THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON PERCEPTIONS OF BRAND KNOWLEDGE.

THE CASE OF THE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES PENSION FUND (GEPF).

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A research article submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration

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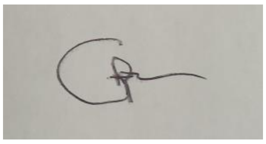
June 2023

DECLARATION

I, Gcinasonke Dandala, declare that this research article is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration (MBA) in the Wits Business School, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.



Gcinasonke Dandala_______________________________

Signed at ………**Jukskei Park**………………………………..

On the …………**21st**……... day of …**June 2023**……...

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This degree is dedicated to my beloved late parents, Mr. & Mrs. Ndodiphela Wilberforce and Nobambo Susan Dandala who sadly perished together in a motor vehicle accident on 27 August 1999.

Well into their middle age, both were enrolled as students at UNISA at the time of their passing. My mother undertaking her first undergraduate degree, a Bachelor of Arts in Education, she only had one more course to complete her studies. My father, a veteran of two degrees, Bachelor of Arts, BA (1969), the first in the Dandala (Bhuku) family & Bachelor of Education, BEd (1986), was enrolled for his Masters in Education. He remains one of the most intellectual and intelligent men I have ever met.

Both educators, the above illustrates the degree to which they highly valued and prized education. They instilled that in my siblings and I, along with the values of discipline and hard work. They also taught us the importance of family and to be productive members of society. But above all else, they loved us completely and unconditionally! This would not have been possible without their example being a bright, shining and guiding light, over two decades since their passing.

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The three of you are my heart and soul! Nothing would make sense without you!

I love you and thank-you, thank-you, thank-you!

To my parents, your legacy and love of education endures! Rest in peace Bhuku, Sinqashe, Nkamange, mfaz'obelede owancelisa umntwana phez'komlanjazana! Rest in peace Manci, Qholo, Mbali, Mdludlu kaBekiso, Nonto'zinde zinemiqala ukuwela uthukela!

Missing you still…

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ABSTRACT

The goal of the research was to examine the effect of social media marketing activities on brand knowledge, defined as brand awareness and brand image (Keller, 1993). The social media activities selected as independent variables for this purpose were firm generated content (FGC) and consumer engagement (CE). The study was conducted within the context of the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF), Africa's largest pension fund by assets under management.

The population of the research was comprised of GEPF clients defined as members, pensioners and beneficiaries all of whom have a direct interest in the communication activities of the GEPF. The clients were required to have personal accounts on the social media platforms of Facebook and/or Twitter in order to be part of the study. The quantitative research method was used, with research data obtained via an online questionnaire shared on two carefully identified private Facebook groups. A total of 188 followers from the groups fully completed the survey.

Multiple regression analysis using SPSS was then used to analyse the collected data. The results of the study confirmed that the social media marketing activities of firm generated content and consumer engagement have a significant and positive effect on the attributes of brand awareness and brand image. Furthermore, the study indicated that consumer engagement has a more significant impact on the variables than firm generated content.

The study enhances the gaps in research regarding the impact of social media activities on brand knowledge as articulated by Zahoor and Qureshi (2017) that there is still considerable scope to quantify the relationships between social media marketing and the dimensions that comprise customer-based brand equity.

Keywords: Social Media, Firm Generated Content, Consumer Engagement, Brand Equity, Brand Awareness, Brand Image

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The objective of the study is to investigate the impact of the Government Employees Pension Fund's (GEPF or The Fund) social media marketing on perceptions of its brand knowledge defined within this context as brand awareness and brand image. GEPF clients defined as members, pensioners and beneficiaries are the target population of the research.

1.2 Context of the Study

The GEPF is a public sector pension fund responsible for managing and administering the pensions of South African public sector employees at provincial and national government levels. As of 31 March 2022, the fund had assets under management worth R2.3 trillion rand, making it the largest pension fund in Africa. Furthermore, it has, 1.265 million active members and over 470 thousand pensioners and beneficiaries.

The Stakeholder Management and Communications Division (The Division) holds responsibility for managing and overseeing a comprehensive stakeholder management strategy, as well as a communication and education strategy. The Division defines its key goal as that of "ensuring the delivery of clear, timely and relevant information communications to its members, pensioners and beneficiaries" (Annual Report 2021/2022, p. 71), which speaks to enhancing the brand awareness of The Fund and its services. Among its key communications objectives are enhancing The Fund's reputation as a leading pension fund and marketing the GEPF as a preferred and beneficial fund for its members, which is about improving the organisation's brand image.

Due to the operational restrictions experienced as a result of the COVID19 pandemic, the GEPF had to adapt its communications strategy and rely more on digital channels. This led to a heavier reliance on social media platforms, specifically Facebook and

Twitter, to drive the communication and marketing initiatives of The Division. It is within this context that the research is undertaken.

The many advantages of social media for brands include securing brand reputation, improving sales, the participation of customers in the brand development process, expansion of brand awareness, creating positive connections and enhancing customer loyalty to a brand (Schau et al., 2009). According to Karamian et al. (2015), positive and major effects can be derived for brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality through social media marketing activities whilst Bruhn et al. (2012) posit that social media marketing can have a major influence on brand image.

The GEPF's significant increase in the level of social media marketing initiatives requires unpacking to understand the level of impact it has had on brand awareness and brand image i.e., the brand knowledge of the GEPF.

1.3 Research Problem

The understanding of social media marketing's (SMM) impact on brand awareness and brand image is limited as it is still viewed as a new marketing tool (Schulze et al., 2015). There are limited research studies that have investigated the role of SMM activities on customer's brand knowledge (Seo & Park, 2018 cited by Cheung & Rosenberger III, 2020).

Zahoor and Qureshi (2017) propose that there is still considerable scope for future research to quantify the relationships between social media marketing and the dimensions that comprise customer-based brand equity (CBBE), which quantify the strength of customer's affections for a brand and is a description of the associations and beliefs the consumer has about the brand (Wood & Hallam, 2000 as cited in Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017). There is limited research regarding the use of social media marketing in relation to issues and challenges confronted in building brand equity in various industries as well as the kind of social media activities implemented (Hermaren & Achyar, 2018).

Questions as to the type and degree of social media marketing activities required to assist organisations build customer-based brand equity are not clearly understood. Pham and Gammoh (2015) concur in that few studies have researched the impact of varying activities of social media marketing on critical CBBE objectives such as brand awareness, brand judgements, brand feeling and brand resonance. According to Schivinski et al., (2016), there is an inadequate understanding by marketing practitioners about the impact that SMM has on how customers perceive brands.

Keller (1993) conceptualises brand knowledge according to an associative network memory model in terms of two attributes, these being brand awareness and brand image. Given the research gaps identified in academia as stated above, this study seeks to research and understand the impact of social media marketing on the brand awareness and brand image or brand knowledge of the GEPF, two key dimensions that also form the concept of brand equity. The study is novel in its intent to add to the understanding of the impact that social media activities have in shaping brand knowledge, defined in this context as brand awareness and brand image, of a public sector pension fund.

1.3.1 Problem Statement

Social media has overall been recognised as an effective tool that contributes to an organisation's marketing objectives and strategy (Alalwan et al, 2017). Firms can encourage customers to become brand ambassadors whilst actively engaging them. Aichner et al., (2021) state that successful social media managers know how well social media platforms operate as well as how they are utilised by their consumers, and thereby create social media marketing mechanisms that match the behaviour of their customers.

Given the possibilities offered by social media for brands, what requires understanding is whether social media marketing has an impact on the key brand equity dimensions of brand awareness and brand image also defined as brand knowledge by Keller (1993). The social media platforms used to conduct the study will be based on the target audiences' interaction with the GEPF brand on Facebook and Twitter only. The study will seek to understand brand awareness and brand image in this context as two individual dependent variables.

Social media marketing is defined as commercial marketing activities or mechanisms that utilise social media to try and positively impact consumers' purchase behaviour

(Dann, 2010 as cited by Chena & Linb, 2018). Two social media marketing activities have been identified for this study to be the independent variables that will be researched to understand the impact of social media marketing on brand knowledge.

Firm-Generated Content (FGC) is content in text, audio, video or picture format that an organisation produces and then shares using social media platforms. firm generated content is a form of advertising that is in the control of the firm and is guided by a pre-determined marketing strategy (Schivinski et al, 2016). Firm generated content works in synergy with traditional marketing media, such as television, e-mail, print etc. Cultivating consumer relationships and managing brands are the key objectives of firm generated content (Gensler et al., 2013).

Firm generated content social media marketing is articulated as an independent variable and is expected to positively influence the brand awareness and brand image of the GEPF. The following hypotheses are proposed in this regard:

- **H1**: Firm Generated Content (FGC) positively influences the brand awareness of the GEPF.
- **H2**: Firm Generated Content (FGC) positively influences the brand image of the GEPF.

Consumer engagement (CE) involves both a motivational state that creates an amplified participation in online brand activities (Baldus et al., 2015; Brodie et al., 2013), as well as behavioural and cognitive responses, such as "liking" and "commenting" on brand posts or developing user-generated content (Simon et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2012). A customer's mental and behavioural inclination to interact with brands and other social media participants can be encapsulated in the concept of consumer engagement (Dessart et al., 2016). It has strong implications as it leads to consumer behaviour and action that has favourable brand outcomes (Jahn and Kunz, 2012).

The definition of consumer engagement applied in this study is adapted from Read et al (2018, p.5) where it is described as, "a psychological state that reflects a consumer's sense of connection to a brand based on their ongoing relationship (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b; Mollen and Wilson, 2010)". Several precursors of consumer engagement with brands on Twitter were identified as being brand customer service (BCS), brand interactivity (I) and brand intimacy (BI) by Read et al (2018).

Brand customer service relates to information seeking and sharing, as well as making and handling of complaints (Ibrahim et al., 2017; Harmeling et al., 2017). I relates to customers' perception of a brand's willingness and authentic appeal for integration with them (France et al., 2016 as cited in Read et al, 2018) and BI relates to how well consumers understand a brand (Aaker et al., 2004; Guese and Haelg, 2009, as cited in Read et al, 2018).

Consumer engagement is expressed as an independent variable and is expected to positively influence the brand awareness and brand image of the GEPF. The following hypotheses are proposed in this regard:

- **H3a-c**: Consumer Engagement positively influences the brand awareness of the GEPF.
- **H4a-c**: Consumer Engagement positively influences the brand image of the GEPF.

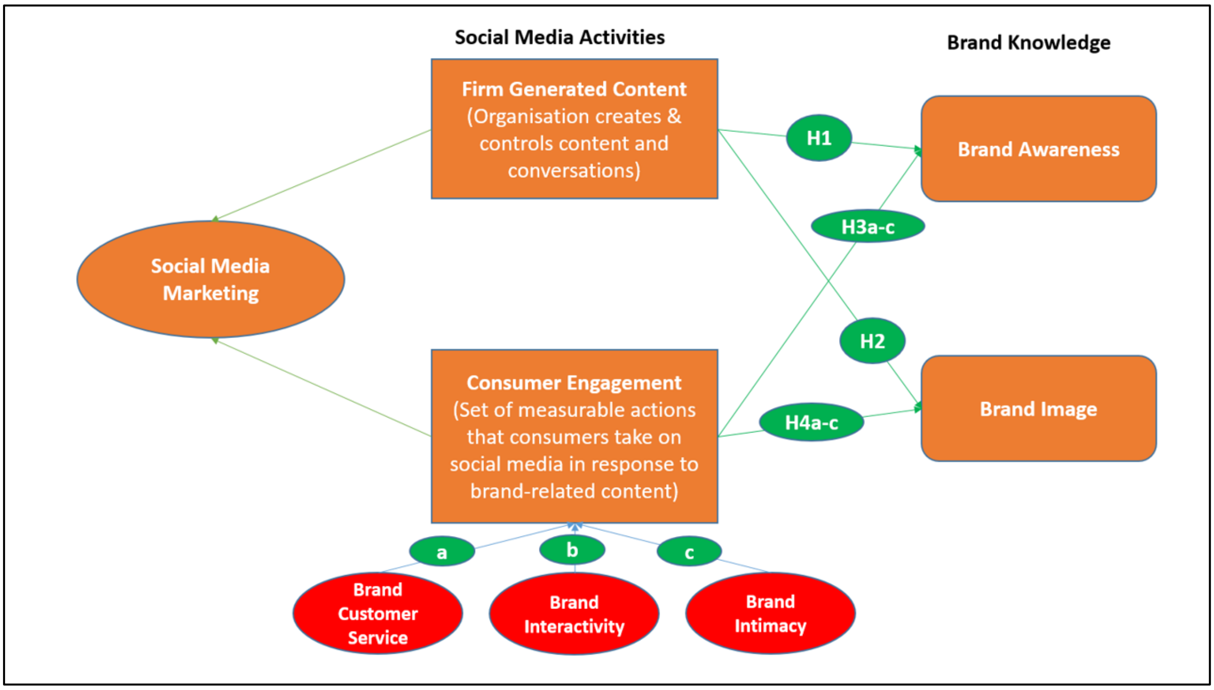


Figure 1.1: Research Model

1.4 Research objectives and questions

The key objectives of the research were to determine whether the social media marketing activities of firm generated content and consumer engagement influence brand knowledge described as brand awareness and brand image. Theoretical and empirical objectives of the research are provided below.

1.4.1 Theoretical objectives

- To review literature on social media;
- To review literature on firm generated content;
- To review literature on consumer engagement;
- To review literature on brand equity and brand knowledge;
- To review literature on brand awareness;
- To review literature on brand image;

1.4.2 Empirical objectives

The empirical objectives sought to examine the following:

- Do social media activities positively influence brand knowledge?
- Does the social media activity of firm generated content positively influence brand awareness?
- Does the social media activity of firm generated content positively influence brand image?
- Does the social media activity of consumer engagement positively influence brand awareness?
- Does the social media activity of consumer engagement positively influence brand image?

1.5 GEPF Overview

The GEPF is committed to being a global leader and reputable pension fund that delivers quality service to its beneficiaries. In this regard, one of its key stated missions is to “Empower our beneficiaries through effective communication” (GEPF, 2022).

