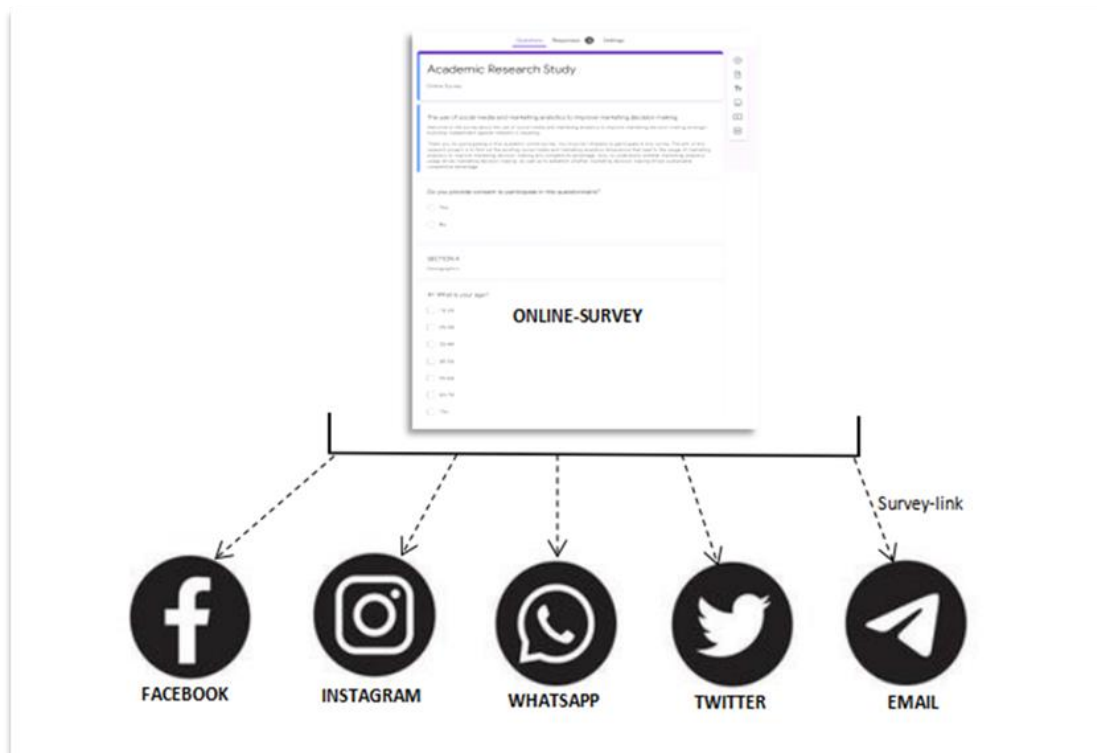


Figure 4.3. Online-survey social media distribution process.

Figure 4.3 provides a visual representation of the online survey distribution procedure across different social media platforms. The researcher utilised Google Forms links to distribute the online survey, engaging participants through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and email. Individuals receiving the links were presented with choices to accept participation, decline, or disregard the message, signalling either non-reading or opting not to respond. Notably, the predominant source of survey responses was Facebook Marketplace, followed by contributions from Instagram and Twitter.

4.7.2. Data Reduction

During the data reduction phase, the researcher engaged in a systematic process of sifting through raw data, involving selection, concentration, simplification, abstraction, and transformation. These steps were critical for isolating the most pertinent data that directly addressed the research questions. This approach facilitated the systematic organisation of data, the elimination of redundancies, and the generation of findings that were amenable to derivation and independent validation. Such procedures were consistent with qualitative research methodologies, which required the distillation of data to reveal significant patterns and themes (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

4.7.3. Data Processing

At this stage, the data underwent processing, where it was organised and prepared for analysis. This process included structuring the data into manageable formats, such as spreadsheets, to facilitate ease of analysis. Data processing also encompassed coding categorical variables, creating new variables, and integrating datasets, as emphasised by Kim and Lee (2019).

4.7.4. Data Cleansing

The accuracy and reliability of the data were paramount. The data cleansing process involved identifying and correcting errors or inconsistencies, such as handling missing values, correcting data entry mistakes, removing duplicates, and standardising data formats. Effective data cleansing was crucial for minimising biases and ensuring that the analysis accurately reflected true patterns and trends (Gupta & Saini, 2020).

4.7.5. Data Modelling

In the data modelling phase, analytical models were applied to the cleaned data to uncover patterns, relationships, and trends. Techniques such as regression analysis were utilised to quantify relationships between variables and test hypotheses in alignment with the research questions. This phase was supported by Nguyen and Wang (2021), who discussed the application of data modelling techniques to explore relationships within datasets.

4.7.6. Data Coding and Categorisation

In qualitative research, data analysis involved coding textual data to identify significant themes, patterns, and relationships. For this study, coding involved tagging segments of text with codes representing concepts or ideas relevant to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

4.8. Data Analysis

The data analysis process in this study was a comprehensive and multi-faceted endeavour, encompassing several critical stages to ensure the integrity and utility of the data. The data analysis section outlined the comprehensive approach taken to process

and interpret the data collected during the research, providing a detailed account of the methods and procedures used to ensure transparency and rigor in the analysis.

4.8.1. Thematic Analysis

The initial stage of data analysis involved thematic analysis, a method used to organise codes into themes and categories. This process was crucial for identifying patterns and narratives central to understanding the research topic. As noted by Forrester, Blunt, and Hunter (2018), thematic analysis allowed for a structured interpretation of qualitative data by grouping related codes into coherent themes. Each theme reflected a significant aspect of the data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the research questions.

4.8.1.1. Process

- *Coding:* Data were initially coded into discrete units based on key concepts and ideas.
- *Theme Identification:* Codes were systematically grouped into broader themes that represented significant patterns within the data.

This approach provided a structured framework for analysing the data and ensured that the findings were both relevant and meaningful.

4.8.2. Data Interpretation

Following thematic analysis, the focus shifted to interpreting the data. This phase involved understanding the meaning and significance of the identified themes and patterns. The goal was to elucidate how different themes interrelated and what they revealed about the research questions (Silverman, 2018).

4.8.2.1. Process

- *Pattern Analysis:* Analysed how themes and patterns interacted and contributed to answering the research questions.
- *Significance Evaluation:* Assessed the implications of these patterns for the research objectives and theoretical framework.

This interpretive process was essential for deriving actionable insights from the data and understanding their broader implications.

4.8.3. Contextual Understanding

Contextual understanding was integral to the data analysis process, focused on providing a rich and detailed description of participants' perspectives and experiences. This approach emphasised the importance of context in qualitative research, aligning with the recommendations of Merriam and Tisdell (2019). Rather than quantifying relationships between variables, the analysis sought to capture the nuances of participants' viewpoints.

4.8.3.1. Process

- *Perspective Analysis:* Examined how participants' experiences and viewpoints contributed to the themes.
- *Narrative Construction:* Constructed detailed narratives to reflect the depth of participants' experiences.

This method ensured that the analysis captured both the complexities and subtleties of the data.

4.8.4. Data Preparation and Analysis

The data preparation and analysis involved several key steps:

- *Selecting Data:* Each participant's responses were assigned a unique identifier to maintain anonymity. Responses were grouped under a unified code for analysis.
- *Focusing Data:* Data reduction aimed to encapsulate insights from multiple respondents regarding knowledge exchange practices. Responses were summarised and grouped to highlight relevant information.
- *Simplifying Data:* Data abstraction simplified the representation by removing non-essential attributes. This process reduced the volume of data and identified critical patterns.
- *Transforming Data:* Data transformation involved modifying the format and structure of the data using Atlas.ti software. This included integrating, migrating, and wrangling information to facilitate analysis.
- *Data Coding:* Data coding in Atlas.ti involved categorising information into nodes. The software supported both inductive and deductive coding approaches, ensuring comprehensive data analysis.

4.8.5. Research Themes from the Propositions

The creation of categories and themes involved grouping connected codes into broader categories. This process enhanced comprehension and allowed for a detailed exploration of the data. Themes were defined and grouped based on recurring topics and patterns:

- Technological capabilities
- Organisational capabilities
- Environmental capabilities
- Marketing analytics usage
- Marketing decision-making

Each theme was developed by consolidating codes and ensuring they accurately represented the data's essence.

4.9. Results Discussion

The results were compiled into detailed reports that summarised the findings. This phase focused on clearly communicating insights to stakeholders, highlighting key results, and providing actionable recommendations. The findings were discussed in relation to the TOE and DC theories, emphasising their theoretical, practical, and managerial contributions.

4.9.1. Process

- *Results Summarisation:* Summarised key findings and their implications.
- *Recommendations:* Provided actionable recommendations based on the analysis.

4.10. Data Analysis Process in Qualitative Research

The data analysis process in this study was a comprehensive and multi-faceted endeavour, encompassing several critical stages to ensure the integrity and utility of the data. The following steps detailed the process undertaken to extract actionable insights and support decision-making.

4.10.1. Selecting Data

In the online survey, every participant's answers were connected to a distinct identifier. The researcher allocated a unique identification number to each respondent to maintain individuality and protect their identity. Subsequently, the researcher grouped all responses from a particular participant under a unified code.

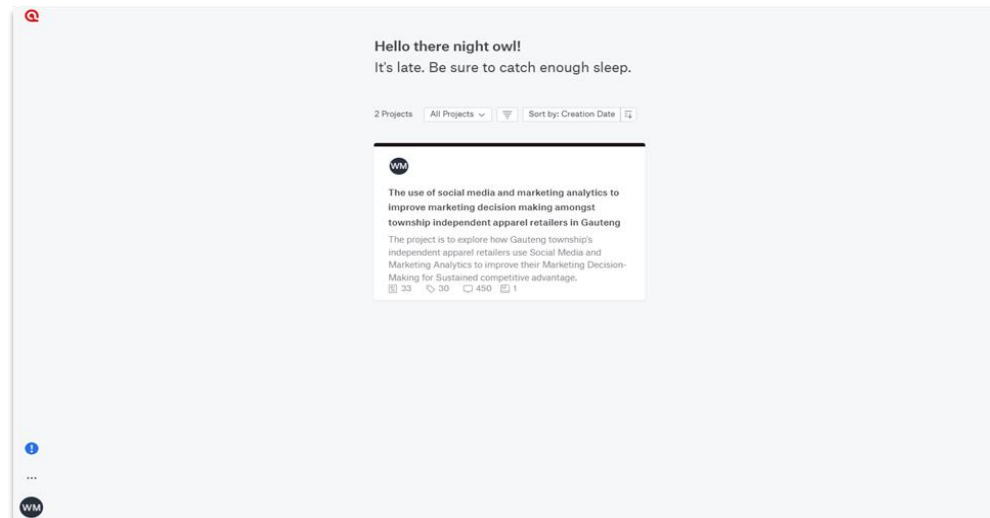


Figure 4.4. Atlas.ti online software platform.

4.10.2. Focusing Data

The primary objective of initiating the data reduction process was to encapsulate the insights provided by multiple respondents concerning the approaches employed in knowledge exchange.

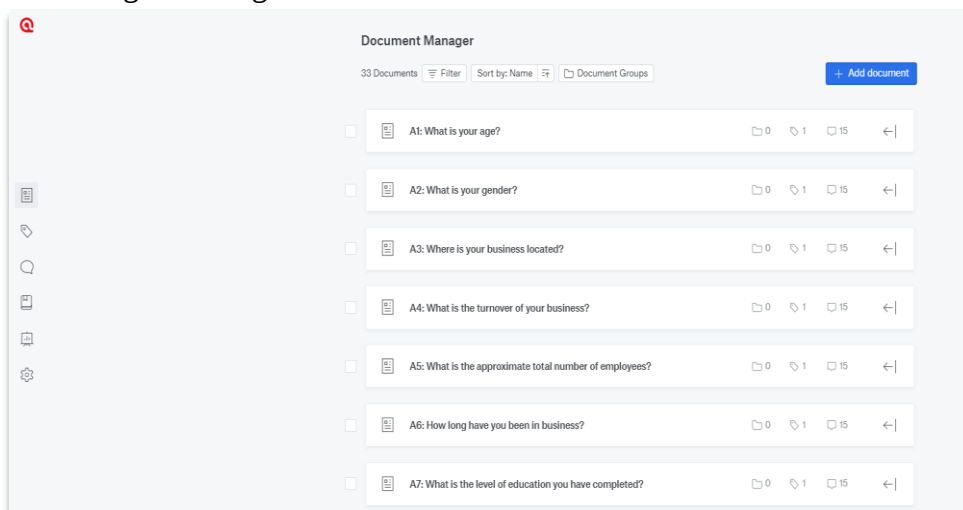


Figure 4.5. Atlas.ti online software platform Document Manager.

4.10.3. Simplifying Data

Data abstraction entailed simplifying the representation of particular data elements. This involved eliminating non-essential attributes to distill the information to its essential features. This process substantially decreased the amount of fundamental data, identified critical patterns, extracted meaning from the data, and established a coherent chain of evidence to interpret the extensive datasets.

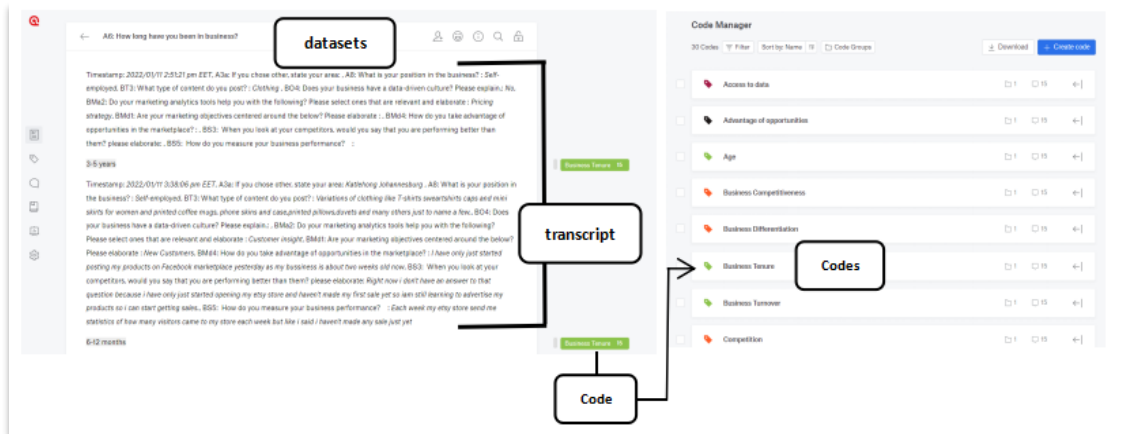


Figure 4.6. Atlas.ti online software Document Manager.

4.10.4. Abstracting Data

Data abstraction involves the practice of simplifying the representation of specific data components. This process involves removing non-essential characteristics to distill the information to its core features. The procedure significantly reduced the volume of fundamental data, identified crucial patterns, extracted meaning from the data, and established a logical chain of evidence to make sense of the extensive datasets.

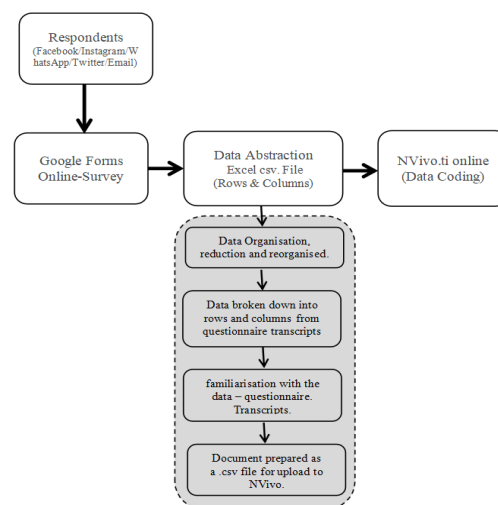


Figure 4.7. Data Abstraction

The initial phase involved the methodical organisation and significant restructuring of the data. This included transferring the data from Google Forms to an Excel CSV file. Subsequently, the researcher carefully examined the questionnaire transcripts to familiarise themselves with the data, documenting initial observations.

Once a comprehensive understanding of the empirical data was achieved, the survey transcripts were systematically archived as documents, ensuring the inclusion of all pertinent information for the study. The next step involved importing the survey transcripts from Excel files into the online data management tool, Atlas.ti online software, for the coding process.

4.10.5. Transforming Data

Data transformation encompassed the alteration of the format, structure, or values of data, and this modification could occur at different stages within the data analytics pipeline. Traditional organisations, especially those with on-premises data warehouses, commonly incorporated a data transformation phase into their ETL (extract, transform, load) process.

In the context of this study, the Atlas.ti online software served as a cloud-based data warehouse. This platform not only offered scalability in terms of computing and storage resources, but also ensured minimal latency, typically evaluated in seconds or minutes. The scalability of the cloud-based platform enabled the researcher to load raw data and apply preloaded transformations within the data warehouse, adopting an ELT (extract, load, transform) model for data transformation at the query level.

Data transformation served various essential purposes, including integration, migration, warehousing, and wrangling. These transformations could involve aesthetic modifications, such as standardising greetings or street names, as well as more significant actions, such as eliminating fields or records. Constructive transformations were also employed to add, copy, and replicate data, encompassing operations like renaming, moving, and combining columns within a database.

4.10.6. Data Coding

4.10.6.1. Coding in Atlas.ti online software

In the Atlas.ti online software platform, coding entailed consolidating pertinent data into a Node, functioning as a container. This software supported both inductive coding, where codes were developed during data examination, and deductive coding, relying on predetermined coding schemes often derived from a literature review.

To maintain traceability of each respondent's survey inputs, it was essential to have unique identifiers such as names or numbers. However, for privacy protection, particularly in lengthy surveys, the researcher manually assigned distinct ID numbers to each respondent. Following this, all the responses from individual participants were grouped under a unified code.

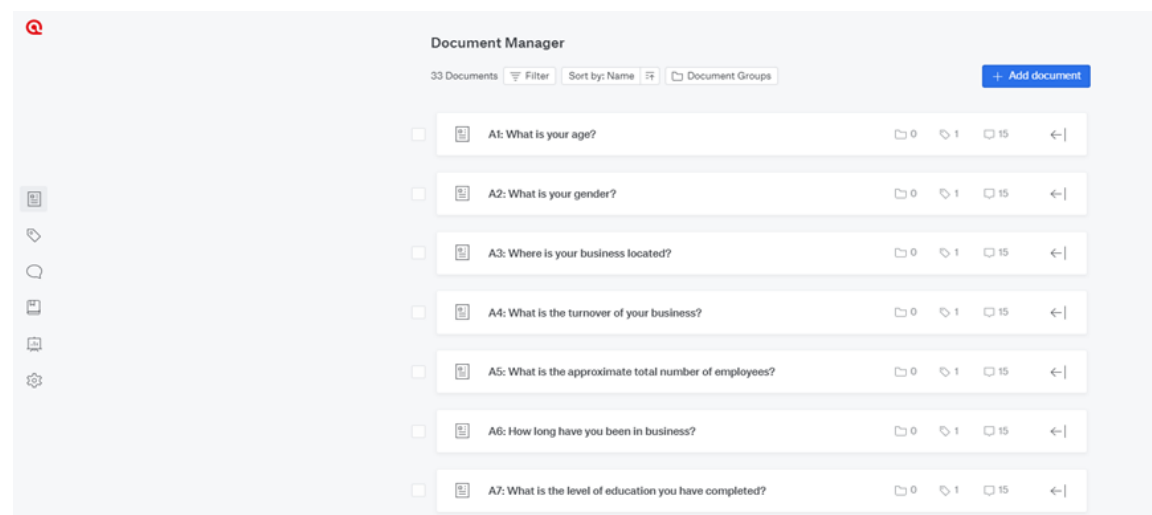


Figure 4.8. Datasets, transcript and codes.

4.10.6.2. Theoretical (Selective) Coding

During theoretical coding, a paramount theoretical code or core category assumed a central role. This code functioned as an overarching framework that encompassed all other codes and data categories, along with their respective subcategories. The emphasis of this coding process was directed towards addressing the "how" and "why" questions, offering a nuanced comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation. It is noteworthy that the extent of coding detail required in qualitative studies may vary, as highlighted by Saldana (2013).

