

# **Title**

***Evaluating the role of social media marketing activities on brand equity of an automobile oil brand in South Africa.***

***Applied Research Project Proposal***

***submitted by***

***Mpumelelo Zandile Zungu***

***Student number: 2188165***

***Tel: 0760360010***

***Email: zzandile@yahoo.com***

***Proposed Supervisor:***

***Dr Emmanuel Quaye***

**Wits Business School**

**[February 2022]**

## **ABSTRACT**

Social media marketing (SMM) plays a significant role in providing access to increased brand activity, brand recognition, and generating online traffic for different businesses for both new and old brands. This study conducted 15 qualitative in-depth interviews with key informants involved in the marketing and sales of the Engen Petronas oil brand in South Africa to explore the impact of social media marketing activities (SMMA) on the new Petronas oil lubricants. The results reveal that SMM activities have proven to be an effective strategy for improving the Petronas oil lubricants brand's brand besides being a new brand in the South African market. Furthermore, the study's findings indicate that despite the lack of significant trendy social media strategies, the engaged SMMA provides access to increased brand activity, brand recognition, and generating online traffic for the Petronas oil lubricant.

### **Keywords:**

Social media marketing (SMM), Social media marketing activities, Oil Lubricants, Brand equity

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this piece of work to my late grandmother Dorothy Dube.

## DECLARATION

I, Mpumelelo Zandile Zungu, now declare that the information presented in this dissertation has not been issued nor submitted to any other higher learning institution for a qualification. All authors mentioned have been fully referenced accordingly.

.....*Zungu*.....

**Mpumelelo Z. Zungu**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Firstly, I would like to thank Almighty God for carrying me through this journey.

To my family and friends, thank you for cheerleading me all the way. Special thanks to Dr Sibongile Mariyln Zungu, Mr Sibusiso Benjamin Zungu, Mr Mphathi Emmanuel Zungu and Professor Kenneth Mathu.

To my supervisor Dr Emmanuel Quaye, a huge thank you for your guidance, wisdom and insight in this academic journey.

# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .....	i
DEDICATION.....	ii
DECLARATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
Table of Figures.....	vii
Tables.....	vii
CHAPTER ONE: STUDY BACKGROUND .....	1
1. Introduction .....	1
1.1. Brief Study Background.....	1
1.2. Problem Statement .....	3
1.3. Study Rationale .....	3
1.4. Research Objectives.....	3
1.6. Study Delimitations.....	4
1.7. Structure of the Study .....	4
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	6
2. Introduction .....	6
2.1. Theoretical Background.....	6
2.1.1. Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA).....	6
2.1.2. The Important Roles of Social Media Marketing.....	8
2.1.3. Brand Equity.....	10
2.2. Building and Strengthening Brand Equity with Social Media.....	11
2.3. Social Media Marketing in Petroleum Industry .....	12
2.4. Concluding Summary.....	13
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	14
3. Introduction .....	14
3.1. Interpretive research paradigm.....	14
3.2. Qualitative case study research design.....	15
3.3. Target population and sample.....	15
3.3.1. Sampling technique.....	16
3.3.2. Selection of the sample.....	16
3.4. Data Collection Instruments.....	17
3.4.1. Semi-structured interviews.....	17
3.4.2. Secondary data extraction.....	18
3.5. Data analysis .....	19
3.6. Data Quality Control .....	20