Despite the onset of the COVID19 pandemic, The Fund remained committed to delivering clear, timely and relevant information to stakeholders as the forefront of its approach. The GEPF had to adapt its communication strategy and rely more on digital channels. It is within this context that social media became a key part of the communication and marketing strategy.

1.5.1 GEPF Social Media Communication & Marketing Strategy

The GEPF enhanced its digital communication strategy by implementing the following activities amongst others (GEPF, 2022):

- Disseminating communication by email, SMS, Facebook, Twitter and the GEPF website
- Launched the GEPF Self Service platform and mobile App
- Created videos and articles for placement on the GEPF website, social media platforms and broadcast at GEPF regional offices.

The above points demonstrate the central role played by social media in making key information accessible to its target audience. A brief scan of the GEPF’s social media platforms, specifically Facebook and Twitter, reveals the volume of key messaging being sent via these platforms.

The GEPF develops firm generated content in the form of social media posts using imagery, videos and text. The GEPF’s social media communication or firm generated content can broadly be described as:

- *Educational*: Information regarding GEPF benefits, services and investments
- *Financial*: Information relating to The Fund’s financial performance
- *Brand*: Relates to GEPF’s brand positioning and how it seeks to be viewed by its target audience

- *Informative*: Sharing of general information such as press releases and announcements

Figure 1.2: Educational

Figure 1.3: Financial

Figure 1.4: Brand

Figure 1.5: Informative

The social media audience engages with the content posted by GEPF through commenting, clicking on links, selecting emojis (liking, disliking etc.) and in turn responses are provided by the GEPF to members who comment on the content or request other information. This is evidence of consumer engagement on the GEPF's social media platforms.

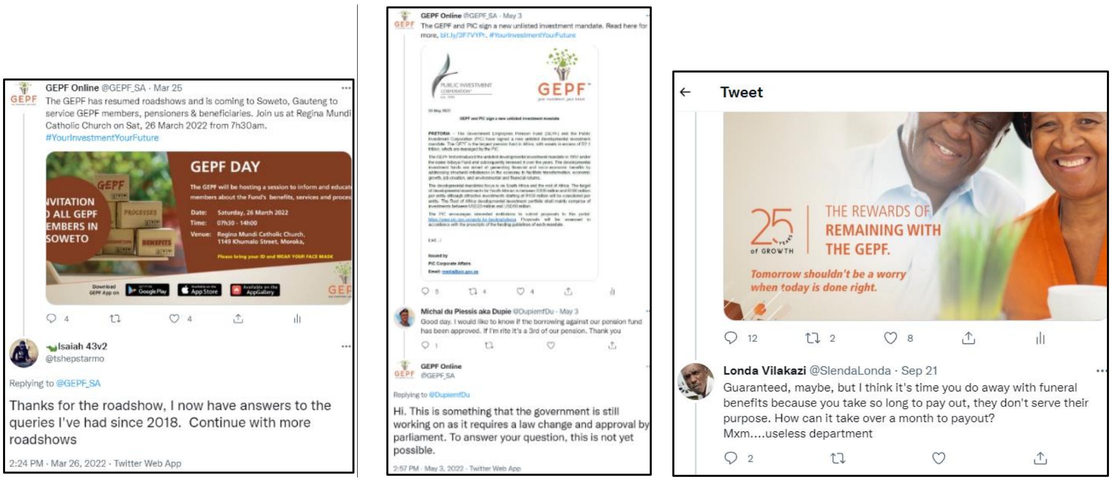


Figure 1.6: Consumer Engagement

To enhance the study, a questionnaire was shared with the GEPF Head: Stakeholder Management & Communications in order to get a better understanding of the organisation's social media communications and marketing strategy. The questionnaire for the interview was developed from existing literature with the aim of discerning the GEPF strategy's objectives with regards to the selected research variables i.e., the interaction between social media marketing through the activities of firm generated content and consumer engagement with brand awareness and brand image. The answers will not be scientifically analysed but simply used to enhance understanding of the organisation's communication and marketing strategy.

1.5.2 Members, Pensioners and Beneficiaries

GEPF members, pensioners and beneficiaries, also collectively referred to as GEPF "clients" are the target audience of the study. This section seeks to provide an overview and definition of the audience or clients for the purposes of the research study.

- *Members*: These are active employees, typically between the ages of 23 – 59 years who are still in active employment of the public service and making monthly pension contributions towards the GEPF. They are the majority of the audience and comprise roughly 1.2 million or about 70% of all GEPF clients.

  NB: For the purposes of the study, people who were GEPF members but have since exited the public service and are not GEPF pensioners are included in the research study by virtue of the experience they gained whilst still members of The Fund.
- *Pensioners*: Former public servants who have retired and are receiving a monthly pension from the GEPF. This constituency numbers approximately 330 thousand or roughly 20% of GEPF clients. These members are largely 55 years old and above. The exception would be pensioners who have had to retire due to ill-health conditions, who may be younger than 55 years of age.
- *Beneficiaries*: These are the dependents of deceased GEPF members & pensioners who have either received a once-off financial benefit or are receiving a monthly benefit by virtue of being related to a deceased GEPF member or pensioner and thus became entitled to receive a benefit. These are typically the legal spouses through legally recognised civil and traditional marriages as well as life partners, biological and/or adopted children and relatives being parents, siblings and cousins of deceased GEPF members or pensioners. They number roughly 167 thousand or approximately 10% of the audience.

1.5.3 GEPF Head Stakeholder Management & communications questionnaire response overview

A brief summary of the notable responses received from the questionnaire sent to the GEPF Head of Stakeholder Management & Communications aimed at further understanding the GEPF's reasons for delving into social media are provided in this section. The full questionnaire and responses are in the appendix.

The Head begins by stating some of the main objectives as being to enhance the GEPF's reach, sharing knowledge with its clients and to get an understanding of clients' views about the organisation. Social media is further identified as a platform that allows instant online discussion and the ability to tap into the opinions of clients, facilitates knowledge sharing on a wider scale, is efficient and cost-effective and provides an opportunity to enhance the reputation of the organisation.

GEPF's clients are described as members, pensioners and beneficiaries as well as the media, trade unions/organised labour and industry thought leaders. The demographic profile of key clients is listed as being 70% members, 20% pensioners and 10% beneficiaries with the majority being approximately 85% black people. On social media, the majority of these clients reside in South Africa in the provinces of Gauteng, Western Cape, Kwazulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Free State and Limpopo. 64% are female, 36% are male and 70% are aged between 25-54 years old.

The key messaging objectives are given as the need to educate and create awareness about the benefits and services of the firm including its various processes, sharing topical issues about the Fund and dealing with complaints. The organisation seeks to communicate these issues through its firm generated content (FGC). In addition, the GEPF tries to engage and respond to client queries and comments on social media within 48 hours, seeks to understand concerns and provides further information in an attempt to develop a reputation of credibility and trustworthiness for The Fund.

Finally, the organisation uses its unique corporate identity guidelines to create differentiated and attractive firm generated content in order to enhance its social media brand awareness. Overall, it aims to build a brand image of a pension fund that cares, focussing on delivering effective and efficient administration whilst safeguarding and growing the investments of the GEPF to ensure that its clients have a financially secure future.

1.6 Delimitations and Assumptions of the Study

1.6.1 Delimitations

The study is limited to members, pensioners and beneficiaries of the largest pension fund in Africa, the GEPF. Accordingly, only two social media platforms i.e., Facebook and Twitter will be utilised as the basis of the study.

Furthermore, only two activities of social media marketing being firm generated content and consumer engagement have been identified as independent variables of the study, whilst only two constructs that help to form brand equity i.e., brand awareness and brand image will be observed as dependent variables.

Importantly, the GEPF audience on social media platforms is a fraction of the approximately 1.7 million GEPF clients, where members constitute 70%, pensioners 20% and beneficiaries 10%. In addition, as will be explained under the research methodology, it will not be possible to control the proportion of clients i.e. create a representative sample, that respond to the research study. These factors mean that the generalisability of the study will be limited.

1.6.2 Assumptions

The research data was collected from two independent private Facebook groups not linked to the organisation that is the subject of the study. It was accordingly assumed that the followers of the group would be a relevant audience for the research as the objective of the private groups is to assist clients with administrative issues related to the subject organisation.

Importantly, it was not possible to collect any data through the Twitter social media platform. Twitter does not provide a feature for people with common objectives to form groups for sharing and discussion in the manner that Facebook allows. This meant that finding a targeted group on Twitter, which could be requested to share the questionnaire on the platform was not possible.

The research instrument distributed via an online questionnaire was only available in English with the assumption that the research audience will have a good understanding of the language and be proficient on how to complete an online survey. The assumption was made based on the fact that the Facebook groups are managed in English.

Finally, it was assumed that the audience would respond to the survey truthfully as confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed.

1.6.3 Preface to the research report

The research report is presented in the structure detailed below.

Chapter 1: The purpose of the study is outlined and the context within which it was undertaken is provided. It further delves into the problem statement, introducing the hypothesis and research model as well as the research problem, research objectives and questions thus giving reasons as to why the study was done. Further to this, an overview of the organisation that is the subject of the study is presented.

Chapter 2: The key literature review of the study is highlighted, with the theoretical framework and major constructs of the study introduced and defined.

Chapter 3: Research methodology is covered in this chapter, giving an overview of the research approach, sample and sampling methods, process of data collection and analysis. On overview of the research instrument is also provided.

Chapter 4: Research results are presented, providing feedback on the descriptive statistics, the reliability and validity measurement process and how the model fit assessment was determined.

Chapter 5: The chapter provides a discussion of the results, offering a detailed interpretation and assessment of what the collected research data means.

Chapter 6: The final chapter provides conclusive remarks and recommendations from the research study and offers some suggestions as to what future similar studies could consider and enhance from this research study.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The available academic literature with respect to the topic will be reviewed in this section. It seeks to provide an academic understanding of the concepts involved in the research i.e., an overview of social media, social media activities, the specific platforms to be used in the research and provide an understanding of the marketing constructs of brand awareness and brand image as well as an overview of GEPF's social media marketing strategy.

2.2 Social Media

A Tokyo online media environment called Matisse was the first to use the term ‘‘social media’’ (SM) in 1994. Social media is seen as an overarching concept that depicts a number of internet-based platforms, which includes blogs, business networks, collaborative projects, social networks (SN), forums, microblogs, photo sharing, products review, social bookmarking, social gaming, video sharing and virtual worlds (Aichner et al, 2021).

Research suggests that nearly all large organisations, in B2C and B2B environments use some or other SM channel to keep their consumers informed, collect information, listen to customer views, provide after-sales service or support, and advertise products and/or services. Aichner et al., (2021) posit that it can be viewed as an effective mechanism in getting closer to customers. Compared to traditional media channels like television, radio, print media etc., social media presents an innovative and cost-effective alternative that provides customers with elevated interactivity and customisation (Leeflang et al., 2014 cited by Alalwan et al, 2017).

Two-way communication between firms and customers can be strategically enhanced by social media, leading to improved attachment of customers to organisations' brands (Alalwan et al, 2017). In support, Filo et al. (2015), posit that using social media platforms enhances the capability of companies to endear consumers to their brands. The interest of consumers is easy and quick communication with the firm, whilst the firm wants to ensure that customers receive accurate information timeously, connect customers to their brand more and control the tide of information. Management now understands that the brand shift to social media requires re-imagining of the customer-company relationship, where the consumer can either become a friend or an adversary and is no longer just a passive audience (Aichner et al, 2021).

Abreza et al. (2013) posit that using social media leads to various benefits for the organisation like expanding the customers' knowledge, better customer engagement and more efficient customer interactions. Customer engagement yields benefits, such as frequent interaction with the brand and the sharing of positive word-of-mouth as they become increasingly emotionally devoted to the brand (Aichner et al, 2021).

However, negative effects for a company's brands can also occur as customers are also able to share their bad experiences and stories with a significant social media audience. Capable firms build and maintain emotional and social ties between their customers and their brands, which can lead to close and strong relationships with customers (Alalwan et al, 2017).

2.2.1 Social media statistics: Worldwide

4.65 billion social media users exist worldwide as of April 2022, which is approximately 58.7 percent of the world's population. This indicates that over 9 in 10 internet users use social media each month. This equates to more than 75 percent of the eligible global population. The average social media user spends an average of 2½ hours per day using social media and actively uses or visits an average of 7.4 different social platforms each month (Datareportal, 2022).

Facebook is the world's most popular social media platform, but there are now six platforms that claim more than one billion active monthly users. Half of these are owned by Meta, the owners of Facebook.