The chosen text underwent a coding process using Atlas.ti online software, resulting in a code name limited to 256 characters. This strategy maintained the participants' original language, incorporating any specific jargon or vernacular. Importantly, it was possible to adjust the code name later in the Code Properties.

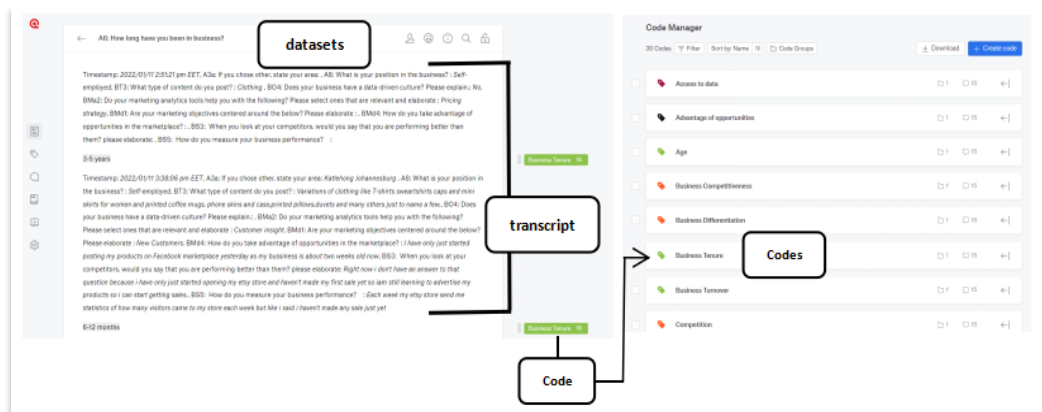


Figure 4.9. Datasets, transcript and codes.

4.10.6.3. Memoing

In qualitative data analysis approaches, especially within grounded theory, coding extended beyond the mere categorisation of extensive text passages. Researchers were encouraged to engage in memoing, a practice that entailed creating memos or notes intended for their personal reference and for the benefit of other study participants during the data coding process. The writings produced throughout the analytical journey served as inspiration for the researcher, with the possibility of some being integrated into the final report.

These notes served distinct roles in various qualitative data analysis methodologies, as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998), who delineated three types of memos, namely: operational notes, theoretical notes, and coding notes.

4.10.6.4. Code Notes

Theoretical notes covered a wide range of subjects, including contemplation on the dimensions and deep meanings of concepts, connections between ideas, and theoretical propositions. This process involved thoughtful consideration of various aspects with the goal of understanding their essence.

In qualitative data analysis, it proves vital to document these reflections, even those that may have seemed initially insignificant. While the length of these notes could vary, it was advisable to keep each focused on a single core concept. This approach facilitated later sorting and organisation, aligning with the guidance provided by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

4.10.6.5. Theoretical Notes

Theoretical notes covered a wide range of subjects, including reflections on the dimensions and profound meanings of concepts, connections between ideas, and theoretical propositions. This process involved deep contemplation of various aspects to understand their essence.

In the analysis of qualitative data, it was crucial to document these reflections, even those that might have seemed initially insignificant. While the length of these notes could vary, it was advisable to keep each focused on a single core concept, making it easier for later sorting and organisation, in accordance with the guidance provided by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

4.10.6.6. Datasets in Atlas.ti online software

The arrangement of data in Atlas.ti online software is structured with rows and columns, offering the researcher flexibility to adjust these datasets. This adjustment is frequently achieved by importing data, such as Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. In this study, survey questions and their corresponding answers were transcribed and smoothly incorporated into these datasets. The detailed process of reviewing responses and coding relevant information is visually depicted in Figure 4.9.

4.10.6.7. Transcription in Atlas.ti online software

The research utilised advanced automation technology, specifically the Atlas.ti online software Transcription, renowned for its capacity to deliver verbatim transcriptions with an impressive accuracy rate of 90 percent, particularly effective with high-quality data. This platform also boasts the ability to transcribe audio and video content in 28 different languages, enhancing its applicability for global research initiatives.

Systematic transcription of categorised excerpts played a pivotal role in pinpointing codes that could contribute to the emergence of themes and patterns within qualitative data. This method facilitated the organisation of semi- or unstructured data, such as extensive transcripts from an online survey, into coherent themes and patterns for subsequent analysis.

4.10.6.8. Coding in Atlas.ti online software

Atlas.ti online software presented the researcher with diverse coding alternatives, which encompassed the integration of custom fields (columns) within transcripts. These adaptable fields afforded the researcher the capability to append and employ them for coding objectives.

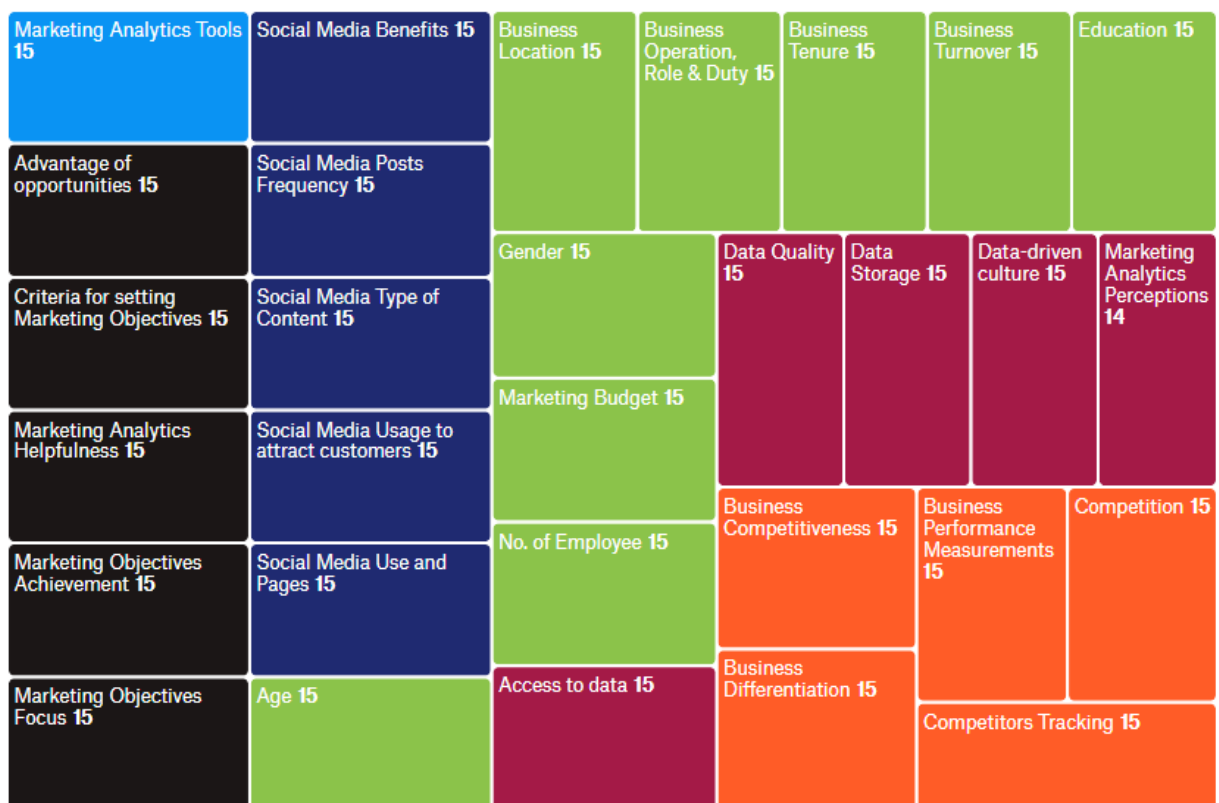


Figure 4.10. Codes Matrix.

To investigate codes within a matrix cell (Figure 5.8), the researcher executes a double-click to reveal all the content-coded data, encompassing both the row and column codes. Certain cells were shaded with the intention of enhancing pattern recognition within the matrix. The data contained in the matrix cells comprises various files that underwent coding prior to the theme development process.

4.11. Research Themes from the Propositions

4.11.1. Creating categories and themes

Connected codes are amalgamated to form categories, enhancing comprehension of the data. The quantity of categories within a theme is determined by the research inquiries. The aggregation of like data into categories is essential for researchers to identify and expound on category attributes. These processes aid in precisely defining categories, comparing them with others, distinguishing them, and, in the instance of extensive categories, subdividing them into more detailed, identifiable, and explicated subcategories.

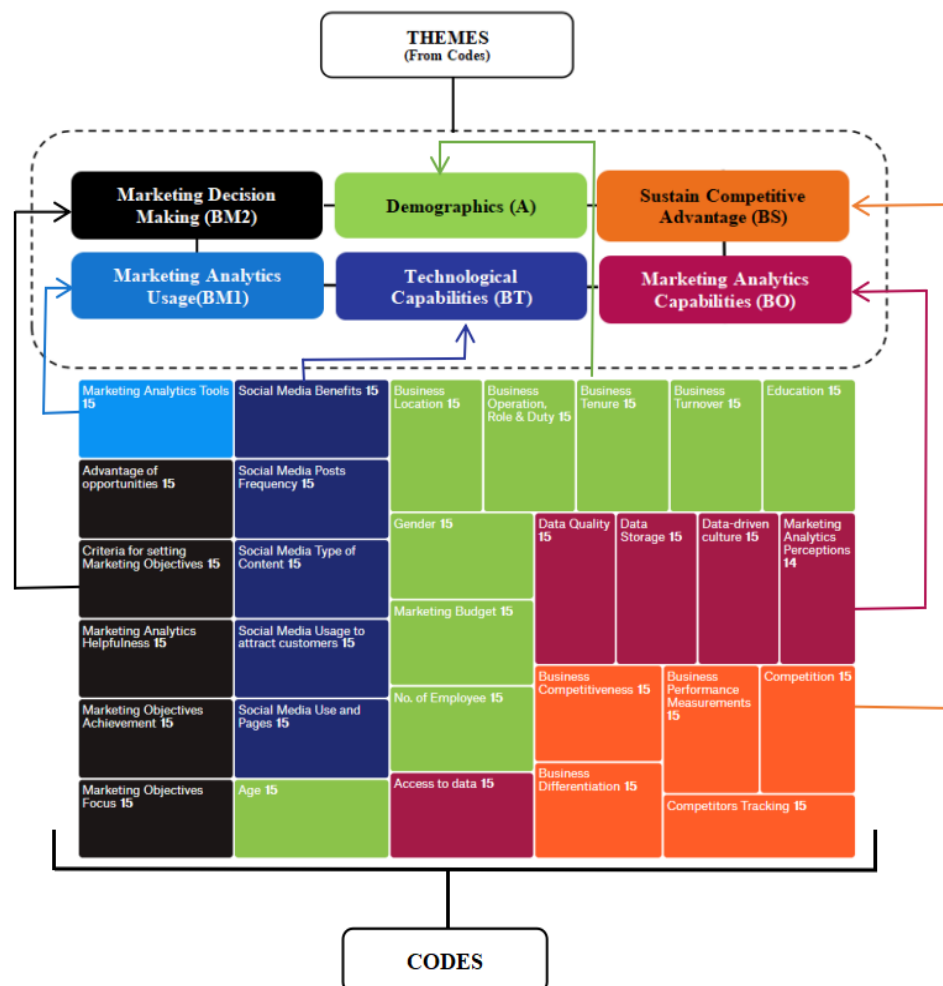


Figure 4.11. Coded theme.

4.11.2. Defining and grouping themes

When two words share a common stem, such as "house," "houses," and "housing," the Atlas.ti online software system systematically analyses them to establish thematic groupings. Subsequently, these themes undergo filtration to eliminate categories representing a significantly smaller portion of the researcher's output. Each node in Atlas.ti online software is assigned a name based on the most frequently used word or phrase within the respective group.

Thematic analysis of survey transcripts was conducted using qualitative data, with the researcher meticulously examining the data to discern recurring themes, encompassing topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning. The predefined research propositions provided a framework for categorising codes into distinct topics, including demography, technological expertise, marketing judgment, marketing analytics proficiency, application, and sustainable competitive advantage. These thematic categories, namely (a) Technological capabilities, (b) Organisational capabilities, (c) Environmental capabilities, (d) Marketing analytics usage, and (e) Marketing decision-making, were derived from the research propositions.

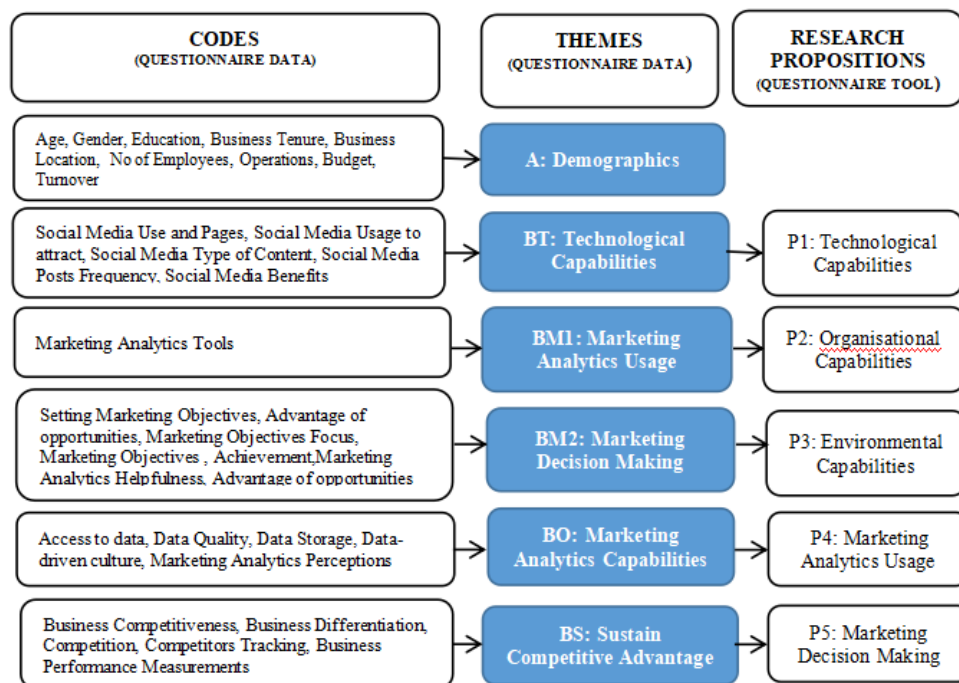


Figure 4.12. Codes, Themes and Propositions.

4.11.3. Process for coding and themes

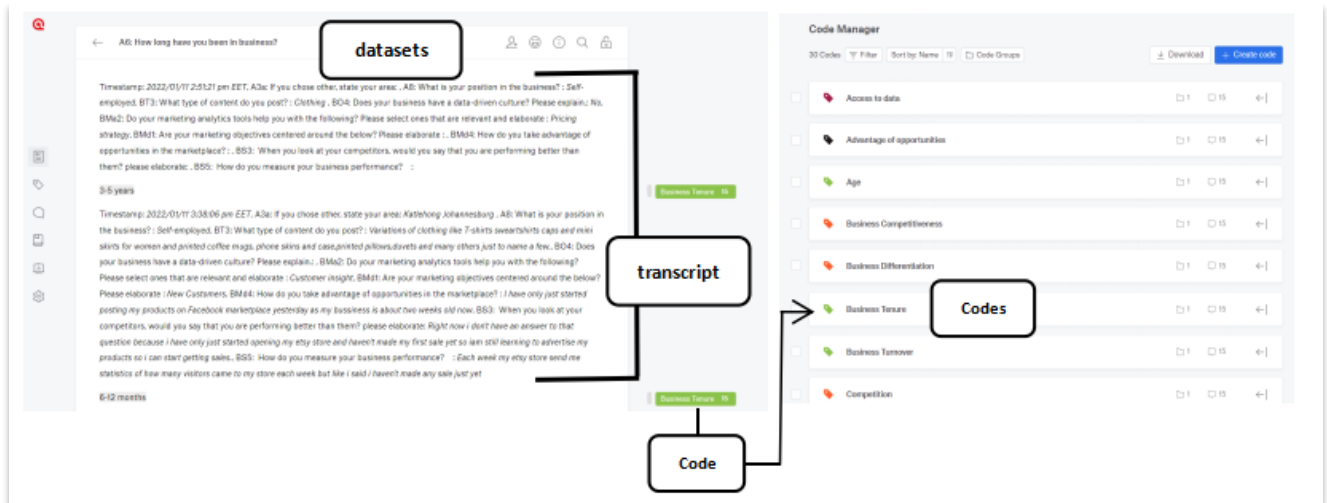


Figure 4.13. Coding Process.

The provided visual representation showcases a code within Atlas.ti. The dataset, brought in from an Excel CSV file, is observable on the left portion of the screen. On the right side, green colour-coded letters, denoting datasets originating from participants' responses, are discernible. Particularly within the demographic theme, age, budget, and gender data are highlighted in green and later exported to Excel for thorough analysis.

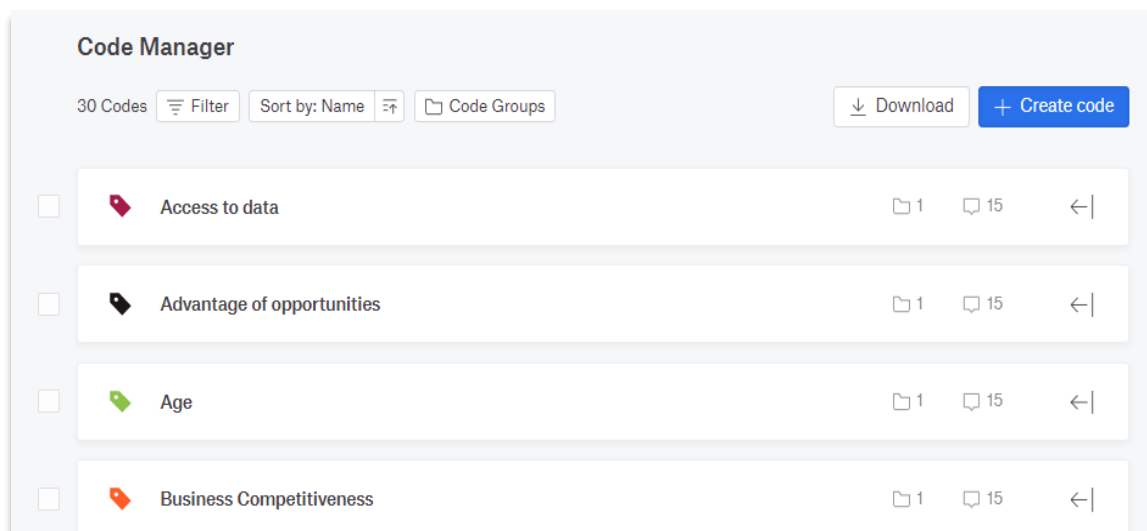


Figure 4.14. Code Manager

The provided illustration showcases the Code Manager screen of the Atlas.ti Online Platform. Within this interface, the number of documents and codes linked to each code

is displayed. The colors assigned to the tags play a pivotal role in clustering codes that are pertinent to specific topics, serving as a fundamental organisational element.

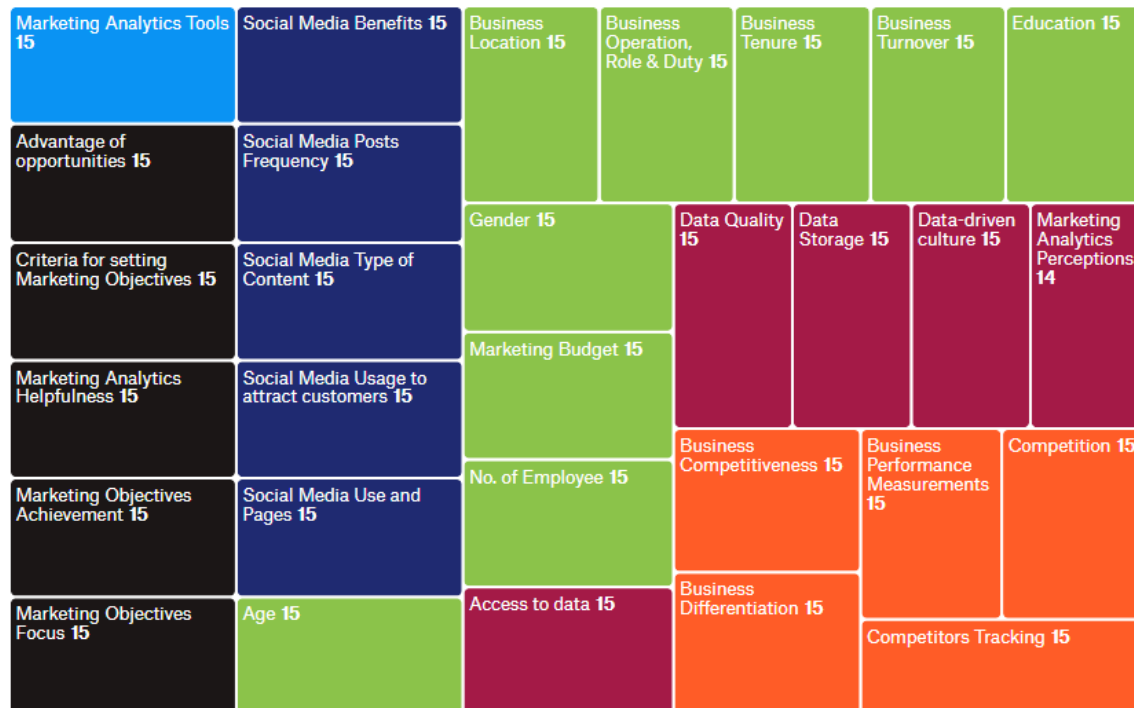


Figure 4.15. Grouped Codes

The provided image exhibits a subset of categorised codes within the Atlas.ti online platform, illustrating the streamlined management of codes and their connection to themes through organisation and color coding. Initially, the codes are grouped into categories before being linked to pertinent topics.

Questionnaire	Quotation	Codes
A1: What is your age?	18-24	Age
A1: What is your age?	18-24	Age
A1: What is your age?	25-34	Age
A1: What is your age?	25-34	Age
A1: What is your age?	25-34	Age
A1: What is your age?	25-34	Age
A1: What is your age?	25-34	Age
A1: What is your age?	25-34	Age
A1: What is your age?	35-44	Age
A1: What is your age?	35-44	Age
A1: What is your age?	35-44	Age
A1: What is your age?	45-54	Age
A1: What is your age?	45-54	Age
A1: What is your age?	55-64	Age
A1: What is your age?	None	Age
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	0-5%	Marketing Budget
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	0-5%	Marketing Budget
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	0-5%	Marketing Budget
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	0-5%	Marketing Budget
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	0-5%	Marketing Budget
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	0-5%	Marketing Budget
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	0-5%	Marketing Budget
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	6-10%	Marketing Budget
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	6-10%	Marketing Budget
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	6-10%	Marketing Budget
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	6-10%	Marketing Budget
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	11-20%	Marketing Budget
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	11-20%	Marketing Budget
A10: Please indicate your budget (in Rands) allocated for marketing activities?	11-20%	Marketing Budget
A2: What is your gender?	Female	Gender
A2: What is your gender?	Female	Gender
A2: What is your gender?	Female	Gender
A2: What is your gender?	Female	Gender
A2: What is your gender?	Female	Gender
A2: What is your gender?	Female	Gender

Figure 4.16. Coding Process

Each participant, by actively participating in the online survey, provided significant data for the demographic theme, which was then integrated into the datasets. This thematic approach enabled a thorough examination of the demographic attributes of the participants.

4.11.4. Data Preparation and Analysis

The collected data were transcribed, coded, and analysed using thematic analysis. This inductive approach involved identifying patterns and themes that emerged from the data, allowing for the development of new theories or refinement of existing ones. The analysis focused on understanding the ways in which social media and marketing analytics influenced marketing decision-making and contributed to competitive advantage.

4.11.5. Preparation and Presentation of the Research Report

The final step involved preparing and presenting the research report. The report included a detailed description of the research process, findings, and their implications. The findings were discussed in relation to the TOE and DC theories, highlighting the theoretical, practical, and managerial contributions of the study.

The report also provided recommendations for independent apparel retailers on how to effectively utilise social media and marketing analytics to enhance their marketing practices and achieve competitive advantage.

4.11.6. Measurement and Measure

As indicated by Malhotra et al. (2017) and Dalati (2018), the measurement aspect of marketing research provided benefits in comprehending consumer behavior and evaluating customer satisfaction. The measurement procedure began by choosing a subject of analysis or an observable event, followed by the establishment of criteria. This involved assigning codes to represent specific attributes of the subjects being analysed.

4.11.7. Measurement and Measure

The measurement aspect of marketing research provides benefits in comprehending consumer behaviour and evaluating customer satisfaction. The measurement procedure begins by choosing a subject of analysis or an observable event, followed by the establishment of criteria. This may involve assigning numerical values and codes to represent specific attributes of the subjects being analysed (Malhotra et al., 2017; Dalati, 2018).

4.11.8. Qualitative vs Quantitative measurements and measure

Qualitative data	Quantitative data
Qualitative, inherently non-countable data typically comprises textual passages, photographs, and videos.	Characterised by its numerical format, it lends itself to precise counting and measurement.
In most instances, qualitative data could be more structured, needing proper organisation and arrangement.	The data acquisition methods employed in quantitative studies exhibit a high degree of organisation and structure.
Consequently, the collection of qualitative data typically involves a smaller sample size.	Typically, larger sample sizes are utilised to collect quantitative data.
Qualitative data is valuable for eliciting profound insights into individuals' thoughts, emotions, and sentiments, as it possesses rich and illuminating qualities.	In quantitative research, quantifiable data is harnessed to establish factual information and discern underlying trends.
Researchers can employ qualitative data to uncover the underlying motivations driving human actions.	Researchers can effectively discern consumer actions and behaviours by analysing quantitative data.

Table 4.4 Qualitative vs Quantitative measurements and measure.

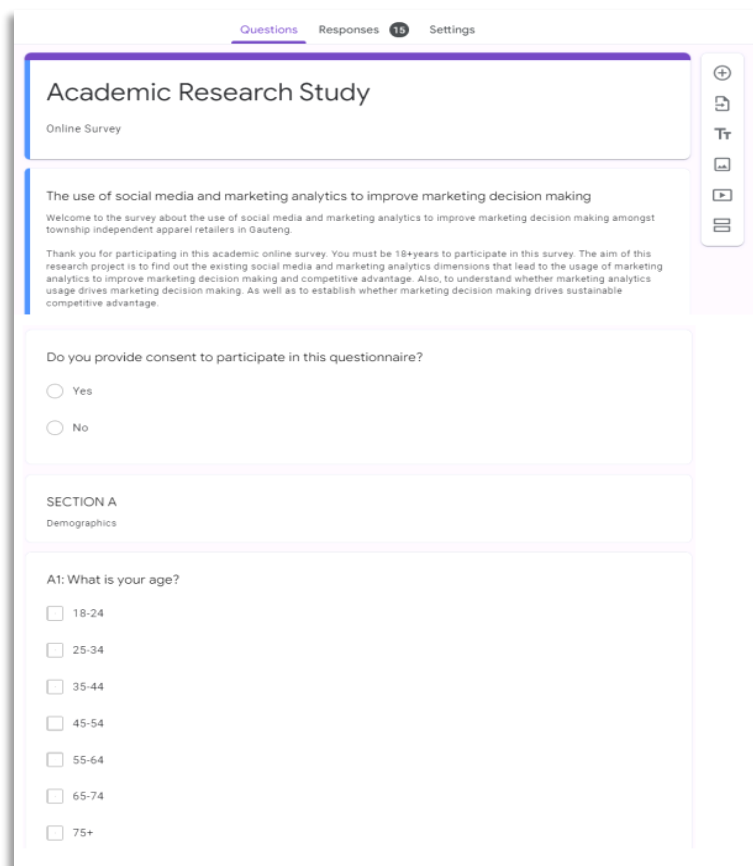
4.11.9. Qualitative Measurement

The fundamental goal of research experiments was to understand and analyse the phenomena in depth, exploring meanings, and developing insights from rich, contextual data, allowing for the identification of noteworthy trends and the development of pertinent deductions. The process involved measurement and categorisation to facilitate comparative analysis for the detection of potential patterns. Researchers utilise both quantitative and qualitative measures to classify the measurements of these variables.

4.12. Development and Pre-testing of the Questionnaire

4.12.1. Questionnaire Tool

Google Forms is an online application designed to facilitate the creation of standardised content for delivery to respondents in a user-friendly digital format.



The screenshot displays a Google Form interface for an 'Academic Research Study'. At the top, there are tabs for 'Questions', 'Responses' (showing 15), and 'Settings'. The form title is 'Academic Research Study' with the subtitle 'Online Survey'. A description follows: 'The use of social media and marketing analytics to improve marketing decision making'. Below this is a welcome message and a thank you note. The first question is a consent question: 'Do you provide consent to participate in this questionnaire?' with radio button options for 'Yes' and 'No'. This is followed by a section header 'SECTION A' and the sub-header 'Demographics'. The first question in this section is 'A1: What is your age?' with a list of age ranges: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, and 75+, each preceded by a checkbox.

Figure 4.17. Questionnaire tool.

Incorporated within a guided questionnaire accessible to all participants, questions may encompass a variety of online devices aimed at enhancing accessibility, as outlined by Kalnow, Lloyd, and Casey (2019).

4.12.2. Questionnaire Design

In pursuit of the study's goal to gather quantitative data, unstructured self-administered questionnaires were utilised for data collection. These questionnaires may consist of a mix of structured and unstructured queries.

Structured questions require respondents to choose an answer from a predetermined set of options, whereas unstructured questions encourage respondents to offer open-ended responses in their own words (Bhattacharjee 2012).

ONE-ONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
SECTION A
Demographics
1. What is your age?
2. What gender are you?
3. Where are your operations located?
4. Indicate the type of your business?
5. Can you describe your target market?
SECTION B
Social Media Usage
1. What is the nature of your operation?
2. What is it like being in charge of the operation?
3. Describe your preferred device to access your social media feed?
4. What are your lived experiences with using social media platforms?
5. Which features of social media do you frequently use?
6. How many followers do you have on your preferred social media platforms?
7. How would you describe your complete experience with social media platforms?
8. Explain what do you use social media for?
9. What social media platforms are you most active on?
10. Describe your use of social media?
11. Describe the type of content you post on social media?
12. Describe your time spent on social media every day?
13. Explain how do you post on social media?
14. Describe how often do you check-in to your social media accounts at any given time?
15. In your opinion, what social media platforms have the least appeal?
16. In your opinion, what social media platforms have the highest appeal?
17. In your opinion, how useful is social media for marketing your products?
18. Describe how your customer engagement on your social media?
19. Explain how do you track the success of social media for your business?
20. Describe how has social media had any effect on your marketing or promotions?
SECTION C
Marketing Analytics
1. Explain how do you go about developing social media and marketing ideas?
2. Explain how you set up your social media and marketing goals and targets?
3. How do you employ, hire or contract anyone trained in data analysis (yourself included)?
4. How do you go about discussing acquiring, analyzing, or other activities involving customer data?
5. How do you use social media data to study the impact of your marketing plans on consumer sentiment and purchasing behaviour?
6. How would you explain your knowledge of the idea of marketing analytics?
7. Explain your decision-making process when it comes to marketing?
8. How do you analyze/study the sales data?
9. How do you analyze/study the Return on your marketing investment?
10. How is your marketing analytics confidence levels?

Figure 4.18. The Research Questionnaire Design.

The survey commenced with an introduction outlining the study's purpose, succeeded by a consent form for respondents to indicate their willingness to participate.

Section A of the questionnaire focuses on demographic details of participants, including gender, age, highest qualification attained, employment status, and preference for sneaker brands. Conversely, section B addresses social media usage, while section C delves into marketing analytics.

4.12.3. Pretesting of questionnaire

The pre-testing process, as defined, entails a scaled-down simulation of the formal data collection process to identify practical issues related to data collection instruments, sessions, and methodology (Malhotra et al., 2017; Buschle, Reiter, and Bethmann, 2021).

The primary goals of the pre-testing phase were twofold: to refine the questionnaire and evaluate participants' comprehension of the questions, thereby mitigating potential data recording issues and allowing the researcher to assess the questions' reliability (Saunders et al., 2007; Malhotra et al., 2017; Buschle, Reiter, and Bethmann, 2021). A pilot study involving four respondents revealed a discrepancy in the demographic section of the questionnaire.

Participants misunderstood the "education level" question, confusing it with their current educational status when it actually referred to their highest qualification. This misunderstanding prompted a revision in the questionnaire. Subsequently, a reliability test was conducted on the collected data, confirming the measurement instrument's suitability for future use.

4.12.4. Sampling design

This study opted for non-probability sampling, which minimises reliance on the principles of probability theory. Specifically, non-probability sampling methods, including accidental or purposive sampling, were under consideration. It is essential to highlight that the majority of qualitative sampling techniques are purposive, aligning with the study's specific approach in tackling sampling challenges by concentrating on predefined groups earmarked for investigation (Malhotra et al., 2017; Moser and Korstjens, 2018; Elfil and Negida, 2017).

4.12.4.1. Strengths and weaknesses of sampling techniques

Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses
Convenience sampling.	Least expensive, least time-consuming, most convenient.	Selection bias, sample not representative, not recommended by descriptive or causal research.
Judgment sampling.	Low-cost, convenient, not time-consuming, ideal for exploratory research design.	Does not allow generalisation, subjective.
Quota sampling.	Sample can be controlled for certain characteristics.	Selection bias, no assurance.
Snowball sampling.	Can estimate rare characteristics.	Time-consuming.
Simple random sampling.	Easily understood, results projectable.	Difficult to construct sampling frame, expensive, lower precision, no assurance of representativeness.
Systematic sampling.	It can increase representativeness, is easier to implement than simple random sampling, and a sampling frame is not always necessary.	Can decrease representativeness.
Stratified sampling.	Includes all important sub-population, precision	Difficult to select relevant stratification variables, not feasible to stratify on many variables, expensive
Cluster sampling.	Easy to implement, cost-effective.	Imprecise, difficult to compute and interpret results.

Table 4.5: Strengths and weaknesses of sampling techniques (Malhotra et al., 2017; Malhotra and Birks, 2006).

The strengths and weaknesses of each sampling technique are shown in Table 1.

4.12.4.2. The Sampling process steps

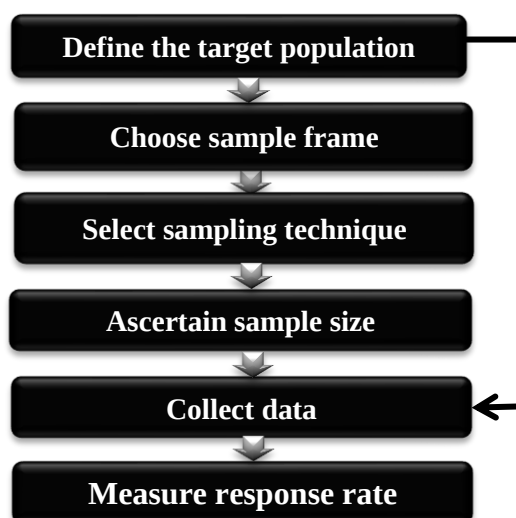


Figure 4.19. Sampling process steps.

The sample size for this study was established based on the criteria of reaching data saturation and ensuring participant accessibility (Saunders, Sim, and Kingstone et al., 2018; Guest, Namey, and Chen, 2020; Konstantina, Barnett, Thorpe, and Young, 2018).

4.12.4.3. The target population

As outlined by Hult, Pride, and Ferrel (2014), a population refers to all the components, units, or individuals that capture a researcher's interest in a particular study. Similarly, according to Kumar (2019:487), a population is the collective group of individuals that a researcher aims to study and gain insights about.

The study sought to examine a target population consisting of 10 to 20 independent apparel retailers aged 18 years and older, representing diverse genders. These participants were specifically chosen from townships within Gauteng province, including Soweto, Tembisa, KwaThema, Mamelodi, Kagiso, Daveyton, Rabie Ridge, Alexandra, and Eldorado Park. A prerequisite was their active involvement in social media and possessing a degree of expertise in digital marketing.

4.12.4.4. Respondents

The research involved selecting fifteen participants, specifically independent apparel retailers aged 18 years or older, from Gauteng townships. These individuals were actively engaged in utilising social media and marketing analytics to inform their marketing decisions.

4.12.4.5. Thematic analysis

Strohacker, Zakrajsek, Schaltegger, and Springer (2019) conducted a study titled "Willingness to Engage in Aerobic Activity in Adults with Obesity," utilising thematic analysis and online questionnaires. A total of 1,059 individuals initiated the survey on Qualtrics, with a subset of 112 obese adults providing high-quality responses that underwent detailed content and thematic pattern analysis.

4.12.4.6. Data Collection

Data collection for this study was exclusively conducted through an online survey format using Google Forms, following the approach suggested by Invoke (2020).

The survey was distributed to independent retailers residing in selected Gauteng townships, including Soweto, Tembisa, KwaThema, Mamelodi, Kagiso, Daveyton, Rabie Ridge, Alexandra, and Eldorado Park, all aged 18 or above. Survey recipients were limited to individuals actively utilising social media platforms for marketing. Various online channels, including email, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and other social media platforms, were employed to reach and recruit participants.

Taking into account cost considerations and the specific characteristics of the target population, virtual interviews were not included in the data collection process. It is crucial to note that participants were not asked personal or sensitive questions during this study that could have caused discomfort, such as inquiries about their health status or medical history, in line with the recommendations of Malhotra et al. (2017).

4.12.4.7. Use of surveys

Mackey, Cooling, and Berrie (1984) outlined their utilisation of pond net surveys in rivers for collecting qualitative samples, concluding that these surveys were more effective in generating species lists compared to core samples.

Interestingly, Jansen (2010) contends that many qualitative research studies use semi-structured interviews with a restricted sample of community members in order to highlight the diversity of cognitive processes or behaviors within a population. Jansen (2010) suggests that most of these studies could be categorised as qualitative surveys because they explore the range of characteristics among group members.

As defined by Bryman and Bell (2011), a survey serves as a research tool employed to gather information about the beliefs and experiences of a group of individuals through a series of structured questions. Nayak and Narayan (2021) affirm that survey questions are typically predetermined, aiming to extract specific information on preferences, opinions, behaviour, or factual details from a particular group of individuals. According to Clarke, Boulton, Davey, and McEvoy (2020), qualitative surveys hold significant potential for qualitative researchers, particularly with the rise of online survey delivery

options, as they align with the values of qualitative research and capture the richness of qualitative data. However, Clarke et al. (2020) highlight that this approach needs to be more widely used, with limited methodological discourse on qualitative surveys.

4.12.4.8. Online surveys

Alizmail and Zhang (2020) conducted a qualitative investigation into participants' interactions with a Likert scale featuring face emojis in online questionnaires, seeking to understand their perspectives, interpretations, and attitudes toward emojis. A study by Evans and Mathur (2018) concluded that online survey research is now more frequently utilised and better received by academics compared to 2005.

On the contrary, Bell (2019) argues that, despite established methodologies for conducting survey research to ensure robust study design and reliable outcomes, the quality of survey research has declined due to the prevalence of user-friendly online survey platforms.

While online survey tools, including websites and software, facilitate the creation and distribution of questionnaires, they also introduce potential biases. Researchers considering online survey administration are encouraged to thoroughly examine how survey research principles can be adapted to online formats to mitigate biases and enhance research rigour (Bell, 2019).

In delineating distinctions within specific research studies, Golebie, Miller, and Csesny (2020) shed light on nuanced variations between email and online surveys. However, these distinctions tend to disappear when aggregated, suggesting that mode differences observed in individual studies may be idiosyncratic rather than mode-specific (Golebie et al., 2020). Online surveys provide an alternative to data collection methods such as mail, phone, and in-person surveys (Golebie et al., 2020). Some objections raised against online surveys include survey and item nonresponse biases and data disparities (Golebie et al., 2020).