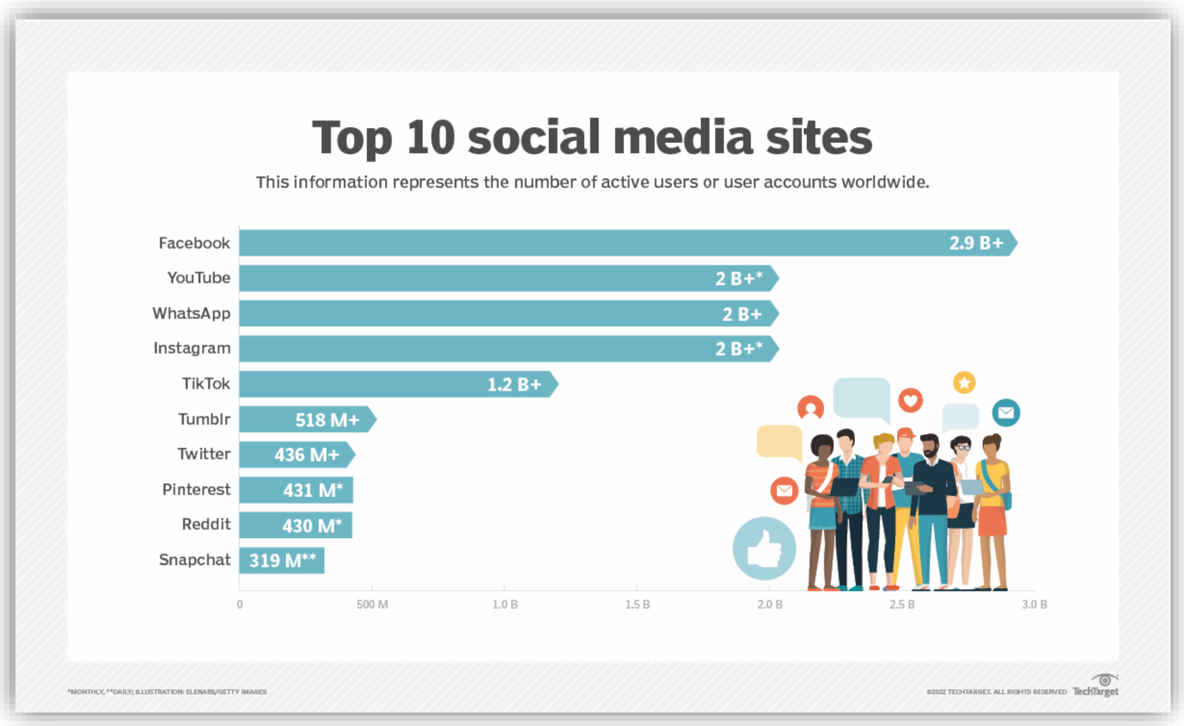


Figure 2.1: Top 10 social media sites worldwide (TechTarget, 2022)

2.2.2 Social Media statistics: South Africa

28 million social media users existed in South Africa as at the beginning of 2022, roughly 46.4 percent of the population. Meta's advertising resources claim that Facebook has 24.2 million users and the company's figures mean that Facebook's advertising reach in South Africa represents roughly 40.1 percent of the population at the beginning of 2022 (Datareportal, 2022).

Twitter claims 2.85 million users in South Africa, meaning an advertising reach in South Africa of 4.7 percent of South Africa's population (Datareportal, 2022).

2.2.3 Facebook and Twitter

Facebook is a social networking site that allows users to post comments, share photographs, and post links to news or other interesting content on the web, chat live, and watch short-form video. The content can be made accessible to the public, or private settings can ensure that only selected groups of friends or family, or individuals view the content. Group, fan and business pages can be opened on Facebook to use for social media communication and marketing (Nations, 2021).

Communicating in short messages called tweets, is the key feature of Twitter, an online news and social networking site. Gil (2021) describes Twitter and tweeting as a kind of microblogging. Users utilise Twitter to receive the latest updates and promotions from corporate brands, communicate with friends and follow business leaders, politicians and celebrities. It is also used to stay current on news and events (Hetler, 2022).

2.2.4 Social Media Marketing Activities

Social media marketing is defined as an organisation's way of developing and stimulating online marketing-related activities on social media platforms that offer value to its clients (Drury, 2008). Dann, (2010 as cited by Chena & Linb, 2018) define it as commercial marketing processes that use social media with the end goal to positively influence consumers' purchase behaviour.

Different authors propose different models with regards to the features or activities that make up social media marketing. Zahoor and Qureshi (2017) list the key features of social media marketing as User Generated Content (UGC), Consumer Engagement (CE), Firm Generated Content (FGC), e-Word-of-mouth (eWOM) and Online Brand Communities (OBC). Kim and Ko (2012) developed five categories of social media marketing activities being entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth communication for luxurious brands. Koivulehto (2017) simply added purchase intention to these. Whilst Seo and Park (2018) defined social media marketing features as entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization and perceived risk in the airline industry.

The GEPF does not fit the description of a luxurious brand as proposed in the Kim and Ko (2012) model thus the model is not considered appropriate for this study. The Zahoor and Qureshi (2017) model will be adopted for this study with the selected features for application in the research being firm generated content and consumer engagement. As social media communication and marketing is relatively new for the GEPF, these elements are the most relevant at this stage of the social media strategy's lifecycle. An overview of these two elements is provided next. Zahoor and Qureshi (2017) list the elements of social media marketing as:

- User-Generated Content
- Customer/Consumer Engagement
- Firm-Generated Content
- eWOM (Word-of-Mouth)
- Online Brand Communities

2.2.4. a) Firm-generated Content

This form of communication is where organisations can develop and control content and conversations on social media (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). Firm-generated content is under the management of organisations, where user-generated content is outside of the company's control (Van den Bergh et al., 2011).

The company can issue firm generated content and receive immediate feedback (Daiya & Roy, 2016). Hermaren and Achyar (2018) indicate that firm-generated content has a positive and major influence on brand association / awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty. This social media activity is one of the best ways for consumers to interact with brands (Daiya & Roy, 2016).

2.2.4. b) Consumer Engagement

Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2012; p. 127) defined customer/consumer engagement as "the intensity of an individual's participation in and connection with an organization's offerings or organization activities, which either the customer or the organization initiates", (Lou et al, 2019). Similarly, Palazon (2015) states that when consumers like or follower a particular brand on social media, they are conveying an inclination to enhance their association with the organisation (as cited in Tafesse, 2018).

Barger et al. (2016, p.5) "operationalize consumer engagement as a set of measurable actions that consumers take on social media in response to firm-generated content i.e. reacting to content (e.g., likes, hearts, +1's, 1 to 5 star ratings), commenting on content (e.g., Facebook comments, Twitter replies), sharing content with others (e.g., Facebook shares, Twitter retweets), and posting user-generated content (e.g., product reviews, Facebook posts about brands)". This customer tendency to reply to and engage with firms on social media encapsulates the concept of consumer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Consumer engagement on social media can enhance attributes of brand equity such as brand awareness, brand association and brand loyalty through all stages of consumer engagement such as watching, sharing, commenting, producing, and development (Zailskaite-Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2013). There is a substantive interrelationship between consumer engagement and a fan brand page on Facebook and their perception of brand awareness (Hutter et al., 2013). Barger et al., (2016, p. 21) recommend the term "social media engagement", "which should be defined as a mutually beneficial process through which firms and consumers co-create brand-related content and social experiences on social media".

2.3 Brand Equity and Brand Knowledge

The term brand equity arose in marketing literature out of an attempt to define the relationship between consumers and brands. It quantifies the strength of consumers' affection towards a brand and describes the relations and beliefs the consumer has about the brand (Wood & Hallam, 2000). When the consumer has familiarity with the brand and holds some favourable, strong and unique brand associations in memory, it is known as customer-based brand equity (CBBE) (Keller, 1993). Accordingly, Ruževičiūtė and Ruževičius (2010) posit that this approach supposes that brand equity is formed by individual experience and resides in the consumer's mind.

Aaker (1991, p. 15) defines brand equity as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers". The assets are brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, brand loyalty and other proprietary assets.

Keller (1993) identifies the elements that lead to the realisation of brand equity. Key amongst these dimensions is brand knowledge, defined in terms of brand awareness and brand image. Keller (1993, p.3) conceptualized brand knowledge as a combination of brand awareness, or ‘‘likelihood that a brand name will come to mind and the ease to which it does so,’’ and brand image, or ‘‘perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory’’ (Dew & Kwon, 2010).

The ability of a consumer to distinguish a brand in differing circumstances is brand awareness. It is reliant on both brand recognition and recall (Aaker, 1991; and Keller, 1993). Brand image can be described as a set of associations linked to the brand that consumers hold in memory. Brand awareness affects the development and strength of brand associations that sculpt brand image (Keller, 1993).

2.3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theories underpinning this study are the brand equity models developed by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993). Aaker (1991, p. 15) defines brand equity as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers”. These assets are brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, brand loyalty and other proprietary assets.

Keller (1993, p. 2) develops an alternative view and defines the concept as follows, “customer-based brand equity is the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand”. Keller views brand equity in terms of brand awareness and the strength, favourability and uniqueness of brand associations that consumers hold in memory. Furthermore, brand knowledge is defined by Keller (1993) in terms of brand awareness and brand image. The two brand equity models are illustrated in the figure below.

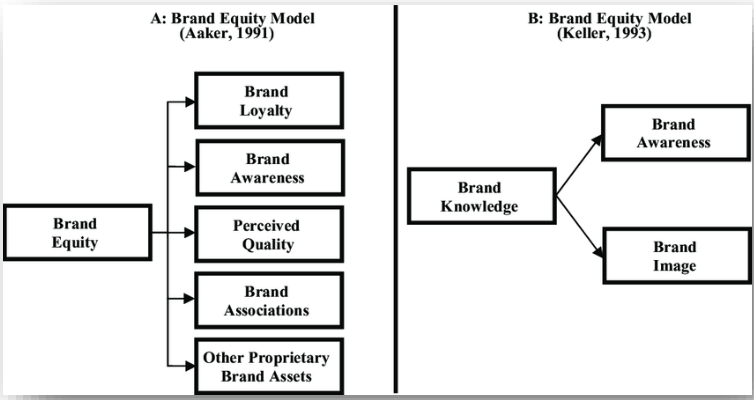


Figure 2.2: Brand Equity Models (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993)

The GEPF's social media strategy is relatively new with its current focus being to enhance awareness for the brand and to gradually improve its image and reputation. Given this context, the Keller (1993) brand knowledge model is most appropriate for the research as its focus is brand awareness and image. Aaker's (1991) model is perhaps slightly more complex for this stage of the GEPF brand's lifecycle and social media activity in particular, as more involved concepts such as brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations are included in the Aaker (1991) model. These are multifaceted concepts that can be explored in time once the brand's lifecycle and social media activity has matured. The next section expands on the concepts of brand awareness and brand image.

2.3.2 Brand Awareness

This concept conveys the likelihood that a brand name will come to a consumer's mind and the ease with which it does (Keller, 1993).

- Brand recognition is the consumers' ability to confirm before exposure to a brand, when given the brand as a cue.
- Brand recall demonstrates a consumers' capability to remember a brand when provided with its product category, the needs the category satisfies or some other clue.

Rossiter and Percy (1987 as cited in Keller, 1993) state that brand awareness is essential for the communications function to occur as it comes before all other steps. No other communication outcomes can be realised without brand awareness (Macdonald & Sharp, 2003). Brand awareness is the general-purpose communication for all promotional strategies (Razak et al, 2019).

Brand awareness can help link brands with associations expected by companies, create consumer familiarity with brands, and show commitment to their customers (Razak et al, 2019). It can add value by reassuring the customer of the organisation's commitment and product quality (Macdonald & Sharp, 2003). The conclusion can be reached that brand awareness requires being aware of a brand's existence along with the association it has with a specific product (Switala et al, 2018).

Investing in building brand equity and brand awareness in particular, can lead to sustainable competitive advantages and long-term value. It is generally accepted that without brand awareness, brand attitude and brand image cannot be realised. (Macdonald & Sharp, 2003). Keller (1993) summarises it best in stating that brand awareness influences the formation and strength of brand associations that shape brand image.

2.3.3 Brand Image

Brand image is a multi-pronged construct that is triggered by cognitions, emotions, symbols, values and attitudes of consumers (Malik et al, 2012). It signifies the perceptions about a brand as shown by the brand associations held in a consumers' memory. Brand associations are other informational connections linked to the brand node in memory and hold the significance of the brand for consumers (Keller, 1993). Kotler and Armstrong (1996 as cited in Alhaddad, 2014) define brand image as "a set of beliefs held about a particular brand". The concept of brand image is broad enough for it to be applied to organisations, corporates, products and/or services alike (Cian, 2011).

Emotional and functional elements make up brand image and the emotional aspect tends to be most prominent (Palacio et al., 2002 as cited in Cian 2011). For other authors brand image is a broad overarching concept that also includes brand personality (e.g., Patterson 1999; Plummer, 1984/85), and yet for others, brand personality and brand identity are two prerequisites for the formation of brand image (e.g., Heylen et al., 1995).

Marketers seek to establish a brand image in order to realise brand equity. Biel (1992 as cited in Kim & Ko, 2012) asserts that brand image is a key driver of brand equity. There are a number of abstract features that may reside in the consumer's mind about a brand, either objective or subjective (Malik et al, 2012). Marketers have to research customer beliefs about their brands in order to determine the correct brand image (Lee et al, 2014).

Organisations need to differentiate their brands and demonstrate to consumers why their brand should be chosen over competitor brands. Organisations and their managers endeavour to seek, select, sustain, and support a positive and unique brand image. The strength of a brand makes it possible to sell certain goods and services without minimal attempts required to convince customers with marketing strategies (Lee et al, 2014). Brand image is an intangible asset of the company and can be perceived as emotion which ensures its long-term success (Išoraitė, 2018).

2.4 Hypotheses development

There is limited literature that has tried to study the relationship between social media activities as articulated through firm generated content and consumer engagement and brand knowledge i.e., brand awareness and brand image. However, comparable studies include Bilgin (2018) who applied the Kim and Ko (2012) model to represent social media activities and concluded that social media marketing activities have a substantial impact on consumers' brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty. Similarly, Schivinski et al., (2016) studied the effects of firm generated content on the perception of brands and indicated that firm generated content did not demonstrate a positive influence on brand equity. The study thus proposes the hypotheses articulated below.

Looking at the influence of firm generated content on brand awareness, according to Bilgin (2018), the effect of social media marketing activities on brand awareness is significant. H1 considers the effect of firm generated content in particular and presumes the outcome will be similar to Bilgin (2018).

- **H1: Firm Generated Content (FGC) positively influences the brand awareness of the GEPF.**

The Schivinski et al., (2016) study considered the concept of brand attitude defined as a "consumer's overall evaluation of a brand" (Mitchell & Olson, 1981 as cited in Schivinski et al., 2016). The study concluded that firm generated content had a positive effect on customers' brand attitude (Schivinski et al, 2016). H2 considers the effect of firm generated content on brand image and presumes the outcome will be similar to (Schivinski et al, 2016).

H2: Firm Generated Content (FGC) positively influences the brand image of the GEPF.

Barger et al., (2016) suggest that social media engagement should be defined as a mutually beneficial process through which firms and consumers co-create brand-related content and social experiences on social media. Schivinski and Dabrowski (2015) highlighted the significance of consumer engagement for brand outcomes. Findings focused on understanding the influence of consumer engagement on brand awareness and brand image are limited. H3a-c and H4a-c consider the relationship between consumer engagement and two of the most desired brand outcomes i.e., brand awareness and brand image.