4.12.4.9. Qualitative Online Survey

According to Braun, Clarke, Boulton, and McEvoy (2020), using online surveys as a qualitative research tool can help dispel common misconceptions about this research methodology. Their aim is to clarify that online surveys present an interesting and versatile approach with inherent advantages for both study participants and researchers, as endorsed by the works of Malhotra et al. (2017) and Braun et al. (2020).

4.12.4.10. The benefits of Qualitative Survey Questions

Qualitative survey questions gather information that is challenging to quantify easily, covering aspects such as attitudes, behaviours, and challenges. These surveys primarily utilise open-ended questions designed to extract contextual insights from specific datasets, often exploring the underlying reasons behind respondents' responses, as described by Malhotra et al. (2017).

4.13. Data analysis

Kalpokaite and Radivojevic (2018) outline the analysis process using the four recurring cycles of the commonly utilised analytical strategies model, which include the Inspection Cycle, Coding Cycle, Categorisation Cycle, and Modeling Cycle.



Figure 4.20. The four iterative cycles (Kalpokaite and Radivojevic, 2018).

According to Lowe, Norris, Farris, and Babbage (2018) data saturation is reached at the point where observed data no longer offer new insights relevant to the research questions, is a fundamental aspect of qualitative research analysis. The study utilised thematic analysis, encompassing stages like transcription, coding, categorisation, and theme identification, to investigate and present thematic patterns in various types of qualitative data, including text, images, and media (Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules, 2017).

The data analysis process comprises the following steps: (a) data collection, (b) transcription of audio/video files, (c) coding of transcripts, (d) development of categories and themes, (e) delineation and naming of themes, and (f) the generation of the research report. The software tool Atlas.ti will be employed for data analysis.

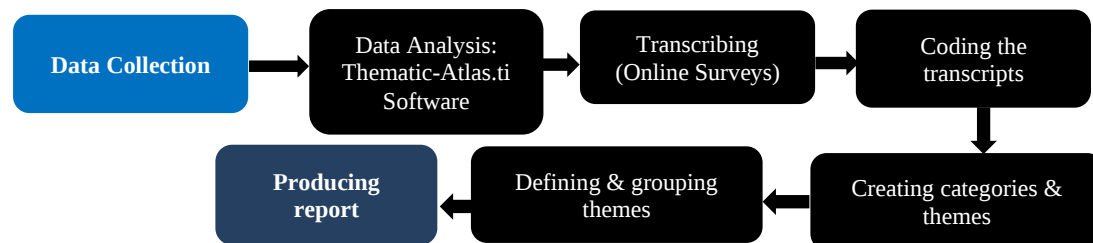


Figure: 4.21. The data analysis procedure

A comprehensive conceptual framework was formulated in order to consolidate and validate prior knowledge, incorporating insights from the data analysis results and the literature review, following the guidance of Kalpokaite and Radivojevic (2018). Transcription, according to Bailey (2008), involves a meticulous process of attentive listening, repeated examination of facts, and, at times, visual observation.

In the context of data analysis, the methodology plays a crucial initial role. An essential aspect of this process is the researcher's ability to objectively grasp the empirical data, emphasising an approach centered on evidence rather than preconceived expectations.

As per Bailey (2008), this approach facilitates the discovery of insights and the generation of ideas during the analysis. The researcher diligently scrutinised the data to identify recurring themes—topics, concepts, and patterns of meaning that consistently emerged.

4.13.3. Coding the transcripts

As emphasised by Williams and Moser (2019), coding assumes a critical structural function in qualitative research, enabling the interpretation of data and subsequent steps to propel the study's objectives. The coding methods utilised involved procedures crafted to reveal the underlying themes present in the data (Williams and Moser, 2019).

4.13.4. Creating categories and themes

The researcher employed a systematic process of coding, grouping, and color-coding for the research propositions, including (1) Technological capabilities, (2) Organisational capabilities, (3) Environmental capabilities, (4) Marketing analytics usage, (5) Marketing decision making, and (6) Competitive advantage. This structured approach facilitated the organisation and assignment of codes to corresponding themes. The coded elements were then arranged and correlated with relevant topics.

To precisely define the data unit, the coding methodology utilised the "Atlas.ti online software," capturing verbatim words or phrases from participants' narratives. Notably, the coding using "Atlas.ti online software" enabled the direct representation of participants' voices, providing insight into their discussions regarding the phenomena, following the approach outlined by Castleberry and Nolen (2018).

4.14. Methods of Data Verification

4.14.1. Triangulation

Triangulation is a methodological approach that enhances the credibility and depth of research findings by incorporating multiple perspectives, data sources, or methods. As defined by Flick (2018), triangulation involves the combination of different data sources or methods to validate and enrich the research outcomes, thereby improving the robustness of qualitative research. This method is essential in addressing the potential biases and limitations inherent in any single approach.

In qualitative research, triangulation is employed to increase the validity and reliability of the study's results. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), triangulation allows researchers to cross-verify findings from various data sources or methods, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This approach helps in overcoming the subjectivity that may arise from relying solely on one method or perspective (Flick, 2018).

The application of triangulation is particularly relevant in marketing research, where understanding complex consumer behaviours and market dynamics often requires integrating diverse data sources. As noted by Hox and Boeijs (2005), employing triangulation in marketing studies allows researchers to combine insights from primary

data, secondary sources, and theoretical perspectives, thereby providing a richer and more accurate portrayal of market phenomena. Furthermore, Morse (2015) highlights that triangulation is crucial in achieving data saturation and ensuring a thorough analysis in qualitative marketing research.

Overall, triangulation strengthens the research process by merging various data sources and methods, leading to more credible and nuanced findings. This methodological approach is vital in overcoming the limitations of single-method studies and enhancing the reliability of research outcomes.

4.1.4.2. Triangulation in Relation to this Study

Triangulation was employed as the primary method for data verification in this study, aiming to enhance the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings. This approach involved integrating multiple data sources and validation techniques to ensure the research outcomes were robust and reliable.

4.1.4.3. Credibility

Primary Data Verification: The study collected primary data through interviews and surveys with independent apparel retailers. To establish credibility, the data was cross-checked within and across participant responses. Consistent patterns were sought, and any discrepancies were scrutinised to ensure accurate representation of participants' experiences and views. This process helped validate the findings and reduce the likelihood of biases or inaccuracies in the data.

4.1.4.4. Transferability

Secondary Data Integration: Secondary data, including existing literature, market reports, and competitor analyses, were reviewed to provide context and enhance the transferability of the findings. By situating the primary data within a broader industry context, the study demonstrated how the findings might apply to similar settings or populations. This contextualisation allowed for a better understanding of the generalisability of the research results beyond the specific sample studied.

4.1.4.5. Dependability

Expert Review: The involvement of the supervisor in the research process contributed to ensuring dependability. The supervisor's review provided an external validation of the research methods, data interpretation, and conclusions. This expert oversight helped to confirm that the research process was consistent and reliable over time, addressing any potential methodological issues or inconsistencies.

4.1.4.6. Confirmability

Cross-Referencing and Benchmarking: To establish confirmability, the study cross-referenced primary data with secondary sources and compared participant responses with documented industry trends.

Alignments between the data and existing literature supported the study's findings, while any deviations were explored to ensure accuracy. The use of secondary data to corroborate primary data and the supervisor's review of the findings reinforced the objectivity and neutrality of the research.

4.1.4.7. Limitations of Triangulation

Potential Limitations: Despite its strengths, triangulation has limitations. The reliance on secondary data sources introduced the possibility of outdated or biased information affecting the context of the primary data. Additionally, while triangulation enhances credibility and confirmability, it does not entirely eliminate biases or inaccuracies in the primary data. The subjective nature of qualitative research and the potential for participant biases could still impact the overall findings. Furthermore, the varied availability and quality of secondary data could affect the comprehensiveness of the contextual analysis.

In this study, triangulation played a pivotal role in enhancing the credibility and reliability of the research findings concerning independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships. By integrating multiple data sources, analytical methods, and perspectives, triangulation ensured a comprehensive and robust validation of the results.

The use of triangulation involved the convergence of data from various sources, including primary data collected through interviews and surveys, and secondary data

such as existing literature, market reports, and competitor analyses. This approach not only provided a multifaceted view of the research topic but also helped contextualise the primary data within a broader industry framework.

In terms of credibility, triangulation strengthened the study's findings by cross-verifying information from different data sources, thereby reducing the risk of bias and enhancing the overall trustworthiness of the results. The incorporation of diverse perspectives and methods ensured a more nuanced understanding of the research questions, aligning with the principles of qualitative research.

Regarding transferability, the use of triangulation allowed for the examination of patterns and themes across different contexts, making it possible to draw parallels and insights that could be relevant to similar settings beyond Gauteng townships. This approach provided a basis for generalising findings to other comparable environments.

Dependability was addressed through the consistent application of triangulation methods, which contributed to the stability and reliability of the research process. By systematically verifying data through multiple lenses, the study ensured that its findings were not merely a product of a single method or source but were reflective of a broader, more robust analysis.

Confirmability was achieved by maintaining transparency in the data verification process. Triangulation made it clear how conclusions were drawn and provided an audit trail for the research process. This transparency supported the objectivity of the findings and allowed for an accurate reflection of the data without undue influence from researcher biases.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of triangulation. Despite its strengths, the method relies on the availability and quality of data from multiple sources, and the integration of diverse data can sometimes lead to complexities in interpretation. Additionally, while triangulation enhances validity, it does not eliminate the potential for researcher bias or methodological constraints.

In conclusion, triangulation significantly contributed to the robustness of this study by validating findings through a multifaceted approach. It provided a comprehensive

framework for understanding the utilisation of marketing strategies among independent apparel retailers and ensured that the research outcomes were both credible and dependable. In this section, a comprehensive examination of statistical analysis and the outcomes derived from the primary data gathered in the investigation of independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships is provided. The chapter covers various elements, including the approach to data collection, pattern matching, data analysis, coding processes, data reduction methods, criteria for data selection, identification of themes based on research propositions, research findings, thematic analysis, and methodologies utilised for data validation.

4.15. Ethics Consideration

Prior to initiating data collection, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the University of Witwatersrand Ethics Committee, ensuring compliance with ethical standards. The information provided to participants regarding the data sought adhered to established criteria within the research profession, clearly outlining the research's purpose and the utilisation of their contributions.

Participants received comprehensive briefings through the provision of an information sheet and a consent form, ensuring their thorough understanding of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their option to withdraw at any stage throughout the research process.

Access to the surveys was restricted to the researcher and the supervisor, both of whom diligently safeguarded the data. With participants' consent and a commitment to preserving anonymity, the data will be securely retained at the University of Witwatersrand for five years. The research report encompasses all relevant details concerning the ethical procedures, aligning with Morgan (2016).

4.16. Conclusion

This chapter detailed the comprehensive research methodology employed in this study, which aimed to explore the impact of integrating social media and marketing analytics on marketing decision-making among independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships.

The research followed a qualitative design rooted in interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, emphasising the subjective meanings and experiences of participants.

The study identified a gap in empirical literature regarding the use of social media and marketing analytics by independent apparel retailers. The TOE framework and DC theory were integrated to address this problem, offering a nuanced understanding of how these tools influence marketing decision-making and competitive advantage.

Data were collected using a self-administered online survey distributed through various social media and messaging platforms.

Purposive sampling ensured that participants actively using social media and marketing analytics were selected, enabling the collection of relevant and representative data. The use of online surveys was justified by their efficiency and ability to engage diverse participant groups, as supported by contemporary research.

The questionnaire was developed and pre-tested to ensure clarity and relevance. Survey links were distributed via Facebook Messenger, Instagram Messenger, Twitter Messenger, WhatsApp, and email. Participants had the option to accept, decline, or disregard the survey invitation, with the majority of responses sourced from Facebook Marketplace, Instagram, and Twitter.

The data preparation phase involved transferring responses from Google Forms to Excel, followed by a thorough examination of the data. This process included data reduction, abstraction, and transformation using Atlas.ti online software, ensuring the data were organised, simplified, and ready for analysis.

Data coding was conducted using both inductive and deductive approaches in Atlas.ti. Theoretical (selective) coding identified core categories, while memoing captured reflective notes throughout the analysis. The coding process maintained the original language and specific jargon of participants, allowing for the adjustment of code names as necessary.

The data analysis employed thematic analysis in order to identify and categorise significant themes. This was followed by pattern analysis and significance evaluation to interpret the data, providing actionable insights and understanding the broader

implications of the findings. Contextual understanding was emphasised, focusing on the participants' perspectives and constructing detailed narratives to reflect their experiences.

The analysis identified key themes related to technological, organisational, and environmental capabilities, as well as the use of marketing analytics and decision-making processes. These themes were discussed in relation to the TOE and DC theories, highlighting their theoretical, practical, and managerial contributions. The results were summarised, and actionable recommendations were provided, ensuring the findings were relevant and useful for stakeholders.

The research methodology employed in this study was meticulously designed to ensure the integrity and utility of the data collected. By integrating established theoretical frameworks and employing rigorous qualitative analysis techniques, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of how independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships use social media and marketing analytics to enhance their marketing decision-making. This methodological approach not only addressed the research objectives but also contributed valuable insights to the existing literature, paving the way for future research in this domain.

5. Chapter 5: FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the thematic analysis and findings derived from the primary data collected in the study of independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships. Participants in the study responded to inquiries probing their use of social media, marketing analytics, and marketing decision-making to pursue sustainable competitive advantages. The research aimed to address a discernible gap in existing literature, making the investigation both relevant and worthwhile.

To sustain competitiveness, independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships must actively engage in social media marketing to secure a sustainable competitive advantage by effectively attracting and retaining their customer base. The study explored these retailers' strategies in utilising social media and marketing analytics to enhance their marketing decision-making and gain a competitive edge.

The primary goal of the study was to bridge this gap by providing insights into how independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships engaged with social media marketing and analytics to enhance their decision-making processes and secure a sustainable competitive edge.

The secondary objective of this study was to develop the Integrated Social Media and Marketing Analytics (ISMMA) framework, inspired by established theories such as the Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) framework and the Dynamic Capabilities (DC) model. This framework was designed to offer a comprehensive understanding of how social media and marketing analytics could be effectively integrated into marketing strategies.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, thematic analysis was chosen as the analytical approach. Data collection involved a self-administered online survey created using Google Forms, featuring a semi-structured questionnaire designed to capture the firsthand experiences of independent retailers in their use of social media for marketing activities.

Thematic data analysis was performed using the online platform, Atlas.ti, commonly utilised in qualitative research for effective data analysis. The thematic analysis aimed to identify patterns, enabling data coding into predefined categories corresponding to the research propositions or emergent themes that directly addressed the central research question.

This approach allowed for a detailed examination of the qualitative data, providing insights into the subjective experiences and perspectives of the participants. By focusing on thematic analysis, the study aimed to uncover deep and meaningful patterns within the data that inform the understanding of how social media and marketing analytics were utilised by independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships.

5.1.2. The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the utilisation of social media and marketing analytics by independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships. The aim was to understand how these tools were used to improved marketing decision-making and contributed to achieving a sustained competitive advantage.

5.1.2.1. Primary Research Objectives

The primary goal of this research was to identify prevailing factors within social media and marketing analytics influencing the adoption of marketing analytics, examining the impact of marketing analytics on improved marketing decision-making, and determining the pivotal role of proficient marketing decision-making in achieving sustainable competitive advantages.

5.1.2.2. Secondary Research Objectives

The secondary objectives introduced the ISMMA framework, which was formulated based on the grounding of TOE theory and the DC model. This framework underscored the critical role of integrating technology, data analysis, and decision-making skills as essential components for maintaining competitiveness. The study specifically focused on independent apparel retailers in the Gauteng townships.

5.1.3. Research questions

The primary research question guiding this study was: How do independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships use social media and marketing analytics to improve their marketing decision-making and achieve a sustained competitive advantage? In addition to this main question, the study also focused on the following sub-questions: What is the nature of the current use of social media and marketing analytics? How does marketing analytics usage drive marketing decision-making? And, how does marketing decision-making drive sustainable competitive advantages?

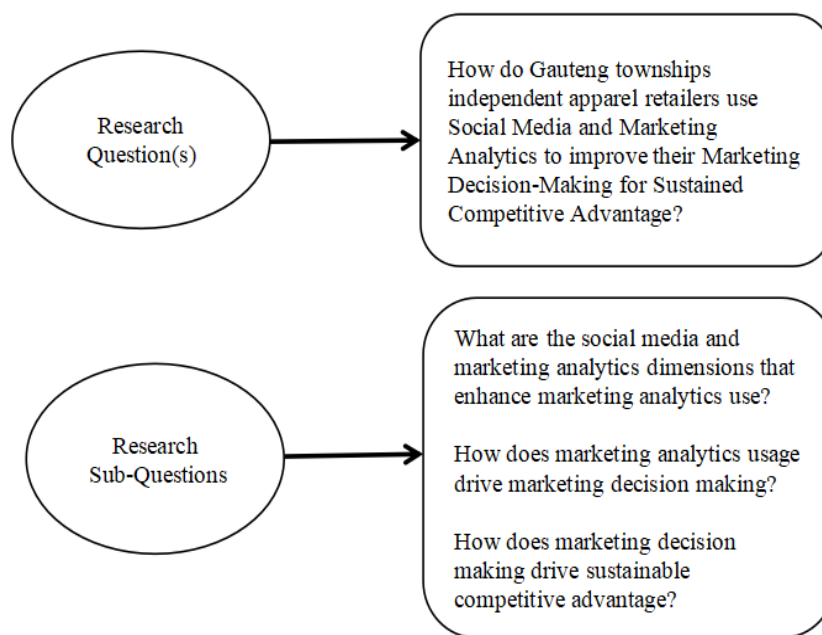


Figure 5.1: Research Questions

5.2. Research Results

5.2.1. Respondents

In the research, fifteen (15) independent retailers from Gauteng townships voluntarily participated, sharing their individual experiences. Each participant provided personal background information, including details about their location, experience in social media marketing, business tenure, revenue, language proficiency, and educational background. Participants were given the option to voluntarily disclose their backgrounds during the online survey.

Summarising this segment of the demographic profile reveals a diverse group of respondents with varying ages and educational backgrounds, from high school graduates to university-educated individuals. Most respondents are founders and self-employed individuals running businesses in Gauteng townships. The scale of their operations varies, with some managing solo ventures and others employing more than forty-nine individuals.

The dataset also shows that the duration of their businesses ranges from as short as six months to as long as twenty years, with annual turnovers from zero to over a hundred thousand Rand. Additionally, while a considerable number of respondents allocate a conservative budget for marketing, a smaller segment invests an amount exceeding the minimum threshold.

5.2.2. Thematic Analysis

This section presented a thematic analysis of the data collected from independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships, emphasising their use of social media and marketing analytics to enhance marketing decision-making and achieve a sustained competitive advantage. The findings were organised under key themes that aligned with the study's research objectives and questions.

5.2.2.1. Technological Capabilities (BT)

5.2.2.1.1. Social Media Usage (SMU)

The data revealed that a significant number of respondents placed considerable emphasis on leveraging various social media platforms, such as Facebook Marketplace, Facebook Group Pages, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter. Facebook and Instagram emerged as the top two preferred channels among participants. These platforms served the dual purposes of marketing and networking, where respondents frequently disseminated product information and images, especially of clothing items such as tops. Their motivations for engaging with social media included soliciting feedback, garnering ratings and reviews, and seeking support from their existing audience while expanding their reach to potential new customers.

5.2.2.1.2 Relevance to Research Objectives and Questions

The relevance of this study to the research objectives and questions centred on investigating how independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships utilised social media and marketing analytics. The primary research objective aimed to explore the utilisation of these tools to enhance marketing decision-making and secure a sustained competitive advantage.

The research questions sought to address how these retailers employed social media and marketing analytics to improve their marketing strategies and the nature of their use of these platforms. Specifically, the questions were focused on understanding the methods by which these retailers leveraged social media and analytics to make more informed marketing decisions and how these practices contributed to achieving a sustained competitive advantage.

The study aimed to uncover the extent to which social media and marketing analytics influenced their marketing strategies and decisions.

5.2.2.1.2. Frequency of Content Posts (FCP)

The respondents indicated varying frequencies in their social media posting activities. A considerable number of participants reported engaging in weekly posting on their social media channels. Additionally, some respondents maintained a daily posting routine, while others reported a monthly posting frequency. This variation reflected different strategies and capabilities in maintaining an active online presence.

5.2.2.1.2.1. Relevance to Research Objectives and Questions

The research objective focused on investigating the utilisation of social media by independent apparel retailers. This objective aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these retailers employed social media in their marketing strategies.

The research question sought to explore the nature of the current use of social media and marketing analytics among these retailers.

Specifically, it aimed to reveal the patterns and methods of social media utilisation, including how these platforms were integrated into their marketing practices. The study sought to uncover detailed insights into how social media and marketing analytics were being used to support their business objectives and decision-making processes.

5.2.2.1.3. Type of Content Posted on Social Media (TCPSM)

The respondents primarily posted images of their products, including T-shirts, sweatshirts, caps, and miniskirts, often showcased on models. This visual content aimed to attract and engage potential customers by providing a clear representation of the products offered.

5.2.2.1.3.1. Relevance to Research Objectives and Questions

The research sought to explore the use of social media by independent apparel retailers and its impact on their marketing practices. Respondents predominantly posted images of their products, such as T-shirts, sweatshirts, caps, and miniskirts, often showcased on models. This visual content was strategically designed to attract and engage potential customers by providing a clear and appealing representation of the products offered.

By focusing on high-quality imagery, retailers aimed to enhance customer interest and interaction. This practice reflects the broader research objective of examining how social media can be effectively utilised to improve marketing decision-making and achieve a competitive advantage.

The nature of this social media use demonstrates how visual content contributes to engaging customers and potentially driving sales, aligning with the study's aim to assess the role of social media and marketing analytics in the marketing strategies of independent apparel retailers.

5.2.2.1.4. Social Media Leads (SML)

The Respondents used social media to build a following and attract potential customers through consistent posting of high-quality product images.

They also engaged in promotional activities, including offering special discounts, generating top-notch content, sharing brand images and designs, and creating captivating and entertaining posts to facilitate interactions for order placement. Detailed product descriptions were included to elucidate specific details and emphasise the exceptional qualities of their merchandise.

5.2.2.1.4.1. Relevance to Research Objectives and Questions

The research aimed to investigate the utilisation of social media by independent apparel retailers and its impact on their marketing strategies and competitive advantage. The data indicates that respondents effectively used social media to build a following and attract potential customers through the consistent posting of high-quality product images.

Their promotional strategies included offering special discounts, generating engaging content, and sharing brand images and designs. They created captivating and entertaining posts to facilitate customer interactions and encourage order placements. Respondents also included detailed product descriptions to highlight the unique qualities of their merchandise.

This approach not only enhanced their visibility but also demonstrated how social media could be leveraged to improve marketing decision-making and gain a competitive edge, thus aligning with the research objectives of assessing how social media and marketing analytics influence marketing strategies and competitive advantage.

5.2.2.1.5. Benefits of Social Media (BSM)

The respondents highlighted several advantages of using social media, such as expanding their customer base and connecting with new individuals. Social media advertising was cost-effective and eliminated the need for advertising agencies, allowing businesses to promote their offerings effectively within budget constraints. Social media platforms enhanced business visibility, attracting more followers and customers, leading to higher product sales and broader market reach.

The accessibility and ubiquity of social media on smartphones made it a valuable tool for minimising marketing expenditures while providing brand exposure to a geographically dispersed audience.

5.2.2.1.5.1. Relevance to Research Objectives and Questions

The objective of this section was to investigate the utilisation of social media by independent apparel retailers, focusing on its impact on marketing decision-making and competitive advantage. The data revealed several key benefits of social media use. Respondents highlighted that social media platforms facilitated the expansion of their customer base and enabled them to connect with new individuals. They found social media advertising to be cost-effective, eliminating the need for traditional advertising agencies and allowing for effective promotion within budget constraints. This increased visibility not only attracted more followers and customers, but also led to higher product sales and a broader market reach.

Additionally, the accessibility and ubiquity of social media on smartphones made it a valuable tool for minimising marketing expenditures while providing extensive brand exposure to a geographically dispersed audience.

These findings underscore how the utilisation of social media contributes to improving marketing decision-making and achieving sustained competitive advantages, aligning with the research objectives of evaluating the impact of marketing analytics on decision-making processes and competitive advantage.

5.2.2.2. Marketing Analytics Usage (BM1)

5.2.2.2.1. Marketing Analytics Tools Used (BMa1)

The Respondents used various social media platforms, particularly Instagram and social media marketplaces, as key tools in their marketing efforts. Additionally, they employed alternative strategies, such as conducting manual surveys, observing spending patterns, and engaging in display advertising at exhibitions, flea markets, and social markets. Despite these insights, eight out of the fifteen respondents chose not to provide detailed information in this section.

5.2.2.2.2. Relevance to Research Objectives and Questions

This section investigates the utilisation of marketing analytics by independent apparel retailers by assessing how these retailers employed various tools and strategies to enhance their marketing efforts. The data revealed that respondents primarily utilised social media platforms, with Instagram and social media marketplaces being central to their marketing activities. Additionally, they employed alternative strategies, including conducting manual surveys, observing spending patterns, and engaging in display advertising at exhibitions, flea markets, and social markets.

This approach was intended to assess the impact of analytics usage on decision-making processes and to evaluate whether marketing decision-making influenced sustainable competitive advantages. However, it is noteworthy that eight out of the fifteen respondents did not provide detailed information in this section, which limits the breadth of insight into their marketing analytics practices.

Despite this, the findings suggest that marketing analytics played a crucial role in shaping marketing strategies and decision-making, thereby contributing to competitive advantages.

Two illustrative statements from independent retailers in the study are as follows:

- Respondent 9: *"We use display advertising through exhibitions, flea markets and social markets."*
- Respondent 10: *"None as yet; the business is still in the foundation phase."*

5.2.2.2.3. Marketing Analytics tools help (BMa2)

As indicated by the data, the majority of respondents underscored the significance of marketing analytics in enhancing customer insights. Furthermore, additional participants outlined various applications of marketing analytics, including customer acquisition, customer retention, segmentation, new product or service development, product or service strategy, promotion strategy, and pricing strategy.

5.2.2.2.1 Relevance to Research Objectives and Questions

The research objectives aimed to investigate the utilisation of marketing analytics by independent apparel retailers, assess the impact of analytics usage on decision-making processes, and evaluate whether marketing decision-making influenced sustainable competitive advantages. The study sought to understand how these retailers in Gauteng townships used marketing analytics to enhance their decision-making and secure long-term competitive success.

In terms of relevance, the data indicates that marketing analytics played a crucial role in improving customer insights, which aligned directly with the objective of investigating their utilisation. Respondents highlighted various applications of marketing analytics, such as customer acquisition, retention, segmentation, and development of product or service strategies.

This information addressed the research questions by revealing how marketing analytics influenced decision-making processes and contributes to achieving a sustained competitive advantage. Specifically, the data showed how analytics was used to drive marketing decisions and the ways in which these decisions, in turn, contributed to sustainable competitive advantages.

An illustrative statement from independent retailers in the study reads as follows:

- Respondent 4: *"I want to promote my brand so that my brand can go viral and reach more customers."*

Furthermore, a number of participants provided insights into how they apply marketing analytics within their product or service strategy. For instance, one respondent mentioned:

- Respondent 9: *"Exhibitions help a lot because we network with other business that is related to our industry. Meeting directly with clients helps us improve the quality of our products."*

5.2.2.2.4. Center for Marketing Objective (BMd1)

According to the data, certain participants highlighted a range of marketing objectives, focusing on aspects such as brand awareness, expanding business networks, and introducing new products to attract fresh customers. A smaller subset of respondents underscored their marketing endeavours aimed at retaining existing customers. It is noteworthy that a few participants chose not to provide information in this section.

5.2.2.2.4.1.Relevance to Research Objectives and Questions

The data highlighted a range of marketing objectives identified by the participants, including brand awareness, expanding business networks, and introducing new products to attract new customers. These objectives are directly relevant to the research aim of investigating the utilisation of marketing analytics by independent apparel retailers. Understanding these objectives helps to illustrate how marketing analytics can be employed to support and achieve specific goals within the marketing strategy. For instance, enhancing brand awareness and expanding business networks can benefit from analytics tools that provide insights into market trends and customer preferences, enabling more targeted and effective marketing efforts.

Additionally, a smaller subset of respondents focused on marketing efforts aimed at retaining existing customers. This aspect is relevant to assessing the impact of analytics usage on decision-making processes. Marketing analytics can play a crucial role in customer retention strategies by analysing customer behaviour and preferences to tailor marketing efforts that foster loyalty and repeat business. By linking these marketing objectives with the use of analytics, the study can provide a comprehensive view of how analytics contribute to achieving various marketing goals.

The fact that certain participants chose not to provide information on their marketing objectives adds a layer of complexity to the research. This omission highlights potential gaps in the data and suggests that further exploration may be needed to understand the full spectrum of marketing practices among independent apparel retailers. This insight is pertinent to evaluating whether marketing decision-making influenced sustainable competitive advantages, as it points to areas where additional data could enhance the understanding of how marketing objectives are set and pursued.

5.2.2.2.5. Marketing Objectives Achievement (BMd2)

Several respondents discussed leveraging social media to achieve their marketing goals. Furthermore, some highlighted the use of street marketing, involvement in local markets, building customer connections, adjusting pricing strategies, prioritising product quality, intensifying branding initiatives, and staying abreast of fashion trends.

5.2.2.2.5.1. Relevance to Research Objectives and Questions

Several respondents discussed leveraging social media as a strategic tool to achieve their marketing goals. This focus aligns with the research objective of investigating the utilisation of social media by independent apparel retailers. By examining how social media is used to achieve various marketing goals, such as enhancing brand visibility and engaging with customers, the study can assess the effectiveness and impact of social media strategies within this sector.

Additionally, certain respondents highlighted the use of complementary strategies such as street marketing, participation in local markets, and building customer connections. These strategies reflect a broader approach to marketing that goes beyond social media, incorporating aspects like adjusting pricing strategies, prioritising product quality, intensifying branding initiatives, and staying updated with fashion trends. Understanding these additional strategies is crucial for evaluating the overall marketing decision-making processes of independent apparel retailers. It helps to provide a comprehensive view of how different marketing tactics, including but not limited to social media, contribute to achieving sustained competitive advantages.

The participant responses reveal a multifaceted approach to marketing, where social media constitutes one of several tools used to meet various objectives. This diversity in strategies underscores the rationale of exploring how different marketing practices and analytics are employed to drive decision-making and influence business outcomes. This section addresses the research questions related to the nature of social media and marketing analytics usage and their impact on marketing decision-making and competitive advantage.

The participant responses below provide insights into these strategies:

- Respondent 10: *“Going to markets and connecting with customers on a personal level before directing them to my social media pages.”*
- Respondent 7: *“By having reports about entertainment and fashion.”*
- Respondent 12: *“Going for the highest quality possible at manufacturing.”*

It is noteworthy that seven out of the fifteen respondents opted to skip this section.

5.2.2.2.6. Criteria used to set marketing objectives (BMd3)

Multiple participants highlighted the utilisation of social media to achieve their marketing goals. Additionally, some underscored the importance of street marketing, involvement in local markets, establishing customer connections, adjusting pricing strategies, prioritising product quality, enhancing branding efforts, and staying informed about fashion trends.

5.2.2.2.6.1. Relevance to Research Objectives and Questions

Multiple participants highlighted the utilisation of social media as a key tool in achieving their marketing goals. This observation directly aligns with the research objective of investigating the use of social media by independent apparel retailers. By focusing on how social media is leveraged to meet various marketing objectives, the study addresses the question of how these platforms contribute to improving marketing decision-making and achieving competitive advantages.

In addition to social media, some participants emphasised the significance of supplementary marketing strategies, such as street marketing, involvement in local markets, and establishing strong customer connections. These additional strategies are relevant to the research questions concerning the broader use of marketing practices and their impact on decision-making. Adjusting pricing strategies, prioritising product quality, enhancing branding efforts, and staying informed about fashion trends further illustrate the diverse approaches taken by retailers to achieve their goals.

These varied strategies provide insight into the multifaceted nature of marketing within the apparel sector. Understanding how different elements, including social media and traditional marketing techniques are integrated into overall marketing efforts helps in evaluating their collective impact on decision-making and competitive positioning.

This highlights the diverse methods used by retailers and their relevance to achieving marketing objectives and sustainable competitive advantages.

The subsequent statements offer a glimpse into the participants' perspectives:

- Respondent 10: *"I make promotions based on demographic locations as I've been scaling my business and got to see which locations are most fertile for my business."*
- Respondent 4: *"The criteria that I use to set my marketing objectives is when I set a short-term goal."*

It is noteworthy that seven out of the fifteen respondents opted to skip this section.

5.2.2.2.7. Advantage of opportunities (BMd4)

In this segment, participants conveyed their efforts to capitalise on market opportunities by actively monitoring the social media pages of other companies and seizing favorable circumstances. Moreover, some independent retailers indicated that they aimed to comprehend market needs. Confident respondents also exploited opportunities through event monetisation. One participant affirmed their commitment to uniqueness and staying ahead of current trends.

5.2.2.2.7.1. Relevance to Research Objectives and Questions

In this segment, participants conveyed their efforts to capitalise on market opportunities by actively monitoring the social media pages of other companies and seizing favourable circumstances. This practice directly aligns with the research objective of investigating the utilisation of social media by independent apparel retailers. By tracking competitors and market trends on social media, these retailers aim to understand and respond to market needs effectively, thereby enhancing their marketing decision-making processes. This approach also addresses the research question concerning how social media and related strategies contribute to achieving competitive advantages.

Additionally, some independent retailers highlighted their focus on comprehending market needs, which ties into the research objective of evaluating the impact of analytics and market understanding on decision-making.

Confident respondents who exploited opportunities through event monetisation demonstrate a proactive approach to leveraging market trends for business growth.

Furthermore, one participant's commitment to uniqueness and staying ahead of current trends reflects an effort to maintain a competitive edge through innovative and informed marketing practices.

This section illustrates how independent apparel retailers employ various strategies to capitalise on market opportunities, align their marketing efforts with emerging trends, and make informed decisions that contribute to their competitive positioning. By showcasing these diverse strategies, the data provides valuable insight into how social media and other market observations influence marketing objectives and decision-making processes.

Several respondents echoed the theme of leveraging opportunities through event monetisation, emphasising their dedication to distinctiveness and staying abreast of prevailing trends:

- Respondent 12: *"Understanding what the market needs and providing it when it's needed."*

The other founders used sales promotion and advertising:

- Respondent 11: *"Any given opportunity that has to do with sales, I make use of it."*
- Respondent 15: *"Advertising everything and making specials."*

5.2.2.3. Marketing Analytics Capabilities (BO)

5.2.2.3.1. Access to data

In this segment, participants outlined their data sources, which included personal data, social media, in-store research, and internet research. However, one participant mentioned not having access to data. Out of the respondents, nine out of fifteen cited acquiring data from their cellular network service providers.

Here are excerpts from some of the responses provided by the participants:

- Respondent 13: *"I use my own personal data to at least push the brand too."*
- Respondent 12: *"Social media and in-store research."*
- Respondent 9: *"We get it through research from the internet."*

5.2.2.3.2. Data Quality

In terms of strategies employed by independent retailers to ensure data quality, participants highlighted their direct engagement with customers. Some respondents underscored the importance of diversifying data sources and avoiding reliance on a single channel. They emphasised the significance of cross-referencing and verifying information. Moreover, participants mentioned leveraging online platforms for analytics. The following excerpts capture statements from some of the respondents:

- Respondent 9: *"We research and verify the information we get, using trustworthy online platforms that give feedback and analytics."*
- Respondent 12: *"Using trustworthy online platforms that give feedback and analytics."*
- Respondent 13: *"Engage directly with the customers to get the information."*

One respondent, Respondent 8, said: *"It's beyond me"*. The other respondent, Respondent 6, said: *"I'm not sure about the question"*.

Five respondents skipped this section.

5.2.2.3.3. Data Storage

In terms of data storage practices, some respondents explained that they do not maintain extensive data storage due to the scale of their small businesses. Conversely, other participants detailed their data storage procedures, which include the use of laptops, computers, mobile devices, external hard drives, online storage, and manual filing systems.

The following are selected statements made by respondents on this matter:

- Respondent 13: *"not really since we are a small business, but most of the information is available on the pages."*
- Respondent 9: *"mobile device and external hard drives."*

Three respondents skipped this section.

5.2.2.3.4. Data-driven culture

When questioned about data storage practices, some respondents confidently mentioned having established data storage practices, though without providing extensive details. In contrast, other respondents explicitly indicated maintaining a data stock culture, while one participant highlighted their practice of monitoring content engagement and data to stay attuned to prevailing trends:

- Respondent 12: *"We stock according to our clients' buying patterns and focus more on reproducing or selling stuff that's mostly selling."*
- Respondent 9: *"Yes, we rely on data to keep us up to date with trends and how we can improve."*
- Respondent 4: *"For now, I'm failing because I have to entertain my Facebook followers, so I have to post so many things."*

Five respondents answered this section with a "No" without elaborating. Another respondent skipped this section, with one other answering with "N/A" in this section.

5.2.2.3.5. Marketing Analytics Perceptions

In this segment, participants conveyed their views on marketing analytics, highlighting its relevance in the business landscape. Some emphasised its importance for achieving growth, considering it a fundamental element for any business. Additionally, marketing analytics was recognised as a valuable tool for evaluating the effectiveness of diverse marketing strategies and initiatives.

One respondent underscored the significance of such assessments in guiding businesses toward informed decision-making.

The following are excerpts from the statements provided by the participants:

- Respondent 12: *“Marketing analytics is essential for and ensures growth without it business tend to be stagnant.”*
- Respondent 13: *“I would say it's very important since it helps on what's working for the business and what's not so you can make better decisions going forward.”*
- Respondent 9: *“It helps us evaluate our performance in terms of our marketing initiatives.”*

Five respondents skipped this section.

5.2.2.3.6. Relevance to Research Objectives and Questions

This section details how participants in the study approached various aspects of marketing analytics capabilities, shedding light on their practices related to data access, quality, storage, and perceptions.

The diversity in data sources—ranging from personal data and social media to in-store and internet research—illustrates the broad scope of tools and methods used by independent apparel retailers to gather relevant marketing information.

This aligns with the research objective of investigating the utilisation of marketing analytics by these retailers, highlighting their strategies for obtaining and leveraging data to inform decision-making.

Participants’ emphasis on engaging directly with customers and diversifying data sources addresses the research question concerning how independent apparel retailers ensure data quality. Their practices of cross-referencing and verifying information, along with leveraging online platforms for analytics, underscore the importance of maintaining accurate and reliable data to support effective marketing decisions.

The section on data storage practices reveals varied approaches, with some retailers opting for minimal storage due to the scale of their operations, while others employ a range of methods including digital and manual systems. This reflects the research objective of assessing how data storage practices impact marketing analytics capabilities and decision-making processes.

Regarding the data-driven culture, the participants' responses reveal a spectrum of practices, from having established data storage protocols to actively monitoring content engagement and trends. This demonstrates the relevance of fostering a data-driven culture in enhancing marketing strategies and achieving competitive advantages.

Lastly, participants' perceptions of marketing analytics as a crucial tool for business growth and decision-making highlight its significance in evaluating marketing strategies. This addresses the research question regarding the role of marketing analytics in guiding informed decision-making and driving business success. The insights provided by participants, despite some choosing to skip this section, contribute to understanding how marketing analytics is perceived and utilised in the context of independent apparel retailers.

5.2.2.3.7. Sustained Competitive Advantage (BS)

5.2.2.3.7.1. Competitors

Participants mentioned that their competitors include other local clothing brands in the area, individuals involved in the clothing business, fellow designers, factories, and prominent brands that replicate township style.