The definition of CE applied in this study is adapted from Read et al (2018, p.5) where it is described as, "a psychological state that reflects a consumer's sense of connection to a brand based on their ongoing relationship (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b; Mollen and Wilson, 2010)". Several precursors of CE with brands on Twitter were identified being brand customer service (BCS) – (a), brand interactivity (I) – (b) and brand intimacy (BI) – (c) (Read et a, 2018) as shown in Figure 1.

- **H3a-c: Consumer Engagement positively influences the brand awareness of the GEPF.**
- **H4a-c: Consumer Engagement positively influences the brand image of the GEPF.**

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The research approaches, processes and methods utilised to collect, process and analyse empirical evidence to achieve the objectives of this study are explained in this chapter. The following is discussed: the research approach, population, sampling methods and sample size, data collection method, the research instrument, data processing and analysis.

3.2 Research Approach

The quantitative research approach will be applied in the study. The quantitative approach utilizes numerical data collection methods. They generally depend on a large sample size and the validity of the integrity of the data, lies in the sample and sample size chosen (Rutberg and Bouikidis, 2018). It is concerned with measuring the magnitude, size or extent of an observable phenomenon (Kitto et al., 2008). Quantitative research will be the preferred method of the study to be conducted on GEPF members, pensioners and beneficiaries as it is objective and systematic thus eliminating ambiguity.

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 Population

The population of this research will consist of members, pensioners and beneficiaries of the GEPF. Any respondent that does not indicate that they fall within one of these categories will be excluded from the research analysis. Furthermore, the population sample will be derived from those who have an active Facebook and/or Twitter account.

The location of the respondents will largely be from South Africa. However, there are GEPF pensioners in particular, who have since relocated to other parts of the world after leaving the South African public service and continue to draw a GEPF pension on a monthly basis. It is presumed that their experience with the GEPF's social media platforms is the same as for any other GEPF client and thus are included in the study.

3.3.2 Sample and Sampling Method

The Promotion of Personal Information Act (POPIA), known as the POPI Act has made it challenging to get the personal details of individuals. The act makes it illegal to access a person's details or send them marketing content without their explicit consent. This has significant implications for the research study as it will not be possible to control for the numbers of each of the client base who respond to the study. This is because it is not possible to access a GEPF database beforehand and thus specifically select the numbers of each client base to respond to the research study.

Ideally, the study would seek to have the sample of respondents in the same proportion as the overall GEPF client population i.e., Members – 70%, Pensioners – 20% and Beneficiaries – 10%. Given that the research instrument will be shared on private Facebook groups of concerned GEPF members for members to voluntarily participate, the proportion of the types of respondents cannot be controlled.

The sampling method is a convenient sample as the researcher will be engaging respondents based on ease of accessibility within the selected private social media groups featuring an audience with similar needs. Convenience sampling is affordable, easy and the subjects are readily available (Etikan et al, 2016).

To derive the sample size, an online sample size calculator was used, with 95% Confident level and 5% Margin of Error. The total population of the GEPF clients is approximately 1.7 million people. Therefore, the appropriate sample size resulted in 385 individuals. It is assumed that females will be the greater number from the targeted population.

3.4 The Research Instrument

The primary data was collected using a self-administrated online questionnaire. Online questionnaires have the following advantages (Tan & Teo, 2000): (1) sampling is not restricted to a single geological location, (2) lower cost, and (3) faster questionnaire responses.

This study used two Facebook online communities known as the GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE PENSION INFO (GEPI) and the GOVERNMENT PENSION MEMBER FORUM (GPMF) and invited members in the private groups to voluntarily complete the questionnaire in the designated online questionnaire platform. The questionnaire was accessed by the participating members via a link placed on the group’s public page.

The self-administered online questionnaire was developed and adapted from the literature review. The questionnaire contains various expressions and statements carefully designed to gather the respondents’ views on the constructs to be studied as articulated in the literature review. The questions relating to firm generated content were adapted from a research instrument by (Sadek, Elwy, & Eldallal, 2018) and the consumer engagement questions were adapted from Read et al, (2018). The questionnaire on brand awareness was adapted from the following sources, (Bilgin, 2018) and (Sadek, Elwy, & Eldallal, 2018). Finally, the brand image questions were adapted from prior research instruments by (Bilgin, 2018), (Godey, et al., 2016) and (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

The first section of the questionnaire screened participants to ensure that they are eligible to participate in the survey. The most important participation criteria were that the respondent be a GEPF client under the definitions of member, pensioner or beneficiary. Secondly, the participant needed to confirm that they had a personal social media account on Facebook and/or Twitter. Other demographic factors were requested in the opening section to enrich the data such as gender, age range and ethnic group which were all be voluntary responses. The rest of the questionnaire featured the sections studying the various constructs. In summary:

- *Section A: Demographic*
    - Demographic grouping into the GEPF client categories and screens respondents that are not supposed to participate in the survey.
- *Section B: Firm-Generated Content (FGC)*
    - Assesses the relationship the users have with social media, introduces the concept of FGC and seeks to understand the audience views of the content.
- *Section C: Consumer Engagement (CE)*
    - Assesses the relationship the users have with social media, introduces the concept of CE and seeks to understand the audience views about it.
- *Section D: Brand Awareness*
    - Introduces the concept of brand awareness and seeks to understand whether the audience believes it is enhanced by FGC and CE.
- *Section E: Brand Image*
    - Introduces the concept of brand image and seeks to understand whether the audience believes it is enhanced by FGC and CE.

3.5 Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher received formal permission to use the GEPF as the subject of the research from the organisation. The approval memo is provided as a supplementary file. Permission was requested from the GEPF to access a database of clients and to use the official GEPF social media platforms to conduct the study. This request was formally denied by the GEPF Executive Committee due to the challenges related to POPIA. This is rather regrettable as directly accessing GEPF clients either through a database or the official social media platforms would have had positive outcomes for the research.

As an alternative, the researcher observed that a number of independent social media pages have been formed by GEPF clients with the intention of assisting each other with regards to GEPF related matters. Typically, these pages are formed with the goal of creating a forum where GEPF clients can interact about the GEPF administrative challenges they face.

It is for this reason that the two online Facebook groups, the GEPI and GPMF were approached to avail their communities to respond to the survey. Permission was received from both groups to conduct the research on their platforms. These social media groups were primarily created to give GEPF members advice, support and to keep them informed regarding administrative matters. Both social media groups in no way represent the GEPF, nor have a link to the GEPF. The groups have a combined followership of over 200 000 followers.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

Given that the research involved human participants, an ethics clearance certificate was obtained from the university's independent ethics committee ensuring that the study complies with the ethical principles of the University of the Witwatersrand. Prior permission was requested and received from the executive committee of the GEPF, allowing the organisation to be the subject of the study for the purposes of the research. Furthermore, official permission was requested, and approval received from the page administrators of the Facebook groups where the research questionnaire was shared for interested people to voluntarily participate.

The research instrument and manner of data collection ensured that the respondents remained completely anonymous. Personal details were not requested with the only requirement being that respondents identify themselves into one of the client categories of member, pensioner or beneficiary as well as to optionally indicate their race and gender. This was to ensure that the clients have peace of mind and were not concerned about their personal details being compromised and hopefully to allow them to respond to the questionnaire truthfully.

Finally, the researcher ensured that the data collected was not tampered with it in any manner and was purely analysed in its original form. This was to ensure that the integrity and quality of the research was maintained. These were the critical ethical considerations to allow the success of the research.

3.7 Data analysis

Multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the data and to determine the fit of the proposed research model. This is in line with Hair et al (2015) who recommend that when the research problem relates to a single metric dependent variable that is believed to be related to two or more metric independent variables, multiple regression analysis is most appropriate. The regression analysis was run through data tool SPSS in order to determine the fit of the model.

Thereafter, a number of steps were followed in order to assess the fit and accuracy of the model. This includes observing the R Squared, which can be explained as the percentage of the variance in the dependent variable which is accounted for by the regression line. Followed by looking at the ANOVA F-statistic, an accuracy measure or a formal statistical significance test of fit. The next step in the process involved assessing the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable by reviewing the data provided in the coefficients table.

The final step was then to determine the estimated accuracy of statistics such as regression slopes, i.e., whether the estimate of the slope is accurate enough to have confidence in through studying the confidence intervals or p-values (Sig). Furthermore, tests were done to compare means and groups which was aimed at understanding whether different factors had an impact on the model.

Reliability of the multi-item scales was measured by the Cronbach Alpha test where scores of between 0.65 – 0.80 indicate high reliability and observing the correlation matrix provided an indication of the discriminant validity of the constructs. Further details on the method followed for analysis are provided in Chapter 4 where the results are presented.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

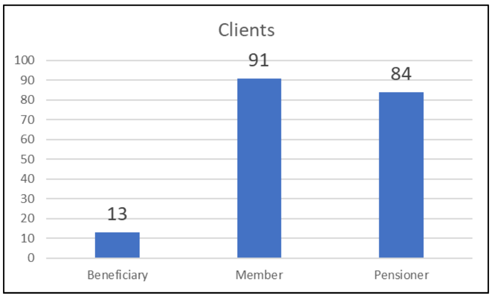
The results obtained from the online survey shared on selected Facebook pages for GEPF clients to complete are presented in this chapter. The first section provides descriptive statistics on the demographics, the results on the impact of social media marketing on perceptions of brand knowledge as observed through the various constructs used in the measurement instrument are discussed followed by an analysis of the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument.

The survey was administered through the Qualtrics online survey tool and a total of 256 participants took part in the survey. However, only 188 participants either fully met the criteria to be included in the study i.e., being a bona fide GEPF client with a personal account on social media platforms Facebook or Twitter or fully completed all the survey questions. The results presented are therefore based on the fully completed surveys of the 188 participants who fully met the study criteria.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

4.2.1 Demographic profile of participants

The main protagonists of the study are GEPF clients, described as members, pensioners and beneficiaries. It is important to understand their demographic makeup in terms of gender, ethnic group and age range as presented in the graphs below.



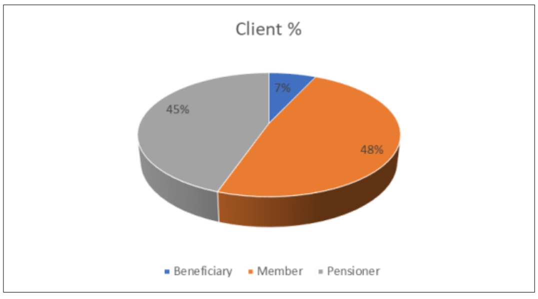


Figure 4.1: Clients

Members and pensioners were the majority and at an almost equal percentage of participants, 48% and 45% respectively with beneficiaries making up a small number at 7%. The GEPF client profile has been described as consisting of 70% members, 20% pensioners and 10% beneficiaries.

Pensioners draw a monthly income from the GEPF directly, whilst members still receive their salary from their employer and thus have a slightly more distant relationship with the GEPF. The overrepresentation of pensioners can reasonably be assumed to be a result of this fact as they have an immediate and direct relationship with the GEPF. It should therefore be unsurprising that they are likely to have a more significant interest in GEPF matters and thus look to social media as one of the platforms to stay informed. Additionally, the argument can be made that most pensioners are likely to have slightly more time on their hands to spend on social media as they are no longer in active employment. Beneficiaries make up the lowest proportion of clients at 7%, which is not too far removed from their 10% of the overall client profile.

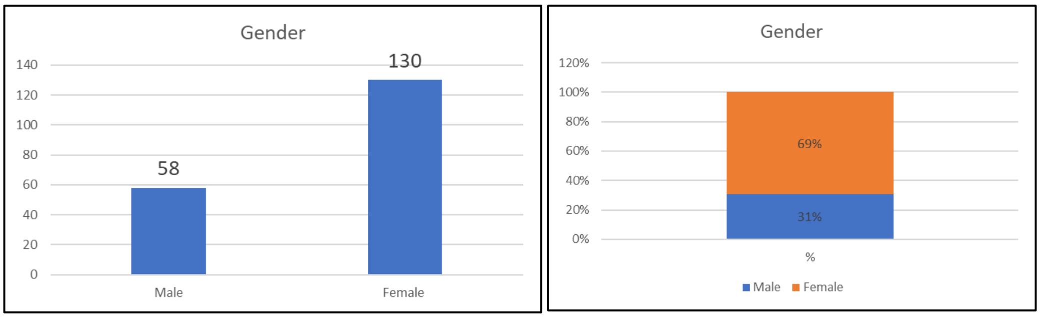


Figure 4.2: Gender

Nearly 70% of the observations were received from female clients and only 30% from males. As of February 2022, the gender split of Facebook users in South Africa was 50.7% female and 49.3% male (Datareportal, 2022). This is the first interesting statistic, implying a higher interest by females about pension matters than males, at least on social media. The significant overrepresentation of female clients in the GEPF respondent profile is hard to explain.

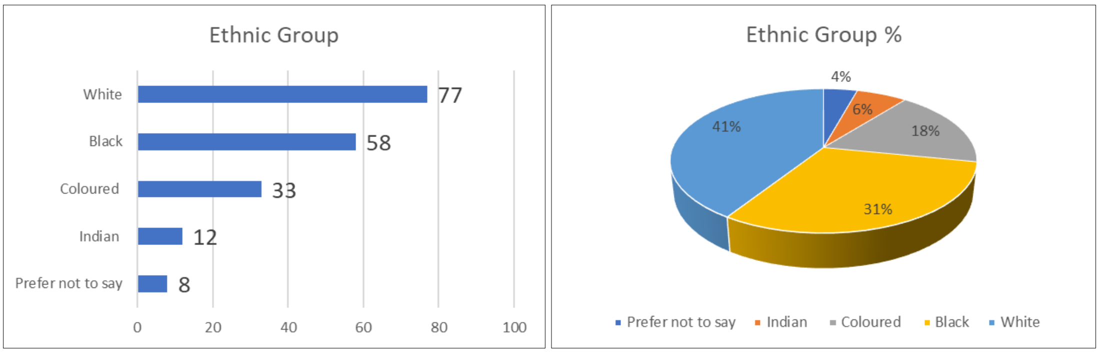


Figure 4.3: Ethnic Group

White clients at 41% of participants, higher than black clients (31%) were significantly overrepresented in the study. Only eight (8) participants preferred not to say (PNTS) what their ethnic group is. The GEPF Head: Stakeholder Management & Communications indicated that black clients comprise approximately 85% of GEPF clients. Furthermore, the results also show that the high white demographic in the study is driven by white pensioners, making up 22% of white people in the study. This is much higher than the pensioners of the other ethnic groups.