Here are illustrative statements from independent retailers in the study:

- Respondent 9: *"We have other local clothing brands in our area."*
- Respondent 10: *"Other local clothing brands are my competitors."*
- Respondent 8: *"Other designers and factories."*
- Respondent 7: *"Giant brands who copy township style."*

Four respondents skipped this section.

5.2.2.3.7.2. Competitor Tracking

In this section, certain participants highlighted their active monitoring of competitors through online platforms. This vigilance involves evaluating competitor strategies and closely examining their activities on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Respondents also mentioned employing analytics tools to improve optimisation and conduct in-depth research.

The following are statements provided by the participants:

- Respondent 12: *"Viewing their websites and their strategy."*

- Respondent 9: *“Check through their social media to find out what they are currently doing.”*
- Respondent 2: *“There are tools such as the eRank tool, which is a SEO tool to help me with key words and tags people use to find my items online, and it is the best research tool to check how my competitors are doing and charging for their products.”*
- Respondent 10: *“Facebook and their websites”.*
- One respondent was specific about why they do not track their competitors:
- Respondent 4 *“I’m not able to track them because they have resources.”*

Three respondents stated that they do not monitor their competitors; nevertheless, they did not offer substantial explanations for this decision.

5.2.2.3.8. Competitiveness

Numerous participants underscored the importance of maintaining competitiveness, citing their gradual recognition within the market as a contributing factor. Others asserted that their competitive edge stems from strategic pricing, a commitment to quality products, and the appeal of their product offerings.

The following are excerpts from the responses:

- Respondent 9: *“We are slowly getting recognition because people realise that we have good quality products made locally.”*
- Respondent 3: *“Our prices are lower, and we provide quality products.”*
- Respondent 4: *“Yes, I’m performing better because my brand is very nice and attractive.”*

One respondent said:

- Respondent 12: *“Some of our competitions are better funded but for bootstrapping, we are right up there.”*

One respondent said they are not able to answer this question and said:

- Respondent 2: *"Right now, I don't have an answer to that question because I have only just started opening my Etsy store and haven't made my first sale yet, so I am still learning to advertise my products so i can start getting sales."*

Another respondent said they are looking inward, not outside their business. Here is what they said:

- Respondent 6: *"I don't know we are looking at our own thing."*
- Respondent 13: *"I cannot say because I don't know how their products are doing and why."*

Two of the respondents skipped this section.

5.2.2.3.9. Differentiation

Some respondents said they differentiate themselves through their craft and customer service, high-quality manufacturing products, innovation, customer service, and brand engagement.

Here illustrative statements from independent retailers in the study:

- Respondent 8: *"Workmanship and customer service."*
- Respondent 9: *"We manufacture high quality products from scratch while they rely on ready-made products they can brand."*
- Respondent 3: *"We make our clients feel comfortable with their orders, the design process and the message behind the brand."*
- Respondent 12: *"Our story is connected to our identity, culture and heritage and makes it that much more meaningful to engage with the brand."*

One respondent noted that nothing differentiates them from competitors. However, the respondent could not provide reasons to substantiate:

- Respondent 15: *"Nothing"*.

Three respondents skipped this section.

5.2.2.3.10. Performance Measurement

In this section, certain participants mentioned that they gauge their business performance based on metrics such as monthly sales, sales growth, and shop statistics. Some of the responses were as follows:

- Respondent 2: *"Each week, my Etsy store sends me statistics of how many visitors came to my store each week, but like I said, I have not made any sale just yet."*
- Respondent 13: *"By how many customers I reached and total sales made."*
- Respondent 12: *"Business development, sales, profit margins."*

Three respondents skipped this section.

5.2.2.3.11. Relevance to Research Objectives and Questions

The section on competitors and competitiveness provides valuable insight into how independent apparel retailers navigate their competitive landscape, aligning with the research objectives of investigating the use of social media and marketing analytics to enhance marketing decision-making and achieve competitive advantages. Participants identified their competitors as local clothing brands, individuals in the clothing business, fellow designers, factories, and notable brands replicating township style. This identification highlights the research objective of understanding the competitive environment in which these retailers operate.

The discussion on competitor tracking illustrates the respondents' active engagement in monitoring their competitors through online platforms, including social media sites like Instagram and Facebook. This approach directly relates to the research question regarding how marketing analytics can be utilised to track and analyse competitor strategies. Participants' use of analytics tools for optimisation and in-depth research underscores their efforts to leverage data for improving their own competitive positioning.

The fact that three respondents chose not to monitor competitors, without substantial explanations, provides additional context for the varying attitudes towards competitive analysis.

The emphasis on maintaining competitiveness through strategic pricing, product quality, and market recognition addresses the research question about how marketing decision-making influences competitive advantage. Participants' strategies for differentiation, such as crafting unique products, enhancing customer service, and innovating within their offerings, further illustrate how they aim to stand out in a competitive market. The mention of performance measurement based on sales metrics and shop statistics aligns with the research objective of evaluating how data-driven practices impact decision-making and business performance.

Overall, the insights into competitors, tracking practices, and differentiation strategies provide a comprehensive view of how independent apparel retailers use marketing analytics to navigate their competitive environment and make informed decisions to sustain their market presence.

5.3. Analysis of Findings

These findings offered a detailed and nuanced understanding of how independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships leveraged marketing strategies to achieve their business objectives. Through a comprehensive analysis of the collected data, several key insights emerged that reflected the diverse approaches and practices within this sector.

Firstly, the study highlighted the significant role of social media in the marketing efforts of independent apparel retailers. Respondents extensively utilised platforms such as Instagram and social media marketplaces to expand their customer base, enhance brand visibility, and promoting their products. This digital approach allowed for cost-effective advertising and facilitated direct engagement with customers, which was instrumental in driving sales and building a loyal following.

The findings also underscored the importance of integrating various marketing strategies. Beyond social media, participants employed additional tactics such as street marketing, participation in local markets, and the adjustment of pricing strategies. These diverse approaches aimed at capitalising on market opportunities, establishing strong customer connections, and differentiating their offerings from competitors.

The study also revealed variations in data utilisation and storage practices among respondents. While some retailers demonstrated advanced data management techniques, others faced limitations due to the scale of their operations. This variation highlighted the need for tailored strategies that aligned with the specific capabilities and resources of each business.

In terms of competitive strategies, the research found that retailers actively monitored their competitors and adjusted their approaches to maintain competitiveness. Key factors such as strategic pricing, product quality, and innovation were identified as critical components in sustaining a competitive edge. Additionally, performance measurement through metrics such as sales growth and customer engagement provided valuable insight into business effectiveness.

The findings provided a comprehensive picture of the marketing landscape for independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships. They offered valuable implications for practitioners and researchers alike, suggesting that a multi-dimensional approach to marketing, supported by robust data verification methods like triangulation, was essential for achieving business success and staying competitive in a dynamic market environment.

6. Chapter 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1. Introduction

The digital age significantly transformed business operations, particularly in terms of marketing strategies. Social media platforms emerged as pivotal tools for businesses, allowing them to engage with customers, manage their online presence, and drive marketing initiatives effectively. Retailers leveraged these platforms to attract leads, streamline operations, facilitate product orders, reduce advertising costs, and expand their customer base.

This chapter examined how retailers in Gauteng's townships utilised social media and marketing analytics to influence consumer behaviours and attitudes. The study's findings highlighted the strategic use of social media for generating profit, sharing content, conducting targeted promotions, and engaging with user comments. This approach corroborates the emphasis placed by Shah Jahan Miah, Vu, and Gammack's (2019) on enhancing strategic decision-making through analytics.

Additionally, Lal, Ismagilova, Dwivedi, and Kwayu (2020) underscored the importance of measuring the Return on Investment (ROI) from social media strategies. Accurate ROI measurement provided valuable insight that strengthened marketing strategies and improved overall performance. These insights were consistent with Ancillai et al. (2019) and Hsiao et al. (2020), who highlighted the impact of social media on brand awareness and consumer engagement.

The chapter is structured to address each research objective and question systematically. Each section presents a research objective and its corresponding research question, followed by a discussion on how they were addressed in the study. This approach ensured a logical flow and comprehensive coverage of the study's findings.

6.2. Research Problem

The literature revealed a significant gap in integrating SMMA to enhance marketing decision-making and achieve sustainable competitive advantages (Yogesh et al., 2021).

Makhitha (2016) and Mathe (2019) highlighted the competition and marketing challenges faced by independent retailers in townships, noting that these small-scale businesses often struggled against the backdrop of established chain-store retailers in South Africa's townships.

Previous studies employed the TOE model and DC to explore the adoption of social media marketing among SMEs. However, these studies predominantly relied on quantitative methodologies (Mokhtar et al., 2016; Garrido-Moreno et al., 2020). Gao et al. (2019) suggest a qualitative approach for future research to address this gap.

The primary aim of this study was to examine how independent apparel retailers in Gauteng's townships used social media and marketing analytics to improve their marketing decision-making and achieve sustained competitive advantages. This chapter provided a thorough analysis of the findings, interpreted results, discussed limitations, and offered recommendations for future research.

6.3. Findings Concerning the Research Objectives

The study involved fifteen independent apparel retailers from Gauteng townships who participated in a survey, sharing their experiences and perspectives on using SMMA to enhance marketing decision-making and competitive strategies.

6.3.1. The following sections analysed the study's results in relation to the established research objectives:

- *Objective 1:* To evaluate how independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships used social media and marketing analytics to inform their marketing strategies.
- *Objective 2:* To assess the impact of social media and marketing analytics on competitive advantage and business performance in this context.
- *Objective 3:* To identify challenges and barriers faced by these retailers in implementing social media and marketing analytics strategies.

The analysis of these objectives revealed critical insights into the practical applications of SMMA in the township retail sector, contributing significantly to both theoretical understanding and practical implementation. The subsequent section is dedicated to scrutinising the study's results in relation to the predetermined research objectives and questions:

- *Research Objective 1:* To examine how independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships utilise social media to enhance marketing decision-making.
- *Research Question 1:* How do independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships use social media to enhance marketing decision-making?

The study's findings indicated that independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships leveraged social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to directly engage with their customers and streamline their marketing strategies. These platforms were used for a variety of purposes, including showcasing new arrivals, announcing sales and promotions, and engaging with customers through comments and messages. The visual nature of Instagram, for example, allowed retailers to display their apparel in an appealing manner, attracting potential buyers and encouraging customer interaction. This direct engagement was pivotal in fostering a sense of community and loyalty among customers, which is crucial for small retailers in a competitive market.

Retailers used social media not just for communication, but also as a tool for gathering valuable customer feedback. By monitoring comments, likes, and shares, retailers could gauge customer preferences and trends in real time. This immediate feedback loop enabled them to adjust their marketing strategies quickly and effectively. For example, if a particular post received higher engagement than usual, retailers would analyse what made it successful and apply those insights to future posts. This dynamic approach to marketing allowed retailers to stay relevant and responsive to their customers' needs, thereby enhancing their overall marketing decision-making process.

Moreover, the study found that social media platforms provided a cost-effective marketing solution for these independent retailers. Traditional advertising methods such as print media and billboards are often financially out of reach for small businesses.

In contrast, social media offered a relatively low-cost alternative that could reach a wide audience. Retailers reported that the ability to create targeted advertisements on platforms like Facebook allowed them to reach specific demographics that were most likely to convert into customers. This targeted approach not only maximised their marketing budget, but also improved the efficiency and effectiveness of their campaigns.

The use of social media also facilitated collaborative marketing efforts among retailers. Some retailers formed alliances to cross-promote each other's products on their social media channels. This collaborative approach helped them expand their reach and tap into each other's customer bases. Additionally, the ability to use social media analytics to track the performance of these collaborative campaigns provided further insights into what strategies were most effective. This collective use of social media and shared knowledge enhanced the overall marketing capabilities of independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships, making their marketing strategies more robust and adaptable to market changes.

- *Research Objective 2:* To investigate the influence of marketing analytics on the marketing strategies of independent apparel retailers.
- *Research Question 2:* In what ways do marketing analytics influence the marketing strategies of these retailers?

Marketing analytics were found to be crucial in shaping the marketing strategies of independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships. The study revealed that analytics tools helped retailers track key performance metrics such as customer engagement, reach, and conversion rates. These insights enabled retailers to understand which types of content resonated most with their audience and identify the optimal times for posting in order to ensure maximum visibility and interaction. By leveraging these data-driven insights, retailers were able to make informed decisions that enhanced the effectiveness of their marketing strategies. This empirical evidence supports the research objective by highlighting how analytics informed and refined marketing strategies, leading to more effective and targeted marketing efforts.

Retailers reported that marketing analytics allowed them to replicate successful posts and adjust their strategies in response to observed customer behavior patterns.

For example, if analytics indicated that a particular type of post—such as a product showcase or a behind-the-scenes look—garnered high engagement, retailers would prioritise similar content in future campaigns. Additionally, analytics tools provided insight into customer demographics, preferences, and purchasing behaviours, which helped retailers tailor their marketing messages to better meet the needs and interests of their target audience. This strategic use of data not only improved customer engagement, but also increased the likelihood of conversions and sales.

Furthermore, the ability to monitor and analyse marketing performance in real-time provided retailers with the agility to quickly adapt their strategies. Retailers could identify underperforming campaigns early and make necessary adjustments to improve outcomes. For instance, if a promotional post did not achieve the desired reach or engagement, retailers could experiment with different content formats, messaging, or timing based on analytical insights. This iterative approach ensured that marketing strategies remained relevant and effective in a fast-paced and competitive market environment. The study found that this real-time adaptability proved to be a key advantage of using marketing analytics, as it allowed retailers to stay responsive to market changes and consumer trends.

In addition to shaping individual marketing campaigns, marketing analytics also played a significant role in long-term strategic planning for retailers. By analysing trends over time, retailers could identify broader patterns and shifts in consumer behaviour, which informed their overall marketing strategy. For example, where analytics showed a growing preference for video content among their audience, retailers might choose to invest more resources in creating high-quality videos to engage their customers. This strategic foresight enabled retailers to allocate their marketing budget more effectively and prioritise initiatives that were most likely to yield positive results. Overall, the integration of marketing analytics into their marketing strategies empowered independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships to make data-driven decisions that enhanced their competitiveness and business performance.

- *Research Objective 3:* To identify the challenges faced by independent apparel retailers in adopting social media and marketing analytics.
- *Research Question 3:* What challenges do independent apparel retailers face in adopting social media and marketing analytics?

The research identified several challenges hindering the adoption of social media and marketing analytics among independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships. A major challenge was the lack of technical expertise required to effectively use these tools. Many retailers struggled to interpret analytics data and integrate it into their decision-making processes. This gap in technical skills meant that, even when analytics tools were available, their potential benefits were not fully realised. Retailers often found themselves overwhelmed by the complexity of these tools, which limited their ability to leverage data insights to enhance their marketing strategies. This challenge underscores the need for targeted training and support to help retailers develop the necessary skills to use social media and analytics tools effectively.

In addition to the technical expertise required, the need for constant monitoring and updating of social media content was resource-intensive, placing a significant burden on small retailers with limited staff. Unlike larger businesses with dedicated marketing teams, independent retailers often had to juggle multiple roles, making it difficult to maintain a consistent and engaging social media presence. The time and effort required to create, post, and manage social media content, along with responding to customer interactions, placed considerable strain on their already limited resources. This resource constraint was a critical barrier to the effective adoption and use of social media and marketing analytics.

Another challenge identified was the financial investment needed to adopt and sustain the use of advanced marketing analytics tools. Many independent retailers operated on tight budgets and found it challenging to allocate funds for purchasing software, hiring skilled personnel, or investing in training programmes. The cost of acquiring and maintaining these tools often outweighed the perceived benefits, especially when immediate returns on investment were not evident. This financial hurdle prevented many retailers from fully embracing the potential of marketing analytics to drive their business growth and improve competitive advantage.

Furthermore, the research highlighted the issue of data privacy and security concerns among retailers. Independent apparel retailers expressed apprehension about the safety of their customer data when using social media platforms and analytics tools. Fear of data breaches and misuse of sensitive information made them hesitant to adopt these technologies. This concern was particularly pronounced, given the increasing awareness and regulatory scrutiny around data protection. Retailers required reassurance that their customer data would be handled securely and in compliance with legal standards. Addressing these privacy and security concerns is crucial to fostering greater confidence among retailers in adopting social media and marketing analytics.

Overall, the research underscored that, while social media and marketing analytics offered significant potential benefits for independent apparel retailers, several barriers hindered their adoption. Addressing these challenges through targeted training, resource allocation, financial support, and robust data security measures is essential to enable retailers to harness the full potential of these tools. By overcoming these obstacles, independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships can better leverage social media and marketing analytics to enhance their marketing decision-making and achieve sustained competitive advantages.

- *Research Objective 4:* To assess how the use of social media and marketing analytics contributes to achieving sustained competitive advantage.
- *Research Question 4:* How do social media and marketing analytics contribute to achieving sustained competitive advantage for these retailers?

The study found that the effective use of social media and marketing analytics significantly contributed to a sustained competitive advantage for independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships. Retailers who effectively leveraged social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp were able to execute cost-effective marketing campaigns and engage directly with their customers. This direct engagement helped enhance brand visibility and foster customer loyalty, which are crucial elements for maintaining a competitive edge. The ability to interact with customers in real-time, respond to their queries, and address their concerns promptly created a positive customer experience that encouraged repeat business and word-of-mouth referrals.

Marketing analytics played a pivotal role by providing actionable insights that informed strategic decision-making. Retailers could track key performance metrics, such as customer engagement, reach, and conversion rates, to identify the most effective marketing tactics. These insights allowed them to optimise their marketing efforts by replicating successful strategies and discontinuing less effective ones. For instance, understanding the types of posts that garnered the most engagement enabled retailers to tailor their content so as to better meet customer preferences and maximise impact. This data-driven approach ensured that marketing resources were allocated efficiently, enhancing overall business performance and competitiveness against that of larger chain stores.

The retailers who integrated social media and marketing analytics reported several tangible benefits, including improved customer retention rates and increased sales. By utilising analytics to understand customer behaviour and preferences, these retailers could personalise their marketing messages and promotions, thereby increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty. The ability to anticipate customer needs and offer tailored solutions not only differentiated these retailers from their competitors, but also created a loyal customer base that was less likely to switch to other brands. This strategic advantage was evident in the improved business performance and sustained competitive advantage achieved by these retailers.

Overall, the findings of the study clearly demonstrated that the strategic use of social media and marketing analytics provided independent apparel retailers with a significant competitive edge. These tools enabled retailers to enhance their marketing decision-making, improve customer engagement, as well as optimise their marketing strategies, leading to better business outcomes. This alignment with the research objective showcased the substantial benefits that social media and marketing analytics can offer in helping small retailers achieve and maintain a competitive advantage in a highly competitive market.

In conclusion, the study provided comprehensive insight into how independent apparel retailers in Gauteng townships use social media and marketing analytics to enhance their marketing strategies, the challenges they face, and the competitive advantages they gain.

6.4. Key Findings and Implications

This section synthesises the study's findings, integrating empirical results with established literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of technological, organisational, and environmental factors in marketing analytics usage and decision-making.

6.4.1. Technological Capabilities

The study revealed that independent apparel retailers in township areas effectively utilised social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter. These technological tools enhanced their marketing analytics practices by facilitating high-quality content sharing, promotional activities, and active customer engagement. This aligns with the literature suggesting that social media significantly impacts marketing practices by providing valuable customer data and optimising marketing efforts (Amoah et al., 2021; Fang, Li, and Bhatti, 2020; Archer-Brown and Kietsmann, 2018; Kumar, 2018). The effective use of social media platforms demonstrates their crucial role in advancing marketing analytics, supporting the study's findings on the importance of technological capabilities.

6.4.2. Organisational Capabilities

The findings highlight the role of organisational factors such as management support, data quality, and data use culture in enhancing marketing analytics usage. Independent retailers apply marketing analytics to inform decisions related to brand management, promotional strategies, and customer engagement. Although certain limitations exist, such as limited use for product planning, the study underscores the significance of organisational capabilities in improving marketing practices. This observation is consistent with Branda et al. (2018) and Lamberton and Stephen (2016), who emphasised that organisational support and data management are crucial for effective marketing analytics (Maroufkhani et al., 2020; Kuns et al., 2017).