A number of assumptions can be made in this regard, given South Africa's history. This can include the higher historical economic advantage of white people and higher education levels amongst others. This leads to a better level of resources allowing them to be on social media i.e., access to data and possibly better understanding of how social media works particularly in the older, pensioner client group.

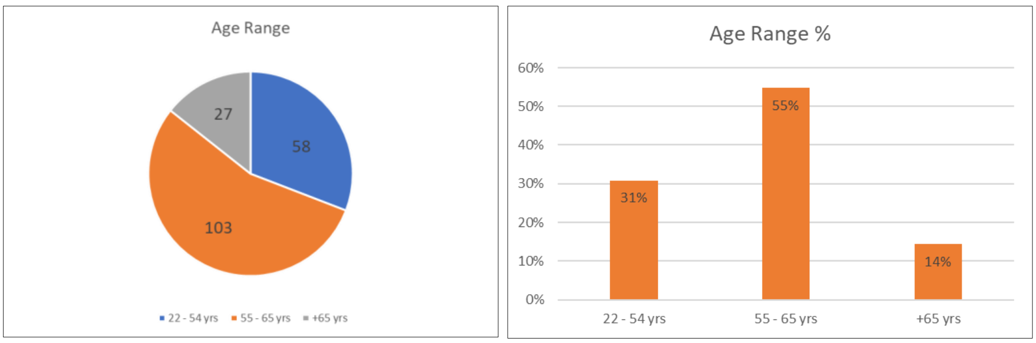


Figure 4.4: Age Range

The age range of 55–65yrs (55%) comprised a significant majority of participants, followed by 22-54yrs (31%) and finally +65yrs (14%). There is no surprise in these statistics as these age ranges are the most affected by pension matters as they represent the working population and retirees.

The questionnaire also featured the 18-21yrs age range, and it is surprising that it had no representation at all. This age range is a sizeable group of GEPF beneficiaries, because of their parents who were or are GEPF members, they are more tech savvy, and it would have been expected that some would be on social media to find out about pension matters that affect them or their parents. Perhaps an indication of a lack of knowledge and awareness in this age range that pension matters could also affect them.

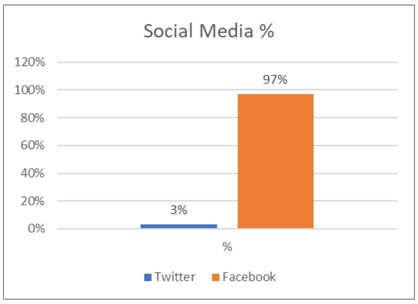


Figure 4.5: Social Media Presence

The survey was shared on two Facebook page groups; therefore, it would be expected that most participants would indicate that they have a personal Facebook account. It can therefore be surmised that the study results can mostly be generalised for Facebook.

The following section of analysis looks at the demographics by client type, which adds further understanding about the profiles of the participants.

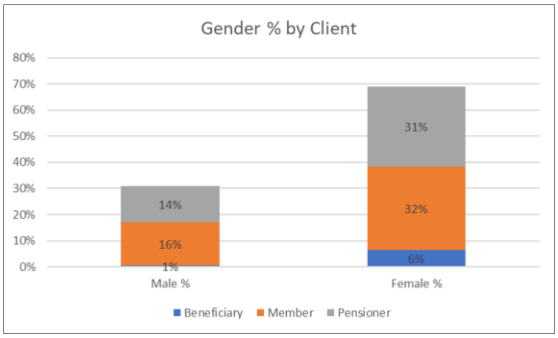


Figure 4.6: Gender by Client

The previous section has established that females were significantly in the majority. The above figure further indicates that member and pensioner females comprised the bulk of the female grouping. Interestingly, member and pensioner males make up roughly half of the females in each client type.

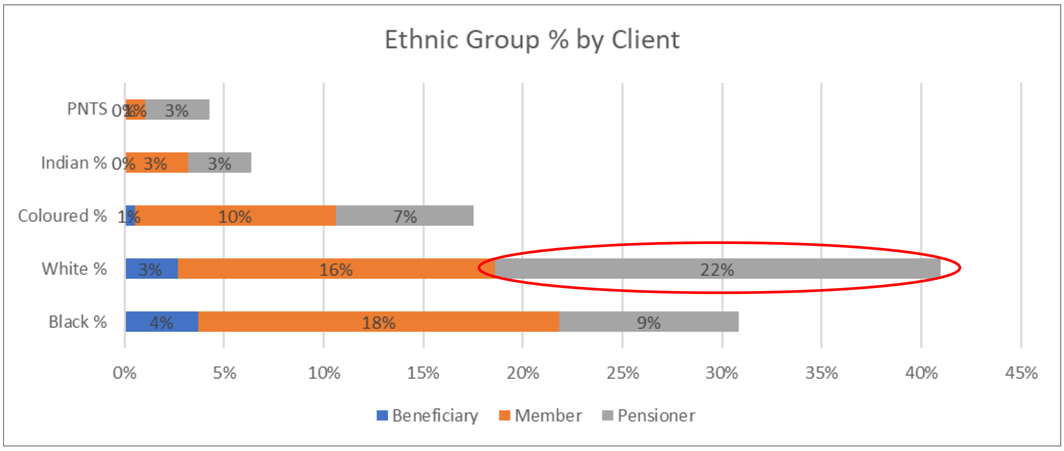


Figure 4.7: Ethnic Group by Client

Figure 4.7 clearly shows that the overrepresentation of white clients was driven by pensioners, who at 22% of participants were much higher than the pensioners of the other ethnic groups. This could possibly indicate a number of factors that can be drawn from general knowledge about South African society i.e., being in retirement, this group has more time available to be on social media, the group is more affluent with better access to resources to be on digital platforms like the means to purchase data and possibly a higher pension activism mindset given some of the general trust issues that many people have with government institutions.

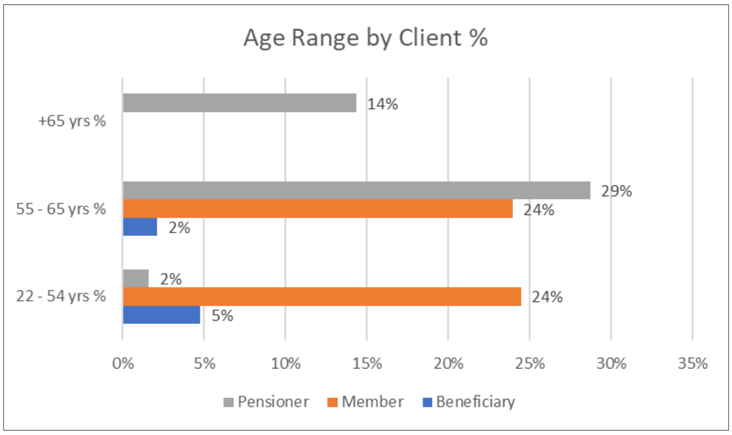


Figure 4.8: Age Range by Client

The statistics in figure 4.8 are as to be expected with the older age groups comprising most participants. Perhaps except to re-emphasize the earlier observation that there were no participants in the 18-21yrs age range, which would have been expected to be a sizeable proportion of the beneficiary client base. This may indicate that the GEPF needs to create some awareness about pension matters for this age range of clients.

Factor/Client		Member %	Pensioner %	Beneficiary %
Gender	Male	16	14	1
	Female	32	31	6
Ethnic Group	Black	18	9	4
	White	16	22	3
	Coloured	10	7	1
	Indian	3	3	0
	PNTS	1	3	0
Age Range	22 - 54 yrs	24	2	5
	55 - 65 yrs	24	29	2
	65+ yrs	0	14	0

Table 4.1: Demographics by client statistics summary

In summary of the demographic statistics, Table 4.1 provides a numeric visualisation of the aforementioned statistics, with some of the mentioned statistics of interest highlighted.

4.2.2 Results on the impact of social media marketing on perceptions of brand knowledge

This section provides an analysis of how the survey participants responded to the questions posed in the research instrument thus giving insight into their perceptions of the constructs posed by the survey.

4.2.2 a) Firm Generated Content (FGC)

The first set of questions sought to understand the participants' views about GEPF's firm generated content. The results, as shown in the table and graph below, indicate that most respondents agree (31%) or strongly agree (23%) with the statements posed. This suggests a slight majority of GEPF's clients view its firm generated content in a positive light. However, the combined proportion (46%) of clients with neutral, disagree & strongly disagree views is significant implying that nearly half of clients are essentially unconvinced about the effects of the firms firm generated content.

Construct	Instruments	Questions	1 - Strongly Disagee	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	TOTAL
Firm Generated Content	FGC1	I am satisfied with the GEPF's social media communications conducted via Facebook and/or Twitter	9%	13%	22%	34%	22%	**100%**
	FGC2	The level of the GEPF's social media communications conducted via Facebook and/or Twitter meets my expectations	9%	15%	22%	32%	22%	**100%**
	FGC3	The GEPF's social media communications conducted via Facebook and/or Twitter are very attractive	9%	17%	27%	27%	21%	**100%**
	FGC4	The GEPF's social media communications conducted via Facebook and/or Twitter provides useful and valuable information	5%	15%	16%	36%	27%	**100%**
	FGC5	The GEPF's social media communications conducted via Facebook and/or Twitter perform well, when compared with the social media communications of other pension funds	5%	16%	28%	29%	22%	**100%**

Table 4.2: Firm Generated Content (FGC) measurement scale

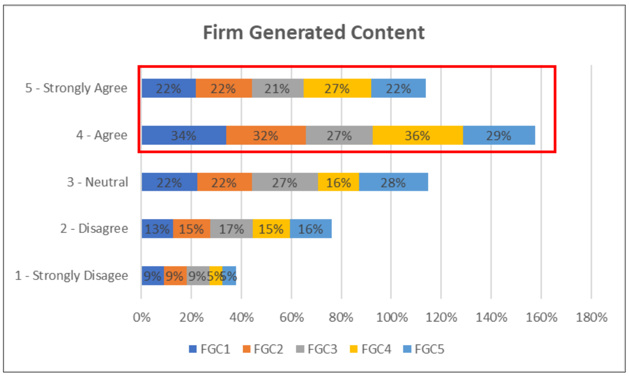


Figure 4.9: FGC Graph

4.2.2 b) Consumer Engagement (CE)

In order to improve inter-item correlation, two (2) questions from the consumer engagement scale were removed for the final analysis. This will be explained in slightly more detail in the next section. The results indicate an ambivalence by GEPF clients on this construct. Most clients (62%), strongly disagreed (13%), disagreed (23%) or were neutral (26%) about the statements. The implication being that GEPF consumer engagement is not viewed positively for the most part by its clients.

Construct	Instruments	Questions	1 - Strongly Disagee	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	TOTAL
Customer Engagement	CE1	My interaction with the GEPF via Facebook and/or Twitter makes me feel valuable	11%	20%	27%	28%	14%	**100%**
	CE4	I feel that I have a special relationship with the GEPF via Facebook and/or Twitter	17%	23%	28%	20%	12%	**100%**
	CE5	If the GEPF's Facebook and/or Twitter were a person, I would consider the GEPF to be a friend	13%	21%	27%	23%	16%	**100%**
	CE6	Seeing a post by the GEPF via Facebook and/or Twitter feels the same as seeing a post from a good friend	11%	27%	24%	26%	11%	**100%**

Table 4.3: Consumer Engagement (CE) measurement scale

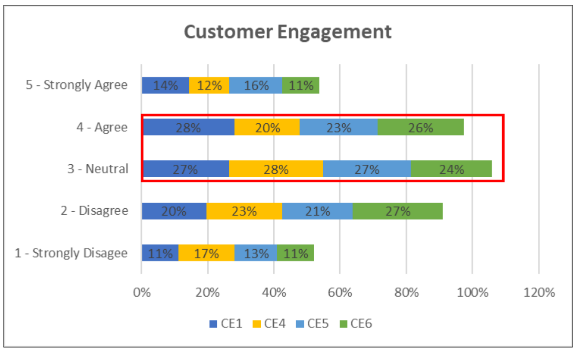


Figure 4.10: CE Graph

4.2.2 c) Brand Awareness (BA)

A significant number of clients rated BA positively, with most respondents (62%) indicating that they agree (44%) or strongly agree (18%) with the statements. This indicates a high level of awareness of the GEPF brand by its clients. However, the proportion of neutral, disagree and strongly disagree responses suggests that work is still required to improve the brand's awareness levels.

Construct	Instruments	Questions	1 - Strongly Disagee	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	TOTAL
Brand Awareness	BA1	I am aware of the GEPF on Facebook and/or Twitter	7%	9%	9%	54%	22%	**100%**
	BA2	When I think of pension funds on Facebook and/or Twitter, the GEPF is one of the brands that comes to mind	8%	15%	15%	40%	21%	**100%**
	BA3	I know what the GEPF looks like on Facebook and/or Twitter	9%	8%	12%	52%	19%	**100%**
	BA4	The GEPF is very familiar to me from Facebook and/or Twitter	11%	13%	19%	40%	18%	**100%**
	BA5	I can quickly recall the GEPF from Facebook and/or Twitter	9%	15%	20%	40%	16%	**100%**
	BA6	I am aware of the characteristics of the GEPF from Facebook and/or Twitter	9%	14%	27%	38%	13%	**100%**
	BA7	I can always remember the logo of the GEPF from Facebook and/or Twitter	10%	12%	16%	43%	18%	**100%**

Table 4.4: Brand Awareness (BA) measurement scale

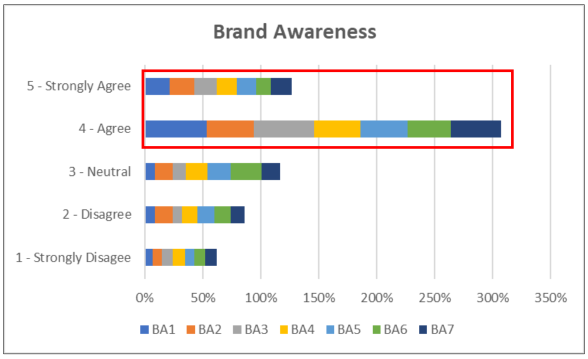


Figure 4.11: BA Graph

4.2.2 d) Brand Image (BRI)

Most clients were either neutral (32%) or agreed (28%) on the statements about the brand image of the GEPF. Those who strongly disagree or disagree comprised 29% of responses whilst only 11% strongly agreed. In essence, 61% (strongly disagree, disagree & neutral) of responses suggests that the brand image of the GEPF is not distinct or strong in the minds of most of its clients.

Construct	Instruments	Questions	1 - Strongly Disagee	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	TOTAL
Brand Image	BRI1	The characteristics of the GEPF comes to my mind quickly from Facebook and/or Twitter	8%	18%	27%	35%	12%	**100%**
	BRI2	In comparison to other pension funds, the benefits of the GEPF are of high quality based on Facebook and/or Twitter	9%	18%	30%	30%	13%	**100%**
	BRI3	The GEPF has a rich history based on Facebook and/or Twitter	9%	19%	35%	28%	10%	**100%**
	BRI4	I can reliably predict how the GEPF will perform on Facebook and/or Twitter	10%	19%	43%	21%	8%	**100%**
	BRI5	The GEPF is a leading pension fund on Facebook and/or Twitter	11%	18%	30%	27%	14%	**100%**
	BRI6	The GEPF has extensive experience based on Facebook and/or Twitter	10%	18%	37%	26%	10%	**100%**
	BRI7	The GEPF is a good representative of the pension industry on Facebook and/or Twitter	11%	20%	28%	30%	12%	**100%**
	BRI8	The GEPF is client-centered on Facebook and/or Twitter	10%	23%	27%	28%	11%	**100%**
	BRI9	I have fond memories regarding the GEPF from Facebook and/or Twitter	12%	21%	35%	23%	9%	**100%**

Table 4.5: Brand Image (BRI) measurement scale

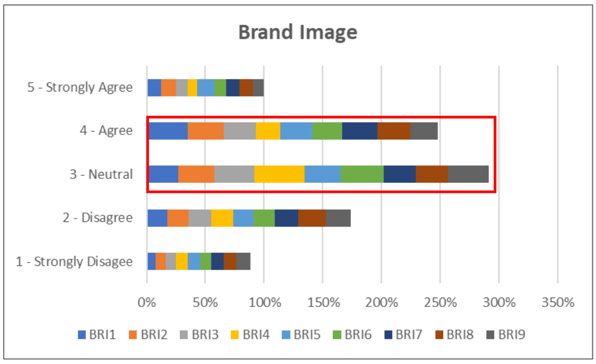


Figure 4.12: BRI graph

4.3 Reliability and Validity Measurements

This section reports on the internal reliability of the multi-scale items used to measure the various constructs in the study as well as their validity.

4.3.1 Reliability measurement

Internal reliability seeks to determine whether the answers to various items in a multi-item scale tend to be consistent when respondents answer the scale. The Cronbach Alpha test was used to determine reliability, where scores of between 0.65 – 0.80 indicate high reliability (Lee P. G., 2015).

All the multi-scale items scored very high with all seven (7) scales used in the survey measuring above 0.9, indicating very high reliability. This was to be expected as all the scales were adapted from previous studies.

The construct of consumer engagement (CE) was being measured through both a direct and an indirect scale. The indirect scale utilised the precursors of consumer engagement i.e., brand customer service, brand interactivity and brand intimacy to infer consumer engagement as per Read et al, 2018. Both the direct and indirect scales displayed high reliability, scoring alphas of 0.976 and 0.971 respectively. The researcher made the decision to use the direct scale for the final analysis in the study based on its higher score. The direct scale was then further adapted to reduce high inter-item correlation amongst the scale questions by removing questions CE2 and CE3. This still resulted in a high Cronbach Alpha of 0.957 but with the inter-item correlation challenge resolved. The table below presents the accuracy statistics.

Research Construct		Descriptive Statistics				Cronbach's Test	
		Mean Value		Standard Deviation		Item-total	α value
FGC	FGC1	3,47	3,468	1,221	1,208	0,885	0,936
	FGC2	3,44		1,242		0,899	
	FGC3	3,33		1,236		0,916	
	FGC4	3,65		1,181		0,896	
	FGC5	3,45		1,158		0,874	
CE	CE1	3,15	3,025	1,219	1,235	0,870	0,956
	CE4	2,87		1,260		0,912	
	CE5	3,09		1,264		0,891	
	CE6	2,99		1,197		0,902	
BA	BA1	3,75	3,500	1,102	1,174	0,780	0,956
	BA2	3,52		1,213		0,768	
	BA3	3,64		1,150		0,867	
	BA4	3,40		1,226		0,894	
	BA5	3,41		1,178		0,924	
	BA6	3,31		1,139		0,883	
	BA7	3,47		1,212		0,817	
BRI	BRI1	3,26	3,109	1,129	1,135	0,830	0,970
	BRI2	3,21		1,140		0,830	
	BRI3	3,12		1,098		0,851	
	BRI4	2,98		1,059		0,847	
	BRI5	3,17		1,194		0,898	
	BRI6	3,09		1,106		0,904	
	BRI7	3,12		1,178		0,902	
	BRI8	3,07		1,170		0,898	
	BRI9	2,96		1,139		0,860	

Table 4.6: Accuracy statistics

4.3.2 Validity measurement

Observing the correlation matrix provides an indication of the discriminant validity of the constructs. It indicates how distinct and less similar the constructs are from one another. Post the establishment of the individual reliability of the multi-scale items, they were aggregated to create final variable scores. These were then tested for correlation via the correlation matrix presented below. The correlations indicate fairly strong correlations or good evidence of association with consumer engagement and brand image holding the closest association. However, the numbers also indicate adequate discriminate validity as all scores are below 0.9, a number above 0,9 indicates a lack of adequate discriminate validity and that the variables essentially measure the same construct.

	Firm Generated Content	Customer Engagement	Brand Awareness	Brand Image
Firm Generated Content	1			
Customer Engagement	0,775	1		
Brand Awareness	0,710	0,782	1	
Brand Image	0,770	0,878	0,859	1

Table 4.7: Correlation Matrix

4.4 Model Fit Assessment

Multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the data and to determine the fit of the proposed model. Hair et al (2015) posit that when the research problem relates to a single metric dependent variable that is believed to be related to two or more metric independent variables, then multiple regression analysis is most appropriate.

The above applies in the context of this study where brand awareness (BA) and brand image (BRI) are the dependent variables presumed to be influenced by the social media activities of firm generated content (FGC) and consumer engagement (CE). The study seeks to determine whether firm generated content and consumer engagement have an influence on BA and similarly whether FGC and CE have an influence in BRI.

The regression analysis was run through data tool SPSS in order to determine the fit of the model. This was done independently for each variable i.e., brand awareness and brand image through a number of steps. Furthermore, a regression was run to test whether the antecedents i.e., brand customer service (BCS), brand interactivity (I) and brand intimacy (BI), a-c in the research model (Figure 1.1) lead to consumer engagement (CE). The process followed and results are discussed in the following sections with the summary tables presented at the end.

4.4.1 R Square Statistic

The R Square can be explained as the percentage of the variance in the dependent variable which is accounted for by the regression line. It is the opposite of error: it is how much of the Y-variable we are able to explain using the straight line in a regression. The closer the data lies to a straight line, the higher will be that line's ability to explain the data, and therefore the higher the R Square (Lee P. G., 2015). The R Square lies between 0 and 1 and can be interpreted as a percentage, where 0 means the data does not explain the dependent variable and 1 means that the data fully explains the dependent variable.

The R Square in the brand awareness regression returned a figure of 0.639 implying that 63.9% of the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables. The figure in the brand image regression was 0.791 meaning that the dependent variable is 79.1% explained by the independent variables. The consumer engagement regression returned the highest number at 0.825, confirmation that the antecedents explain 82.5% of the variance in consumer engagement. These are high figures and, in all three instances, suggest a good model fit.

4.4.2 ANOVA F-Statistic

The ANOVA F-statistic is an accuracy measure or a formal statistical significance test of fit. It provides a statistical value (the "F" statistic) as well as estimates of error, the Sum of Squares and Mean Square, and the associated p-value which is designated the 'Sig'. By observing the ANOVA p-value or 'Sig', and if it is lower than .05 or .01, then a conclusion that a straight line fits the data sufficiently can be made (Lee P. G., 2015).

The regression analysis for brand awareness, brand image and consumer engagement returned Sig's of less than 0.001, which is very small, implying that significant models exists and that the independent variables explain the dependent variables.

4.4.3 Coefficients

The next step in the process is to assess the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. This is done by reviewing the data provided in the coefficients table. Firstly, the Constant or Intercept provides an indication of the expected value of the dependent variable if the independent variables' value is zero (Lee P. G., 2015).

We then analyse the standardised coefficients also referred to as betas (β). These figures assess the size of the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The higher the value of the beta, the higher is the impact of the independent variable on dependent variable. What the data does show in this regard is that consumer engagement has a higher impact on brand awareness and brand image than firm generated content. In turn, brand intimacy (BI) has the highest impact of the antecedents of consumer engagement. Importantly, the betas are positive, which means that when an independent variable increases or decreases, the dependent variable will move in the same direction.

4.4.4 Confidence Intervals

The final step is to determine the estimated accuracy of statistics such as regression slopes, i.e., whether the estimate of the slope is accurate enough to have confidence in. This is done through studying the confidence intervals or p-values (Sig). The general rule is that if the confidence interval of a regression slope lies entirely above or below a certain level (e.g., entirely above zero), then a conclusion that the slope is "significantly different from" that level can be made. (Lee P. G., 2015).

In this regard, the data shows that at the 95% level of confidence the intervals for the slopes lie entirely above zero in all the regression analyses for brand awareness, brand image and consumer engagement. A conclusion can therefore be made that the independent variables, firm generated content and consumer engagement are both significant and have an effect on the dependent variables, brand awareness and brand image.

	EFFECT ON BRAND AWARENESS			
	B	Confidence Interval		β
Intercept/Constant	7,609	5,535	9,683	0,00
FGC	0,336	0,157	0,515	0,259
CE	0,915	0,699	1,132	0,582
R Square		0,639		
Adjusted R Square		0,635		
F		163,723		

	EFFECT ON BRAND IMAGE			
	B	Confidence Interval		β
Intercept/Constant	4,827	2,850	6,804	0,00
FGC	0,364	0,194	0,535	0,224
CE	1,391	1,184	1,598	0,705
R Square		0,791		
Adjusted R Square		0,789		
F		350,74		

	EFFECT ON CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT			
	B	Confidence Interval		β
Intercept/Constant	-1,162	-2,103	-0,221	0,000
BCS	0,278	0,149	0,407	0,276
I	0,170	0,042	0,297	0,164
BI	0,47	0,362	0,577	0,519
R Square		0,827		
Adjusted R Square		0,825		
F		294,068		

Notes: N = 188, $p < .0001$, B = unstandardized effect, β = standardized effect

Table 4.8: Summary table of regression analyses

4.5 Comparison of means and groups

After establishing that a model exists and that the social media activities of firm generated content and consumer engagement do have an influence on the dependent variables, brand awareness and brand image, the research then looked to understand whether different factors had an impact on the model. This section presents the results in this regard.

4.5.1 Comparing means: Gender

This exercise sought to understand whether there was a difference between how males vs. females viewed the dependent variables i.e., brand awareness and brand image. An independent sample t-test was applied which aims to get a statistical significance test (through confidence intervals and/or p-values) for whether the difference in the means is large (Lee P. G., 2015). Table 4.9 and 4.10 are drawn from SPSS and presented below.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std Mean Error
Brand Awareness	Male	58	23,12	7,883	1,035
	Female	130	25,13	6,985	0,613
Brand Image	Male	58	25,97	9,090	1,194
	Female	130	28,86	9,099	0,798

Table 4.9: T-test Group Statistics

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
			Significance		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Sig.	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Lower	Upper
Brand Awareness	Equal Variances Assumed	0,68	0,41	0,082	-4,276	0,255
	Equal Variances Not Assumed		0,49	0,098	-4,397	0,377
Brand Image	Equal Variances Assumed	0,686	0,23	0,045	-5,730	-0,062
	Equal Variances Not Assumed		0,23	0,046	-5,742	-0,051

Table 4.10: Independent Sample Test

Table 4.9 presents the means for the two gender groups for both dependent variables. However, the table does not indicate whether these means are equal or not. It is through observing the “Significance” (Sig) and “Confidence Interval” figures in Table 4.10 that is it possible to make any conclusions. In the case of brand awareness, the p-values or Sig are > than 0.05 indicating an insignificant difference at 5% confidence. Furthermore, the confidence interval includes zero. Based on these results, there is no difference in how males and females view the dependent variable of brand awareness and thus the means are not significantly different.

The picture for brand image differs. The Sig values are < 0.05 signalling a significant difference at 5% confidence. In addition, the confidence interval is entirely below zero indicating a difference in the means. It can thus be concluded that the means for males and females are different, and the two groups do view brand image quite differently from each other.

4.5.2 Comparing means: Multiple Groups

Comparisons of the various groups in the study are presented in this section. The clients’ means are compared and layered with the factors of gender, age range and ethnic group as well as to understand if any of them have a significant influence on the model. The statistical approach used is Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) which is suitable for the comparison of multiple groups. Some of the samples in the analysis where really small, which is not ideal, however the analysis does provide important information.