6.4.3. Environmental Capabilities

The study illustrates the impact of competitive pressures and external support on the use of social media and marketing analytics.

Effective use of these tools contributes to improved competitive positioning, informed pricing strategies, and enhanced product offerings. The role of external support, particularly from top management, is pivotal in adopting marketing analytics, reflecting the insights of Cao et al. (2019) and Abed (2020). The study confirms that environmental factors, including competitive dynamics and external support, are integral to the successful application of marketing analytics.

6.4.4. Marketing Analytics Usage

Marketing analytics significantly enhances decision-making across various marketing aspects, such as pricing, promotional campaigns, and customer acquisition. The study confirms that the use of marketing analytics leads to more informed and effective marketing decisions. This finding is supported by Cao et al. (2021) and Polas and Raju (2021), who highlight the benefits of marketing analytics for decision-making and performance improvement. Despite some observed gaps in analytics capabilities, the study underscores the overall positive impact of marketing analytics on marketing practices and decision-making.

6.4.5. Marketing Decision-Making

The findings emphasised the importance of marketing decision-making in achieving a sustainable competitive advantage. Independent retailers employ various strategies, including competitor profiling and product innovation, in order to maintain competitiveness. This is consistent with recommendations in the literature, which advocate for integrating social media into marketing strategies in order to enhance competitiveness (Mosweunyane et al., 2019; Dlamini and Johnston, 2018; Dos Santos and Duffett, 2021; Kuncoro and Suriani, 2018; Cheng and Liu, 2017; Bashir et al., 2016). The study reinforces the proposition that effective marketing decision-making is crucial for sustaining a competitive edge.

6.4.6. Conclusion

By focusing on key findings rather than specific propositions, this discussion synthesises the study's insights into the role of technological, organisational, and environmental factors in marketing analytics usage and decision-making. The integration of empirical results with existing literature provides a holistic understanding of how these factors influence marketing practices and contribute to achieving a competitive advantage.

6.5. Discussion on the proposed Integrated Social Media and Marketing Analytics (ISMMA) Framework

The data examination and subsequent results analysis met the secondary research objectives, which centered on exploring the use of SM and MA in order to improve decision-making and boost competitiveness. The development of the ISMMA framework was grounded in identifying existing knowledge gaps and establishing essential dimensions to bridge these gaps. This process was guided by the TOE framework and DC theory, which facilitated the construction of a robust framework integrating SM and MA for enhanced organisational performance (Peng et al., 2022).

The identification of these gaps, as revealed through this research study and an extensive review of current literature, provided the foundational elements for the creation of the ISMMA framework. Based on these insights, ISMMA emerged as a relevant tool intended for adoption by independent apparel retailers in the townships of Gauteng (Mero et al., 2020).

This section addressed the secondary research objective, focusing on the development of the ISMMA framework. This framework, tailored for township-based independent apparel retailers, integrates elements from the TOE theory and the DC model, enhancing both its originality and practical applicability.

6.5.1. Integrated Social Media and Marketing Analytics (ISMMA) framework for township independent apparel retailers

The study's results indicated that independent apparel retailers in Gauteng's townships incorporate social media and marketing analytics in a somewhat limited manner. To

address this, the ISMMA framework was developed, serving as a tailored congruence framework for such businesses.

This framework has two primary purposes, namely: facilitating the effective utilisation of SM and providing a foundational structure for marketing analytics theory. Independent clothing businesses in townships can strategically employ this framework to establish a cohesive approach to social media and marketing analytics, fostering long-term differentiation and gaining a competitive edge.

The study successfully achieved the primary research objective by incorporating elements from the TOE and DC frameworks. The components related to the second secondary research objective are detailed in the subsequent sections.

The development of the ISMMA framework involved adapting the TOE model proposed by Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990) and the DC framework outlined by Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997). The dimensions of this framework were systematically crafted with guidance from an extensive review of philosophical literature, as discussed in Chapters 2 to 4. The framework is designed to guide township-based independent apparel retailers in leveraging social media and marketing analytics to enhance their competitive positioning and operational effectiveness.

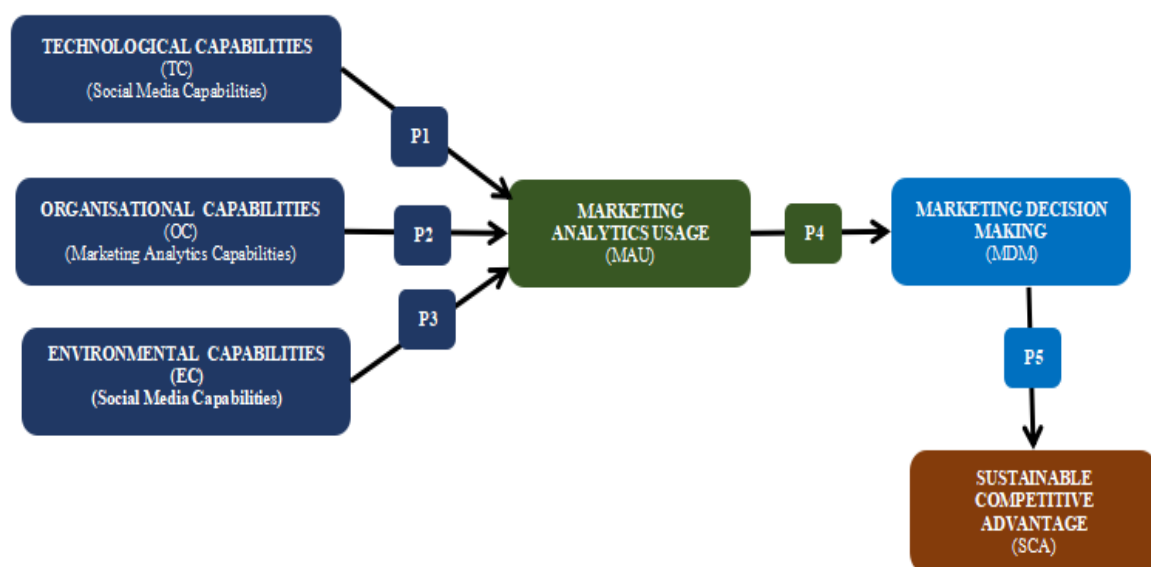


Figure 6.1 Conceptual framework

6.6. ISMMA Framework Development

This section outlines the development of the ISMMA Framework, a tool designed to enhance marketing decision-making for independent apparel retailers in Gauteng's townships by leveraging social media and marketing analytics. The section detail each step in the framework's development process, followed by a discussion of how these steps are supported by the research findings.

6.6.1. Choosing the topic

The research topic was selected based on its feasibility within the available time and resources. Focus was placed on understanding how social media and marketing analytics can improve marketing decision-making for township independent apparel retailers in Gauteng. This choice provided a clear, relevant area of study that aligns with the objectives of the research.

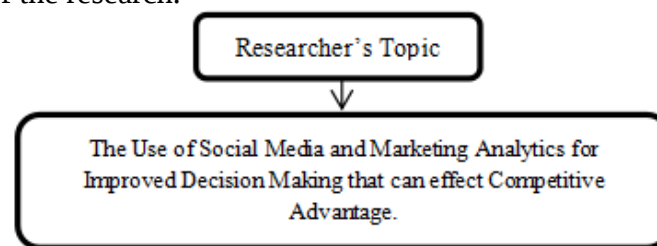


Figure 6.2 Step1 - ISMMA Framework Development.

6.6.2. Formulating the research question

The research question was carefully refined in order to explore the impact of social media and marketing analytics on marketing decision-making among township independent apparel retailers in Gauteng. This formulation was pivotal in guiding the development of the ISMMA Framework, ensuring that it was tailored to address the specific needs and challenges of the target audience.

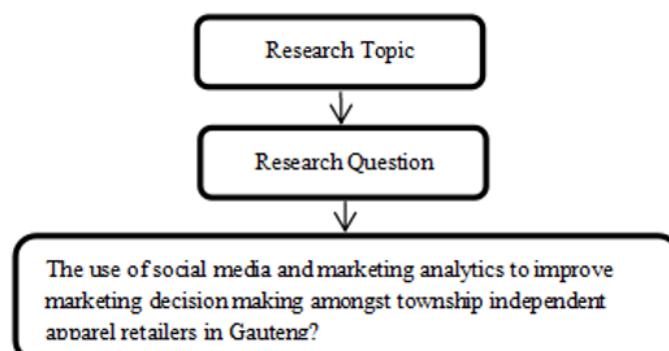


Figure 6.3 Step2 - ISMMA Framework Development

6.6.3. Conducting literature review

TA comprehensive literature review was conducted, focusing on the TOE and DC frameworks. This review provided insight into how these theories apply to the clothing industry and highlighted their strengths and limitations. Key findings included:

- The relevance of TOE in understanding organisational and environmental factors.
- The role of DC in assessing technological advancements and capabilities.
- This literature review informed the selection of variables and the relationships among them, ensuring that the ISMMA framework was grounded in established theoretical perspectives.

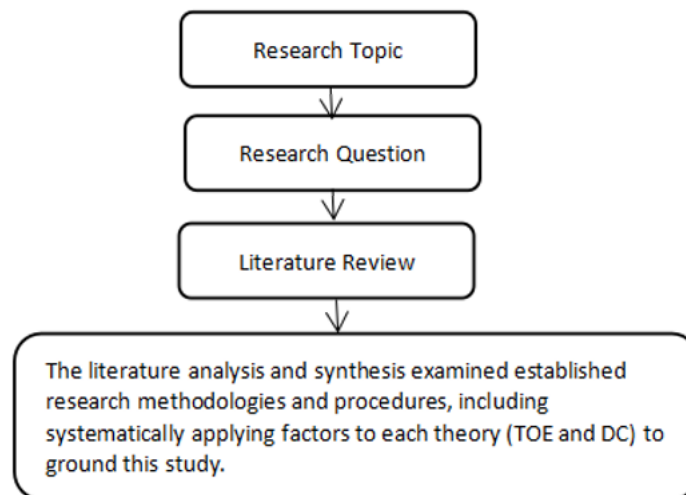


Figure 6.4 Step3 - ISMMA Framework Development.

6.6.4. Choosing variables

Based on the literature review, several key variables were identified:

- Technological capabilities
- Organisational capabilities
- Environmental capabilities
- Marketing Analytics usage
- Marketing Decision-making

These variables were selected for their relevance to the research question and their ability to provide a comprehensive perspective on the factors influencing marketing

decision-making. The conceptual framework aimed to define these variables and explore their interconnections.

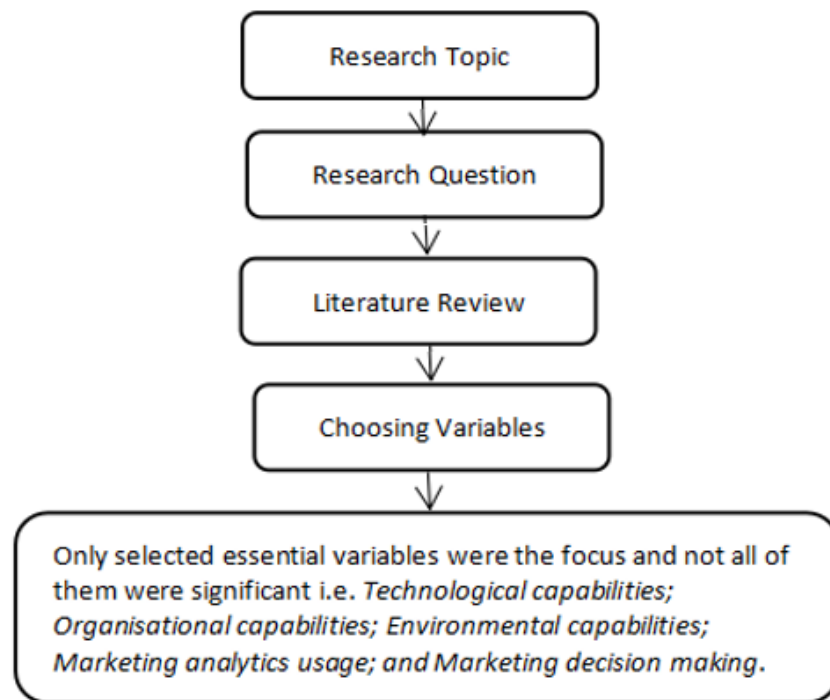


Figure 6.5 Step4 - ISMMA Framework Development.

6.6.5. Established relationships

Upon selecting the variables, i.e. *Technological capabilities*, *Organisational capabilities*, *Environmental capabilities*, *Marketing analytics usage*, and *Marketing decision-making*, the researcher proceeded to delineate their interrelationships. This undertaking involved delineating the relationships between each proposition, drawing support from studies on social media, marketing analytics, marketing decision-making, and competitiveness (Shang and Watson IV, 2020; Branda, Lala, and Gopalakrishna, 2018; Dwivedi et al., 2020; Geyda, 2019; Rahman et al., 2020; Syed Zamberi Ahmad et al., 2018; Jung and Jeong, 2020; Shang and Watson IV, 2020). It is noteworthy that this phase significantly influenced the ultimate configuration of the conceptual framework as the researcher delved into the design of the diagramme.

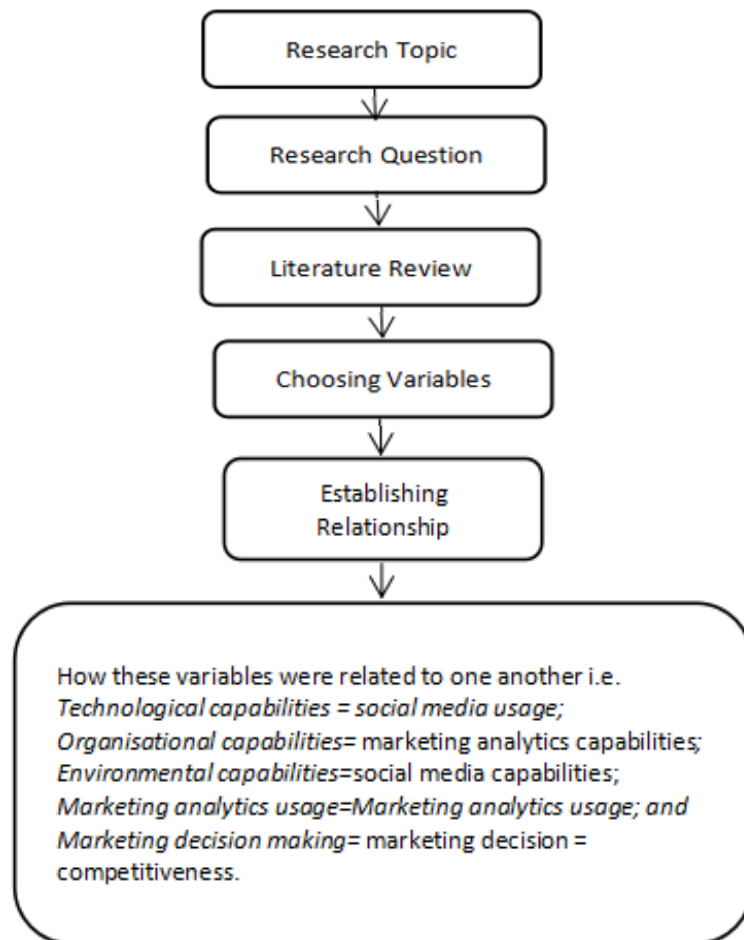


Figure 6.6 Step5 - ISMMA Framework Development.

6.6.6. Creating the conceptual framework

After determining the connections among variables, the following stage involved creating a visual depiction of the diagramme. The researcher systematically labelled the propositions within the diagramme. Propositions were linked using lines and arrows, and the direction of the arrowheads varied depending on the nature of the relationships. Single-headed arrows indicated unidirectional relationships, where one variable influenced another without a reciprocal effect. For instance, if variable A affected variable B, and B did not reciprocally impact A, a single-headed arrow was used to indicate this one-directional relationship.

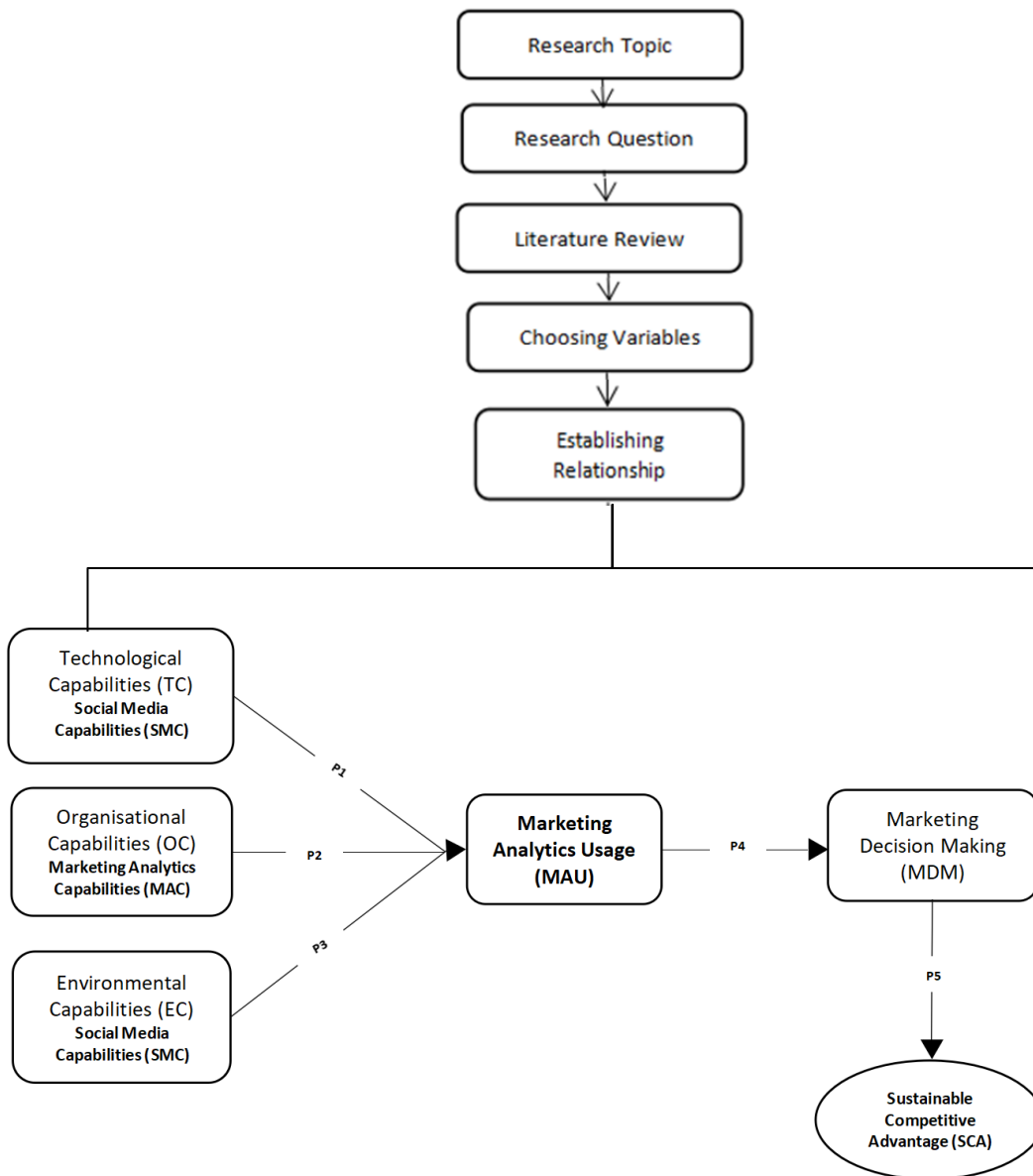


Figure 6.7. Step 6- ISMMA Framework Development.

Consequently, The ISMMA framework stands out as a powerful managerial tool designed to guide the development of integrated social media and marketing analytics strategies. It provides valuable insights for marketing decision-making, while enhancing competitive advantage by assessing brand identity and image. By incorporating external stakeholder feedback, the framework ensures internal alignment and effectiveness.