The aim of the analysis is to determine if the means are statistically different and whether they explain the variance in the dependent variables. The first statistic to observe is the Adjusted R Squared, which similar to regression signifies the percentage to which the overall model affects the dependent variable. Secondly, the Sig figures indicate if there is a difference in the levels of each group/combination. Thirdly, the Partial Eta Squared indicates the degree to which each factor affects the model and finally the Observed Power describes the ability of the test to find differences in the groups to be significant.

All of the results indicate that the factors are insignificant and do not affect the model or the dependant variables to any significant degree. In other words, the factors i.e., whether one is a particular type of client combined with gender, age range or a particular ethnic group has no major bearing on their view of brand awareness or brand image. The results are presented in the tables below.

	CLIENT / GENDER ANOVA					
	EFFECT ON BRAND AWARENESS			EFFECT ON BRAND IMAGE		
	Sig	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power	Sig	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Intercept/Constant	< 0,001	0,663	1,000	< 0,001	0,577	1,000
Client	0,710	0,004	0,104	0,522	0,007	0,158
Gender	0,861	0,000	0,053	0,125	0,013	0,335
Client*Gender	0,284	0,014	0,273	0,150	0,021	0,395
Adjusted R Square	0,007			0,027		

Table 4.11: Client / Gender ANOVA

	CLIENT / AGE RANGE ANOVA					
	EFFECT ON BRAND AWARENESS			EFFECT ON BRAND IMAGE		
	Sig	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power	Sig	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Intercept/Constant	< 0,001	0,818	1,000	< 0,001	0,791	1,000
Client	0,626	0,005		0,337	0,012	0,240
Age Range	0,643	0,005		0,637	0,005	0,123
Client*Age Range	0,777	0,003		0,008	0,008	0,167
Adjusted R Square	0,011			0,007		

Table 4.12: Client / Age Range ANOVA

	CLIENT / ETHNIC GROUP ANOVA					
	EFFECT ON BRAND AWARENESS			EFFECT ON BRAND IMAGE		
	Sig	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power	Sig	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Intercept/Constant	< 0,001	0,731	1,000	< 0,001	0,695	1,000
Client	0,421	0,010	0,198	0,667	0,005	0,115
Ethnic Group	0,770	0,010	0,155	0,814	0,009	0,139
Client*Ethnic Group	0,400	0,035	0,405	0,732	0,020	0,235
Adjusted R Square	0,026			0,033		

Table 4.13: Client / Ethnic Group ANOVA

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Hypotheses Results

The study was aimed at testing the research model illustrated in Figure 1.1. The hypotheses results are depicted in Table 5.1 below.

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficients	R Squared	F	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	FGC ⟶ BA	0,336	0,639	163,723	3,707	< 0,001	Supported and significant
H2	FGC ⟶ BRI	0,364	0,791	350,741	4,214	< 0,001	Supported and significant
H3a-c	CE ⟶ BA	0,915	0,639	163,723	8,327	< 0,001	Supported and significant
H4ac	CE ⟶ BRI	1,391	0,791	350,741	13,267	< 0,001	Supported and significant

Table 5.1: Hypotheses Results

5.1.1 Hypothesis results for the effect on brand awareness (BA)

- **H1: Firm Generated Content (FGC) positively influences the Brand Awareness (BA) of the GEPF.**
- **H3a-c: Consumer Engagement (CE) positively influences the Brand Awareness (BA) of the GEPF.**

The dependent variable, brand awareness (BA) was regressed on the predicting variables of firm generated content (FGC) and consumer engagement (CE). The independent variables significantly predict brand awareness, $F(2,185) = 163.723$, $p < 0.001$, which indicates that the two independent variables under study have a significant positive impact on the brand awareness of the GEPF. Furthermore, the R Squared at 0.639 (Adjusted: 0.635) depicts that the model explains 63.9% of the variance in brand awareness.

In addition, the coefficients were observed to determine the influence of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The results confirm that firm generated content has a significant and positive impact on brand awareness ($B = 0.336$, $t = 3.707$, $p = < 0.001$). Accordingly, H1 was supported. Similarly, the results also confirm that consumer engagement has a significant and positive impact on brand awareness ($B = 0.915$, $t = 8.327$, $p = < 0.001$) thus supporting H3a-c. Finally, the results indicate that consumer engagement has a more significant impact on brand awareness as it has a higher unstandardised coefficient at 0.915 (standardised = 0.582) than firm generated content (unstandardised = 0.336, standardised = 0.259). The impact of consumer engagement is in fact more than twice that of firm generated content on brand awareness when applying the standardised coefficient.

The study of (Bilgin, 2018) was not confined to firm generated content and consumer engagement but social media activities broadly and that study reached a similar conclusion that the effect of social media marketing activities on brand awareness is significant at a high level. Hermaren & Achyar (2018) in a research study on the effect of firm generated content on brand awareness concluded that firm created content in social media can influence brand awareness and association of a brand. Alhaddad (2015) studied the effect of internet advertising awareness on brand equity and concluded that it has significant positive effects on brand awareness, brand image and brand equity. However, in another study by Schivinski et al (2016) the results indicated that firm-created social media communication did not show a positive influence on brand equity as defined in the brand knowledge model of Keller (1993).

5.1.2 Hypothesis results for the effect on brand image (BRI)

- **H2: Firm Generated Content (FGC) positively influences the Brand Image (BRI) of the GEPF.**
- **H4a-c: Consumer Engagement (CE) positively influences the Brand Image (BRI) of the GEPF.**

To determine the outcomes of H2 and H4a-c, brand image (BRI) was regressed on the predicting variables of firm generated content (FGC) and consumer engagement (CE). The independent variables significantly predict brand image, $F(2,185) = 350.741$, $p < 0.001$, which indicates that the two independent variables under study have a significant positive impact on the brand image of the GEPF. Additionally, the R Squared at 0.791 (Adjusted: 0.789) indicates that the model explains 79.1% of the variance in brand image. This is significantly high and confirms the model fit.

In further observing the coefficients, the results confirm that firm generated content has a significant and positive impact on brand image (B = 0.364, t = 4.214, p = < 0.001). H2 is therefore supported. The results also confirm that consumer engagement has a significant and positive impact on brand image (B = 1.391, t = 13.267, p = < 0.001) supporting H4a-c.

The results also indicate that consumer engagement has a more significant impact on brand image as it has a higher unstandardised coefficient at 1.391 (standardised = 0.705) than firm generated content (unstandardised = 0.364, standardised = 0.224). In this instance, consumer engagement has more than three times the impact on brand image compared to firm generated content when applying the standardised coefficient.

A similar hypothesis in the Bilgin (2018) study reached the same conclusion that social media marketing activities have a significant effect on brand image. The Alhaddad (2015) research can also be quoted as a similar study here where internet advertising awareness was shown to have a significant positive effect on brand image along with brand awareness and brand equity. Ebrahim (2019) reached the conclusion that the direct relationship between SMM activities and brand equity is insignificant.

In conclusion, there is evidence from various research studies that social media activities have a significant impact on the brand knowledge attributes of brand awareness and brand image. However, the fact that some studies do find the contrary is more reason for research to continue in this field in order to enhance knowledge about the true impact of social media activities on the attributes that build brand equity.

5.2 Perceptions about the variables

This section tries to make conclusions about what the respondents' perceptions were about the variables researched in the study.

5.2.1 Firm Generated Content (FGC)

More than 50% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this set of questions indicating that the majority viewed the GEPF's firm generated content favourably. However, this cannot be viewed as a particularly pleasing result as it implies that up to 46% of respondents were either ambivalent or unhappy with the organisaton's firm generated content. The conclusion can be made that at best, the GEPF has established a strong base with regards to how it conducts its firm generated content, but some work still needs to be done to win over a significant section of its client base.

5.2.2 Consumer Engagement (CE)

The results for consumer engagement can be described as disappointing. Just 38% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements posed for this variable. This means an overwhelming 62% of clients were neutral or disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statements. Consumer engagement is an important attribute on social media as it speaks to the degree to which clients feel close to the brand and that it is willing to engage with them. The results suggest that significant work is required on the part of the GEPF to improve this attribute.

5.2.3 Brand Awareness (BA)

This is the GEPF's best performing variable according to the results. 62% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements for this variable. This is a strong result and implies that GEPF clients, for the most part, recall and recognise the GEPF brand on social media with relative ease. It means that they can recall and recognise the brand and its physical attributes amongst other brands.

However, nearly 40% of clients did not feel that they could easily recall or recognise the brand. This is a significant segment of clients, and it will be important for the brand to develop strategies to further enhance and entrench the brand's awareness amongst this segment of its client base.

5.2.4 Brand Image (BRI)

For brand image, 61% of clients were either neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements for this variable. This means that only 39% of clients agreed or strongly agreed with the statements. What the results imply is that a significant number of clients do not have a good sense of what the GEPF brand stands for or means.

Kotler and Armstrong (1996 as cited in Alhaddad, 2014) define brand image as “a set of beliefs held about a particular brand”. The results therefore imply that the GEPF has not established a strong and well-defined set of beliefs about the brand that clients will easily recognise and understand. Furthermore, 39% of clients either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, signalling a concern that these clients in fact may have a negative image of the GEPF’s brand image. This is a key element that must be developed in order to create and entrench a strong brand in the marketplace. The GEPF needs to focus on this area to build its brand.

5.2.5 Comparison of means

The aim of comparing means was to determine whether there was any significant difference in how various groups perceived the variables, particularly the dependent variables of brand awareness and brand image.

The factor of gender revealed some interesting results. In the case of brand awareness, the t-test used to do the comparison showed that there was no difference in how males and females viewed brand awareness. The perceptions of both groups were similar.

However, the results for brand image indicate that there is a difference in how the two groups perceive the variable with females scoring higher. This could mean that females have a better, much more defined understanding of the GEPF’s brand image and what it stands for. This could then imply that more work is required on males, to get them to understand the brand.

The results also clearly indicate that the other factors considered play no role in how the variables are perceived. These factors are the type of client i.e., member, pensioner or beneficiary, age range and the respondents’ ethnic group. The implication of these results is that GEPF probably need not be too concerned about these factors when developing strategies to improve its brand awareness and brand image attributes. According to the study, these demographic factors do not influence how clients perceive the attributes.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter consolidates the observations and conclusions derived from the research study. It ponders on the implications of the research for the organisation that was the subject of the study, opines on some recommendations and the direction that possible future studies could take given the outcomes of this research.

6.1 Implications for the GEPF

The picture from the study suggests that the GEPF has made some positive gains in its attempts to build brand knowledge through the social media activities of firm generated content and consumer engagement. The most positive results were observed in the variables of firm generated content and brand awareness. Clients' perceptions of these aspects were positive in the main and illustrate that the GEPF is making headway in developing firm generated content that is attractive and adds value whilst also making the brand easy for clients to recall and recognise.

However, the results were disappointing with regards to consumer engagement and brand image, with the majority of clients holding neutral to negative perceptions. The brand image results in particular demonstrate that the organisation has not yet created a well-defined and strong set of beliefs about the brand in the minds of its clients and they possibly hold a negative view of the GEPF brand. Clients therefore do not believe that the GEPF is executing the activity of consumer engagement as well as it should nor is has it created a strong and clear brand image for the GEPF.

6.2 Recommendations

The study has conclusively established that social media activities have a positive impact on perceptions of brand knowledge, with firm generated content and consumer engagement being key in this regard. It will be important for organisations to develop strategies and plans to enhance the firm generated content and consumer engagement capabilities of their organisations.

This requires find new innovative ways to keep the firm generated content of the firm attractive, interesting and relevant for clients. It needs to contain information that clients find useful and valuable. Developing it in a manner that is consistent in order to improve the ability for clients to recall and recognise the brand will enhance the brand awareness and brand image of the firm.

The organisation needs to seek out ways to engage with its clients more and better on social media. Read et al (2018) recommend that firms engage in social media activities that improve customer service, intimacy and interactivity between the firm and clients. Critically, the study shows that consumer engagement has more impact than firm generated content in the development of brand awareness and brand image. Enhancing consumer engagement building actions should therefore be a key objective of firms. This involves allowing clients the space to express themselves on the platforms, responding to their queries and concerns timeously and generally engaging and interacting with them in a manner that builds relationships with the brand.

In addition, the GEPF should conduct this kind of research on its own client database and official social media platforms, as opposed to third party groups. firm generated content and consumer engagement are also not the only social media activities available to firms to build brand knowledge. There are a number of other activities such as user generated content (UGC), Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and Online Brand Communities amongst others. Organisations should be looking to such various activities where appropriate to enhance brand knowledge.

6.3 Future Studies

The study demonstrated that firm generated content and consumer engagement are key social media activities that drive brand knowledge. The high degrees to which the predictor variables explained the dependent variables is testament to this. However, firm generated content and consumer engagement are not the only social media activities that organisations can or should undertake. There are other activities that could also play significant roles and have impact on how brand knowledge is perceived. This is one area where future research should look into.

The study only considered social media activities conducted on the social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter. The overwhelming response was received from clients with Facebook accounts. Future studies should consider the impact of social media activities conducted on other social media platforms to get an understanding of whether variables researched in this study are perceived differently or not.

The holy grail for marketers is to develop and establish strong brand equity for their brands not just brand knowledge. In many respects, brand awareness and brand image are precursors to the development or brand equity, which includes other key attributes such as loyalty, perceived quality, brand associations and other priority brand assets (Aaker, 1991). Future studies should therefore also look into how various social media activities can impact the overarching concept of brand equity and not just be limited to brand knowledge.

6.4 Conclusion

The research problem began by articulating that social media has on the whole been recognised as an effective tool that contributes to an organisation's marketing objectives and strategy (Alalwan et al, 2017). However, given the possibilities offered by social media for brands, what requires understanding is whether social media marketing has an impact on the key brand equity dimensions of brand awareness and brand image also defined as brand knowledge by Keller (1993).