As a managerial resource, the ISMMA framework is designed to integrate both internal management and external elements, supporting effective social media and marketing analytics management for small enterprises, particularly independent clothing retailers. This integration helps foster long-term brand distinctiveness and competitive advantage, making it a dependable tool for small business owners, startups, and marketing managers. Built on solid theoretical foundations, the ISMMA framework is also adaptable for exploring its application in other marketing contexts, contributing to both the literature and practice of social media management.

This chapter reviewed the survey findings, which underscored the critical role of social media platforms—such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter—in enhancing competitive advantages through informed marketing decisions. These platforms proved to be effective promotional tools for independent apparel retailers in Gauteng. The chapter covered the outcomes related to the research question, analysed results from research propositions, reviewed the achievements of research objectives, and discussed the development and implications of the ISMMA Framework.

6.7. Recommendations

The primary objective of this study was to investigate how social media and marketing analytics affect marketing decision-making and secure a competitive advantage for independent apparel retailers in Gauteng's townships. Based on survey data, several recommendations and suggestions were generated.

The findings suggest that independent apparel retailers can strategically use social media and marketing campaigns to gain a competitive edge. However, additional factors influencing competitive advantage in this sector warrant further research. The recommendations are supported by key insights from the study.

6.7.1. Preliminary Recommendations

- Independent apparel retailers should carefully plan the timing and content of their social media posts to maximise consumer impact.
- Monitoring competitors through social media can provide valuable insights, allowing retailers to adjust their strategies effectively.

- Prioritising customer engagement and feedback is essential for improving organisational processes.
- Using social media to inform customers about discounts, special offers, and new products can help maintain customer loyalty and drive sales.

These preliminary recommendations aim to assist independent apparel retailers in leveraging social media and marketing analytics to enhance marketing decision-making and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage.

6.7.2. Technological Capabilities (TC)

Independent apparel retailers are advised to utilise a variety of social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter. These platforms offer opportunities for increased interaction, visibility, and customer engagement. Integrating marketing analytics into their strategies can provide valuable insights into customer preferences and motivations, thus improving business prospects.

Harris (2017) highlights the importance of leveraging information and customer feedback to build a strong online reputation. This recommendation aligns with that of Fang, Li, and Bhatti (2020), who stress the role of social media in enhancing brand communication and positioning. Adopting social media marketing strategies can improve performance, optimise management, and broaden market reach, as supported by Archer-Brown and Kietsmann (2018) and Kumar (2018).

Independent retailers ought to explore various technological tools to better understand consumer behaviour and guide purchasing decisions. Establishing social media brand communities focused on interaction and visibility is instrumental in achieving these goals (Zollo et al., 2020; Fang et al., 2020; Archer-Brown and Kietsmann, 2018; Kumar, 2018).

6.7.3. Organisational Capabilities (OC)

In order to enhance organisational capabilities, independent apparel retailers should focus on improving their marketing analytics capabilities. This includes improving management perception, support, data availability, quality, and fostering a data-driven culture.

Enhancing marketing analytics capabilities is crucial for achieving objectives like boosting brand awareness and customer retention. Branda, Lala, and Gopalakrishnan (2018) argue that robust marketing analytics capabilities are essential for effective decision-making. Despite some retailers relying on offline methods, systematic planning and management of data needs are necessary for strategic advantages (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016).

Retailers should also leverage customer data from social media to enhance data quality and optimise storage practices, as highlighted by Maroufkhani et al. (2020) and Kuns et al. (2017). This focus on technological capabilities will support better marketing analytics usage.

6.7.4. Environmental capabilities (EC)

Regarding environmental capabilities, it is strongly advised that independent apparel retailers thoroughly explore how the effective use of social media can positively impact their competitive position and increase the likelihood of integrating marketing analytics. Strategic decisions in this regard may involve comprehensive competition profiling, with a focus on local clothing brands, designers, factories, customer service, and well-known brands. This approach has the potential to significantly improve pricing strategies, manage high-quality products, and create appealing product designs—all crucial elements for achieving and sustaining competitiveness.

These recommendations are consistent with the findings of Guangming, Yanqing, and Alia El (2019), who argue that the adoption of marketing analytics can exert a substantial impact on a company's competitive positioning and contribute to the achievement of sustained competitive advantage (Guangming et al., 2019; Cao, Duan, and El Banna, 2019).

In this context, it is essential to acknowledge that the competitive advantage within the environmental context (Abed, 2020) and the perceived usefulness of the technological environment can significantly influence the behavioural intention of independent apparel retailers to embrace social media and marketing analytics (Abed, 2020). Moreover, the adoption of social media marketing is contingent on the demands of the competitive landscape, driven by the expectations of both customers and competitors (Guangming et al., 2019; Cao et al., 2019; Abed, 2020).

6.7.5. Marketing Analytics Usage (MAU)

The suggestion emphasises that the integration of marketing analytics can substantially empower independent apparel retailers to make well-informed marketing decisions. This involves utilising customer insights to guide strategic choices regarding customer acquisition, retention, and segmentation strategies.

Furthermore, marketing analytics can serve as an asset in the development of new products or services, as well as in crafting pricing and promotional strategies. It proposes leveraging social media data for market entry strategies, engaging with customers, reporting on fashion trends, strengthening branding efforts, and establishing short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. These endeavours are anticipated to positively impact the profitability margins of independent apparel retailers.

They find support in the work of Cao et al. (2021), who argue that marketing analytics plays a crucial role in decision-making related to brand awareness, business promotions, and enhancing marketing capabilities for products. Additionally, marketing analytics is seen as instrumental in attracting new customers and retaining existing ones.

The study conducted by Polas and Raju (2021) further reinforces the suggestion that marketing analytics drives decision-making processes in businesses' marketing strategies. This could lead to the development of lucrative marketing campaigns, uncovering patterns, and gaining valuable insight to shape effective marketing strategies. Such manner of insight plays a vital role in optimising advertising campaigns for higher revenue.

In this context, the research findings highlight a positive and significant correlation between identifying entrepreneurial opportunities, their development, and their exploitation with entrepreneurial success in marketing decisions (Polas and Raju, 2021). Consequently, the researcher concludes that the adoption of marketing analytics by independent apparel retailers has the potential to significantly enhance their capacity for effective marketing decision-making (Cao et al., 2021; Polas and Raju, 2021; Balan and Rege, 2017; Ali et al., 2022; Cates, 2018).

6.7.6. Marketing Decision-Making (MDM)

In the realm of marketing decision-making aimed at gaining a competitive advantage, it is advisable for independent apparel retailers to strategically incorporate social media into both their formal internal and external communication strategies. This strategic integration is substantiated by research findings from Mosweunyane et al. (2019), Dlamini and Johnston (2018), and Dos Santos and Duffett (2021). Independent apparel retailers are encouraged to actively embrace product and marketing innovations to establish sustainable competitive advantages.

These innovations play a mediating role between marketing competence and the enduring nature of competitive advantage, while concurrently enhancing revenue (Dansen, 2021).

Moreover, independent apparel retailers can fortify their competitive edge by utilising social media data to drive innovations in pricing and elevate customer satisfaction. Consequently, the adept adoption of social media marketing innovations in the decision-making processes of independent apparel retailers has the potential to lead to tangible competitive advantages (Bashir et al., 2016; Cheng and Liu, 2017; Kuncoro and Suriani, 2018; Mosweunyane et al., 2019).

6.8. Contributions

The present investigation utilised an exploratory methodology, thereby making a valuable contribution to the progress of knowledge and proficiency in the utilisation of marketing analytics (MA) and social media (SM) methodologies. The theoretical and practical contributions of this study are delineated into two specific domains, each of which will be elaborated upon in the following sections for a thorough examination.

6.8.1. Theoretical Contribution

The findings of this study provide valuable insights for researchers exploring consumer behavior, retail marketing, and innovation within small businesses, contributing to the existing literature on township economies. Despite previous calls for research on the business landscape of small-scale retailers in emerging economies, there is a persistent need for substantial empirical research and data inclusion (Boulaksil et al., 2014; Samiee, 1993).

Extant literature highlights that small businesses with innovative practices are more likely to thrive, grow, and outperform their peers (Laforet, 2013; North & Smallbone, 2000; Oke et al., 2007). However, limited scholarly work delves into the mechanisms through which these small enterprises engage in innovation (Hotho and Champion, 2011; Wedel and Kannan, 2016; Sharma and Verma, 2018; Tripopsakul, 2018; Patni, 2019; Pateli, Mylonas, and Spyrou, 2020; Effendi, Sugandini, and Istanto, 2020; Dollarhide, 2021; Dar, Bashir, Khan, Muhammad, Shafiq, Muhammad, and Ali, 2021).

In the domain of marketing decision-making and competitive positioning, social media (SM) and marketing analytics (MA) emphasise the need to evolve competencies driven by technological advancements within the rapidly evolving retail landscape.

The most significant contribution of this study lies in its effort to formulate a theoretical framework tailored to the needs of independent apparel retailers in township settings. It addresses the limited research integrating the TOE and DC theories to explore the combined influence of SM and MA on effective marketing decision-making and, subsequently, the attainment of sustained competitive advantage. Given the scarcity of qualitative research in this domain, this study aims to identify additional variables that can complement existing theories.

Furthermore, it addresses the scarcity of empirical literature concerning the burgeoning field of social media, marketing analytics, marketing decision-making, and competitive advantage, specifically focusing on the independent apparel retail industry within Gauteng townships. Ultimately, the outcomes of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge within the broader discipline of marketing management.

6.8.2. Practical Contribution

6.8.2.1. Township Independent Retailers

A comprehensive understanding of the ISMMA framework emerges as a valuable resource for local independent retailers, providing them with the tools to address challenges associated with the implementation of social media and marketing analytics.

This framework, intricately incorporating market and consumer data, offers a systematic approach to refine the marketing strategies of independent merchants and serves as a benchmark to assess the analytical foundation of their marketing endeavours.

As an exemplary measuring instrument, the ISMMA framework empowers local independent retailers to consistently evaluate the effectiveness of their marketing strategies and initiatives, enabling timely adjustments when necessary. Through ISMMA metrics, crucial performance drivers can be enhanced, directing investments towards the marketing strategies and toolkit of township independent merchants.

Furthermore, independent township apparel retailers can utilise the ISMMA framework to develop training materials and valuable tools in the realm of social media and marketing analytics. This proactive approach contributes to the effective implementation of social media and marketing strategies, reinforcing the alignment between user demands and contemporary technology.

The research findings serve as a catalyst for independent township retailers, encouraging them to devise strategies that alleviate barriers to ISMMA adoption. Using the qualitative metrics and concerns revealed in this study as evaluation criteria, township independent merchants can initiate discussions. For example, a preliminary qualitative questionnaire could probe into whether financial constraints or the need for external support hinder the adoption of SMMA. These outcomes provide an empirical starting point for in-depth dialogues.

6.8.2.2. Academic

The findings of the study, along with qualitative metrics, provide valuable content for academic discussions, acting as evaluative criteria for engaging conversations with students. These discussions can focus on developing strategies to overcome challenges in adopting social media (SM) and marketing analytics (MA).

6.8.2.3. Policymakers

The insights derived from the research findings provide valuable information for policymakers responsible for shaping training policies in entrepreneurial development during the fourth industrial revolution.

These insights include the incorporation of practical recommendations for leveraging social media and marketing analytics tools, with the goal of improving the execution and effectiveness of projects in the areas of social media and marketing.

6.8.2.4. Managerial Implications

- a) *Innovation*: Independent apparel retailers in township areas ought to prioritise innovation to enhance their prospects for survival and expansion. Staying competitive in the ever-evolving retail market requires exploring and applying cutting-edge strategies and technologies.
- b) *Technology Adoption*: Township independent apparel retailers ought to embrace social media and marketing analytics technology so as to adapt to shifting consumer behaviour and market dynamics. Efficient utilisation of these technologies for marketing decision-making is crucial.
- c) *Competitive Advantage*: Understanding the interplay between social media, marketing analytics, and competitive advantage is paramount for township independent apparel retailers. These insights should inform the development of strategies to secure a sustainable advantage over competitors.

Township independent retailers are encouraged to cultivate a culture of continuous learning and adaptability, recognising the dynamic nature of technology and consumer behavior. Long-term success is contingent on remaining informed about the latest trends and technologies in the market.

6.9. Limitations and future research direction

This exploratory study aimed to investigate the utilisation of social media and marketing analytics within independent apparel retailers in specific townships of Gauteng. It proves important to note that the controlled sample consisted of only fifteen independent township retailers, and the focus on Gauteng limits the generalisability of the findings. Despite these limitations, the study provides theoretical and practical contributions.

The study's primary limitation lies in its narrow focus, exclusively targeting small, independent apparel retailers. Geographically, the research was confined to specific townships in Gauteng, hindering the extension of findings to other townships or the entire nation.

In terms of methodology, a probability sampling approach might have been more feasible given the economic context of the townships and the absence of a comprehensive database of independent clothing businesses. As a result, a convenience sampling method based on accessibility was employed.

The study's outcomes may exhibit a bias toward Facebook, as it emerged as the most prominent social network channel among respondents, despite mentions of other platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp.

The exclusion of certain social media platforms might have overlooked valuable insights, but these findings lay a foundational basis for future research on the factors influencing the adoption of social media and marketing analytics by independent apparel retailers for marketing decision-making and competitiveness.

A final limitation is the exclusive reliance on survey respondents' accounts of their business operations, without incorporating the perspectives of the researcher or other observers to corroborate knowledge claims within the qualitative research paradigm. Future research should broaden its scope to include diverse examples for a more comprehensive academic understanding.

6.10. Suggestions for further research

To augment the usefulness and credibility of this exploratory study, it could be beneficial to validate the findings through engagement with marketing professionals in focus group sessions. Future research endeavours may involve validating the findings within the marketing sector and assessing the applicability and effectiveness of a model for the digital marketing analytics skills of recent graduates. The identified limitations in this study open up avenues for recommended areas of further research. To enhance credibility, future studies might utilise quantitative analytical tools and larger sample sizes, rigorously evaluating the application and effectiveness of SMMA.

The study's focus could be expanded to encompass other retail and professional service contexts beyond independent apparel retailers. Additionally, the investigation could delve into the credibility of SMMA across various social media platforms, either comprehensively, or by selecting specific platforms as the primary focus.

The main goal of understanding how consumers use social media for communication and how businesses can leverage this understanding for effective marketing suggests several potential avenues for further research, including:

- Expanding the sample size to include participants from diverse backgrounds beyond Gauteng's township independent retailers.
- Delving into the specific impact of social media marketing on financial outcomes.
- Exploring other independent businesses within Gauteng Province that use social media for engagement and promotion are also proposed research directions.

6.11. Conclusion

Independent apparel retailers in Gauteng's townships play a crucial role in the local economy, sustaining entrepreneurs within the apparel sector. Nevertheless, these retailers encounter significant challenges impeding their ability to attract new customers and retain existing clientele.

Prominent obstacles include a limited grasp of social media and marketing analytics, exacerbated by the emergence of township mall chain stores, intensifying the need for a broader customer base. This study addresses a critical concern by examining the way in which social media and marketing analytics influence marketing decisions to enhance competitiveness, exploring the contributions of proposals to this dynamic.

The research delves into the mediating role of technology, marketing analytics, environmental factors, and marketing decision-making in facilitating this connection. This investigation holds paramount significance for the advancement our comprehension of the theoretical foundations of the relationship between social media and marketing analytics, offering valuable insights for the academic community, business practitioners, and governmental and private institutions engaged in revitalising small township businesses and nurturing entrepreneurs.

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ANNEXTURE 1: HREC Ethics Clearance Certificate



Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Masia

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: H21/10/22

PROJECT TITLE

The use of social media and marketing analytics to improve marketing decision making amongst township independent apparel retailers in Gauteng

INVESTIGATOR(S)

Mr S Masia

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT

School of Business Science/

DATE CONSIDERED

22 October 2021

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

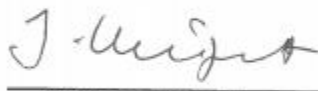
Approved
Risk Level: Minimal

EXPIRY DATE

02 December 2024

DATE 03 December 2021

CHAIRPERSON


(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Dr M Zulu

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee. I agree to completion of a regular progress report. For Minimal and Low studies, this is due annually on 31 December. For Medium and High Risk studies, this is due twice annually on 30 June and 31 December.

Signature

Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

ANNEXTURE 2: Participant Information Sheet (Online Survey)



Participant Information Sheet (Online Survey)

Good day,

My name is Willie Shemane Masia and I am a Masters student in Marketing at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating the use of social media and marketing analytics to improve marketing decision making amongst township independent apparel retailers in Gauteng under the supervision of Dr Melissa Zulu. You must be 18+years to participate in this survey.

The aim of this research project is to find out the existing social media and marketing analytics dimensions that lead to the usage of marketing analytics to improve marketing decision making and competitive advantage. Also, to understand whether marketing analytics usage drives marketing decision making. As well as to establish whether marketing decision making drives sustainable competitive advantage.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in an online survey. This activity will involve answering of series of questions in English with regards to your use of social media and marketing analytics to improve marketing decision making and will take around 30-45 minutes. This survey will be stored in the cloud platform and only the researcher will have access to it. This survey will be deleted after 5 years. There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project, You will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study.

You may withdraw at any time or not answer any questions if you do not want to. The online survey will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in my final research report. Please be aware that completing and submitting the survey is taken to mean consent to participate.

If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time. If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. With your permission, the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers in an

anonymized format. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Willie Shemane Masia



Researcher:

Willie Shemane Masia, 2418537@students.wits.ac.za, +27 76 512 5774

Supervisor:

Dr Melissa Zulu, E : melissa.zulu@wits.ac.za, + 27 11 717 8161

ANNEXTURE 3: Consent Form



Consent Form

Title: The use of social media and marketing analytics to improve marketing decision making amongst township independent apparel retailers in Gauteng

Name of researcher: Willie Shemane Masia

I,, agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous **YES** NO

I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his / her research report **YES** NO

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded **YES** NO

I agree that the information I provide may be used in an anonymized format after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained. **YES** NO

..... (signature)

..... (name of participant)

..... (date)

..... (signature)

..... **WILLIE SHEMANE MASIA** (name of the person seeking consent)

..... (date)

ANNEXTURE 4: One-One Interview Questions

ONE-ONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SECTION A

Demographics

1. What is your age?
2. What gender are you?
3. Where are your operations located?
4. Indicate the type of your business?
5. Can you describe your target market?

SECTION B

Social Media Usage

1. What is the nature of your operation?
2. What is it like being in charge of the operation?
3. Describe your preferred device to access your social media feed?
4. What are your lived experiences with using social media platforms?
5. Which features of social media do you frequently use?
6. How many followers do you have on your preferred social media platforms?
7. How would you describe your complete experience with social media platforms?
8. Explain what do you use social media for?
9. What social media platforms are you most active on?
10. Describe your use of social media?
11. Describe the type of content you post on social media?
12. Describe your time spent on social media every day?
13. Explain how do you post on social media?
14. Describe how often do you check-in to your social media accounts at any given time?
15. In your opinion, what social media platforms have the least appeal?
16. In your opinion, what social media platforms have the highest appeal?
17. In your opinion, how useful is social media for marketing your products?
18. Describe how your customer engagement on your social media?
19. Explain how do you track the success of social media for your business?
20. Describe how has social media had any effect on your marketing or promotions?

SECTION C

Marketing Analytics

1. Explain how do you go about developing social media and marketing ideas?
2. Explain how you set up your social media and marketing goals and targets?
3. How do you employ, hire or contract anyone trained in data analysis (yourself included)?
4. How do you go about discussing acquiring, analyzing, or other activities involving customer data?
5. How do you use social media data to study the impact of your marketing plans on consumer sentiment and purchasing behaviour?
6. How would you explain your knowledge of the idea of marketing analytics?
7. Explain your decision-making process when it comes to marketing?
8. How do you analyze/study the sales data?
9. How do you analyze/study the Return on your marketing investment?
10. How is your marketing analytics confidence levels?