The objectives of this study were to research and understand the impact of social media marketing on the brand awareness and brand image or the brand knowledge of the GEPF, the largest pension fund in Africa. The literature review illustrated that organisations can engage in a variety of social media activities in order to build brand knowledge. The Zahoor and Qureshi (2017) model of features that make up social media marketing activities was selected with firm generated content (FGC) and consumer engagement (CE) as the chosen activities for the study. The research, as stated in the hypotheses sought to determine whether firm generated content and consumer engagement positively influenced the brand awareness and brand image of the GEPF.

Utilising multiple regression analysis and defining brand awareness and brand image as dependent variables with firm generated content and consumer engagement as the predictor variables, the research results overwhelmingly confirmed that firm generated content and consumer engagement do indeed positively influence the dependent variables. The research model for brand awareness returned a R Squared of 0.639 indicating that as high as 63.9% of the variance in brand awareness can be explained by firm generated content and consumer engagement. Similarly, the model for brand image returned an even higher R Squared of 0.791 thus implying that up to 79.1% of the dependent variable is explained by the predictor variables, firm generated content and consumer engagement.

The study also demonstrated that demographic factors, with the exception of gender, played a limited to no role in how clients perceived the dependent variables. In addition, the results indicated the significance of consumer engagement in that it had a higher impact than firm generated content in both models. This means that the ability of firms to develop and enhance customers' tendency to reply to and engage with firms on social media (Hollebeek et al., 2014) is critical to their ability to build brand knowledge.

The final conclusion can therefore be made that firm generated content and consumer engagement are key social media activities that organisations can deploy to build and enhance the brand knowledge of their organisations.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

(The below message was posted on the wall of the Facebook Group page by the page's Administrator)

Good Day All,

Gcinasonke Dandala, is an MBA student at Wits Business School (WBS), JHB. In partial fulfilment of his MBA, he is required to conduct a research study and collect data through an online survey. The title of his research is "The impact of social media marketing on perceptions of brand knowledge: The case of the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF)".

Since the research relates to GEPF members, pensioners and beneficiaries, he has requested and been granted permission by the {PAGE NAME} FB Group to share the research survey on this page for anyone who is interested in participating in the research to participate. Participation is voluntary and nobody is required to share any of their personal details being full names, identity or pension numbers. The research is completely anonymous and takes approximately 10 minutes to complete.

If you are interested in participating, please click on the link to get a full explanation and complete the survey.

{Linke}

Thanks

(People then clicked through to the survey with the opening message below)

Good day,

My name is Gcinasonke Dandala, and I am a Master of Business Administration (MBA) student at Wits Business School (WBS), JHB. In partial fulfilment of my MBA, under the supervision of Dr. Nakuze Chalomba, I am required to conduct a research study and collect data through an online survey. The title of my research is “The impact of social media marketing on perceptions of brand knowledge. The case of the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF)”.

I would like to invite you to take part in answering the questionnaire. The survey is completely confidential and anonymous. You are not required to share any of your personal details being your full names, identity or pension numbers. Kindly complete ALL questions in the survey by clicking the forward arrow to move to the next question. A message will be displayed when you have completed the survey. There are no right or wrong answers. Although your response is of the utmost importance to my research, your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary.

Should you require further details regarding the study, please contact me at 2458079@students.wits.ac.za. For your reference, my supervisor can be contacted at nakuze.chalomba@wits.ac.za. Yours sincerely, Gcinasonke Dandala.

Please indicate below that you agree to participate, that the research project has been explained to you and you understand what your participation will involve. Yours sincerely,

Gcinasonke Dandala

Q1: Please indicate below that you agree to participate, the research project has been explained to you and you understand what your participation will involve.

Yes, I choose to participate	
No, I do not want to participate	

DEMOGRAPHICS

Q2: Please choose the option that best describes your association with the GEPF: COMPULSORY

CLIENT TITLE	DESCRIPTION	TICK
Member	I am employed or was previously employed by the South African government at provincial or national level	
Pensioner	I was previously employed by the South African government at provincial or national level and I am now earning a monthly pension from the GEPF	
Beneficiary	A person that I am related to was a GEPF member or pensioner and I receive a monthly financial benefit or I have received a once-off financial benefit from the GEPF due to our relationship	
Other	I do not fit into any of the above categories	

Q3: Please indicate your social media presence: COMPULSORY

I have a personal Facebook account	
I have a personal Twitter account	
I do not have a Facebook or Twitter social media account	

Q4: Please indicate your gender

Female	
Male	
Non-Binary / Other	
I prefer not to say	

Q5: Please indicate your ethnic group

Black	
White	
Coloured	
Indian	
Asian	
Other	
I prefer not to say	

Q6: Please indicate your age range

18 – 21 yrs.	
22 – 54 yrs.	
55 – 65 yrs.	
+65 yrs.	
I prefer not to say	

Q7: The following sections feature a number of statements for which you are required to indicate whether you agree or disagree with them. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree by ticking the corresponding number in the 5-point scale, where 1 - Strongly Disagree and 5 - Strongly Agree. Please indicate that you understand the instruction.

Yes	
No	

Q8: Firm-Generated Content (FGC)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements

Nr.	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
1.	I am satisfied with the GEPF's social media communications conducted via its Facebook and/or Twitter accounts.					
2.	The level of the GEPF's social media communications conducted via Facebook and/or Twitter meets my expectations.					
3.	The GEPF's social media communications conducted via Facebook and/or Twitter are very attractive					
4.	The GEPF's social media communications conducted via Facebook and/or Twitter provides useful and valuable information					
5.	The GEPF's social media communications conducted via Facebook and/or Twitter perform well, when compared with the social media communications of other pension funds					

- Adapted from Heba Sadek, Sarah Elwy, January 2018

Consumer Engagement (CE)

Nr.	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
Q9	***Brand Customer Service (BCS)***					
6.	The GEPF demonstrates that it is willing and ready to respond to customers' needs via its Facebook and/or Twitter message box					
7.	The GEPF shows a sincere interest in solving customer problems via its Facebook and/or Twitter message box					
8.	Client enquiries are responded to by the GEPF via its Facebook and/or Twitter message box					
9.	The GEPF demonstrates that it is proactive in addressing potential customer issues via its Facebook and/or Twitter message box.					
Q10	***Brand Interactivity***	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
10.	The GEPF gives me the opportunity to respond via Facebook and/or Twitter.					
11.	The GEPF facilitates real-time communication with its followers via Facebook and/or Twitter.					
12.	The GEPF enables conversations with its followers via Facebook and/or Twitter.					

13.	The GEPF encourages followers to respond via Facebook and/or Twitter.					
Q11	***Brand Intimacy***	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
14.	I feel more confident that the GEPF understands its customers on Facebook and/or Twitter.					
15.	I feel that I would be more comfortable describing the GEPF to someone who was unfamiliar with it based on Facebook and/or Twitter.					
16.	I feel that I am more familiar with the range of benefits and services that the GEPF offers from Facebook and/or Twitter.					
17.	I feel that I have become more knowledgeable about the GEPF from Facebook and/or Twitter					
18.	I feel that I am likely to be following the GEPF's Facebook and/or Twitter one year from now					
Q12	***Consumer Engagement***	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
19.	My interaction with the GEPF via Facebook and/or Twitter makes me feel valuable					
20.	I feel that I have a special bond with the GEPF via Facebook and/or Twitter					
21.	I feel that I have a close personal connection with the GEPF via Facebook and/or Twitter					
22.	I feel that I have a special relationship with the GEPF via its Facebook and/or Twitter					
23.	If the GEPF's Facebook and/or Twitter accounts were a person, I would consider the GEPF to be a friend					
24.	Seeing a post by the GEPF via its Facebook and/or Twitter feels the same as seeing a post from a good friend					

- Adapted from Read et al, 2018

Q13: Brand Awareness

Nr.	**Questions**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
25.	I am aware of the GEPF on Facebook and/or Twitter					
26.	When I think of pension funds on Facebook and/or Twitter, the GEPF is one of the brands that comes to mind					
27.	I know what the GEPF looks like on Facebook and/or Twitter					
28.	The GEPF is very familiar to me from Facebook and/or Twitter					
29.	I can quickly recall the GEPF from Facebook and/or Twitter					
30.	I am aware of the characteristics of the GEPF from Facebook and/or Twitter					
31.	I can always remember the logo of the GEPF from Facebook and/or Twitter					

- Adapted from Heba Sadek, Sarah Elwy, January 2018
- Adapted from Yusuf BİLGİN1, 2018

Q14: Brand Image

Nr.	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
32.	The characteristics of GEPF come to my mind quickly from Facebook and/or Twitter					
33.	In comparison to other pension funds, the benefits of the GEPF are of high quality based on Facebook and/or Twitter					
34.	The GEPF has a rich history based on Facebook and/or Twitter					
35.	I can reliably predict how the GEPF will perform on Facebook and/or Twitter					
36.	The GEPF is a leading pension fund on Facebook and/or Twitter					
37.	The GEPF has extensive experience on Facebook and/or Twitter					
38.	The GEPF is a good representative of the pension industry on Facebook and/or Twitter					
39.	The GEPF is client-centered on Facebook and/or Twitter					
40.	I have fond memories regarding the GEPF from Facebook and/or Twitter					

- Adapted from Reza Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), Godey et al. (2016)
- Adapted from Yusuf BİLGİN1, 2018

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.

Your response has been recorded.

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE GEPF HEAD: STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

1. **Why did the GEPF decide to include social media platforms as part of its communications strategy?**

   A: In order to enhance our reach and knowledge sharing as well get an understanding of what our target audiences are saying about the GEPF we decided to adopt social media platforms. Some of the considerations in making the choice were:

   - Social media makes it easy for you to find instant online discussion about the organisation.
   - Social media facilitates sharing of knowledge on a global scale. This provides opportunities for the GEPF to educate and share knowledge.
   - It's an efficient and cost-effective way of enhancing communications to your target audiences.
   - Social media allows you to keep up with the opinions of target audiences news instantly, which allows you to be aware of what is being said about the organisation, etc.
   - Social media allows us to enhance our reputation This allows you demonstrate your expertise as a thought leader.

2. **Which social media platforms does the GEPF use in its communications?**

   A: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn & YouTube

3. **Who are the GEPF's key clients?**

   A: Members, pensioners, beneficiaries, media, trade unions/employee organized labour and industry thought leaders.

4. **What can be shared about the demographic profile of GEPF clients, specifically members, pensioners and beneficiaries?**

A: The GEPF is comprised of approximately 70% members, 20% pensioners and 10% beneficiaries. In pure numbers, there are approximately 1 262million active members, 330 000 pensioners, 167 000 spouses and 10 000 child pensioners. The majority are Black, making up approximately 85%, with the mix of other races making up approximately 15%.

5. **What can be shared about the social media profiles of GEPF clients, specifically members, pensioners and beneficiaries?**

   A: We have the age and gender profiles as well as the location of clients on social media platforms, but it is not possible to categorise them by client type. They are about 64% Female and 36% Male. Age profiles are 18-24yrs (5%), 25-34yrs (25%), 35-44yrs (28%), 44-54yrs (17%), 55-64yrs (12%), 65+yrs (13%).

   Location: 97% in SA, about 3% overseas, top groups by location: Gauteng - 14%, WC - 9%, KZN - 8%, EC - 5%, FS - 2.5% and LP - 2%.

6. **What are the key messages that GEPF is trying to communicate to its clients through social media?**

   A: The platform is used to educate and create awareness about the benefits and services of the GEPF including processes that are required when joining or exiting the fund. Another key area is the fund providing its views on topical fund specific issues highlighted by our clients including assisting with resolving complaints.

7. **Firm-Generated Content (FGC) is content in text, audio, video or picture format that an organisation produces and then shares using social media platforms. FGC is a form of advertising that is in the control of the firm (Schivinski et al, 2016). What does the GEPF try to convey in the FGC that is develops for social media?**

   A: Educate and create awareness about the benefits and services of the GEPF, requirements and obligations of clients including processes to be followed when exiting the fund. Keep clients informed about the financial status of the GEPF, share topical and relevant information and build the thought-leadership credentials of the Fund.

8. **Social media audience's tendency to reply to and engage with firms on social media encapsulates the concept of consumer engagement (CE) (Hollebeek et al., 2014). In this regard, does the GEPF:**

   a. ***Seek to engage and respond to its stakeholders on social media? Please elaborate.***

   A: The GEPF engages with clients on social media, responding to general questions and assisting clients with specific queries like following up on the status of claims.

   b. ***Act proactively to respond to client comments, queries and complaints? Please elaborate.***

   A: We try to be proactive where it is deemed relevant and appropriate. An example is when misleading or inaccurate information circulates on social media. We pick up such instances and issue appropriate statements to provide the true facts for the benefit of our clients.

   c. ***Attempt to respond to queries/comments/complaints quickly? Please elaborate.***

   A: Yes, there are team members who are dedicated to picking up client queries and complaints, who request the relevant feedback and aim to revert to clients within 48 hours.

   d. ***Seek to understand client concerns on social media? Please elaborate.***

A: The team members always seek to clarify any queries and concerns that clients have and refer them to official sources of information like the website for further information where relevant.

e. ***Try to build relationships with its clients on social media? Please elaborate.***

A: The goal is to try and present the GEPF as a credible Fund and a reliable source of information that clients can trust.

9. ***The ability of a consumer to distinguish a brand in differing situations or circumstances is brand awareness (Aaker, 1991; and Keller, 1993). How does the GEPF try to enhance its brand awareness through social media marketing?***

A: The content generated for social media is developed in line with the GEPF's unique corporate identity (CI) guidelines, which helps to differentiate it on social media. The content is also attractive and catchy, using a combination of images and video elements. Furthermore, some of the social media posts are boosted or money spent behind them in order to reach a wider audience thus increasing awareness.

10. ***Kotler and Armstrong (1996 as cited in Alhaddad, 2014) define brand image as "a set of beliefs held about a particular brand". What is the brand image that the GEPF is trying to create on social media?***

A: The objective is to build a brand image for the GEPF as a caring pension fund that is focused on its mandate of delivering efficient and effective pension administration and safeguarding and growing the investment of the GEPF to ensure that clients have a financially secure future on retirement.

Thank-you for your participation by responding to the questionnaire. It is greatly appreciated.