3.7. Ethical considerations.....	21
3.8. Concluding Summary.....	22
<b>CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>23</b>
4. Introduction .....	23
4.1. Emerged themes .....	24
4.2. Presentation of results.....	24
4.2.1. Theme 1: Role of social media marketing on branding .....	24
4.2.2. Theme 2: Experience of marketers and salespersons in social media on brand equity .....	28
4.2.3. Theme 3: Strategies being used to brand Petronas products by Engen SA 31	
4.2.4. Theme 4: Barriers to success brands on social media.....	32
4.2.5. Theme 5: Alternatives to improve the brand through social media .....	34
4.3. Discussion of results.....	37
4.3.1. Role of social media marketing on branding .....	37
4.3.2. Experience of marketers and salespersons in social media on brand equity 38	
4.3.3. Strategies being used to brand Petronas products by Engen SA.....	39
4.3.4. Barriers to successful brands on social media .....	39
4.3.5. Alternatives to improve the brand through social media.....	40
4.4. Concluding Summary .....	40
<b>CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>42</b>
5. Summary .....	42
5.1. Summarization of Chapters.....	43
5.2. Conclusions.....	44
5.2.1. Achieving Research Objectives.....	44
5.2.2. Scope and Delimitation of the Study.....	46
5.3. Recommendations .....	46
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>48</b>
Appendix A: Topic Approval Letter .....	53
Appendix B: Gatekeeper’s Letter.....	55
Appendix C: Ethical Clearance Letter .....	57
Appendix D: Information Sheet.....	58
Appendix E: Interview Schedule .....	59

## Table of Figures

FIGURE 1:CONCEPTUAL MODEL.....	10
--------------------------------	----

## Tables

Table 1: Participants Information.....	23
Table 2: <i>Emerged themes</i> .....	24

# CHAPTER ONE: STUDY BACKGROUND

## 1. Introduction

The emergence and growth of social media marketing (SMM) have played a significant role in providing access to increased brand activity and brand recognition and generating online traffic for different businesses for both new and old brands. Consumers increasingly rely on social media (SM) to decide on the relevant brands or products they want (Akgun, 2020; Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020; Dubbelink, Herrando, & Constantinides, 2021). The automobile industry has not been exempted from SMM's benefits, with about 78% of car buyers indicating the usefulness of SM in choosing their next car and over 86% engaging with automobile brands post-purchase for different services (Heitman, 2021). Though SMM has been significantly beneficial for consumers, it remains crucial for companies to explore and understand the impact of SMM to shape their brand equity sustainably. With this insight, this report presents the impact of SMM activities on the brand equity of Petronas (Engen) oil brand in South Africa. Therefore, this chapter introduces the study background, the problem statement and study rationale, and the study's key objectives and questions.

### 1.1. Brief Study Background

Companies often embark on various activities to improve their competitive advantage, often through the expansion and innovation of brands (Xu, 2014). For example, in 2018 Engen petroleum South Africa introduced new lubricant products under a new Petronas brand with established and experienced lubricant brands such as Castrol, SASOL, Helix, Total, etc. With the understanding that consumers often choose products based on the comprehensive brand and image of the company (Adrian, 2011; Xu, 2014), brand innovation in the case of Engen (Petronas) lubricants attracts different challenges toward brand equity (Xu, 2014). However, since social media marketing (SMM) has proven to provide compelling advantages in engaging new brands and products to consumers and achieving brand equity (Choedon & Lee, 2020; ElAydi, 2018), this study seeks to explore the role on the case of Petronas brands.

The emergence of social media brought about a whole new era for marketing, brand equity and influence of consumer behaviour towards a new brand (Codey, Manthiou,

Pederzoli, Rokka, Aiello, Donvito, & Singh, 2016; Ahmed, Dalia Streimikiene, Berchtold, Vveinhardt, Channar, & Soomro, 2019). With billions of people accessing social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and Twitter every day, companies are presented with unparalleled opportunities to build new reputations and brands (Codey et al., 2016; Ahmed et al., 2019). However, despite the perceived opportunities presented by social media for brand development and management (Akgun, 2020), marketers are highly aware that it remains challenging to create and achieve brand equity for their products, especially in competitive markets with experienced and trusted brands.

The South African petroleum industry is broadly fragmented, with over 70 oil companies. However, it is one of the leading economic sectors contributing about 8.5% of the GDP and supplying about 18% of the country's primary energy (Research & Markets, 2021). Despite the entire oil industry being competitive, lubricants are profitable brands since they have a wide range of end users, including automotive and transportation, power generation, food and beverages, chemical manufacturing, heavy equipment, and power generation, just to mention a few (Mordor Intelligence, 2021). The lubricants market in the country includes some top automotive brands such as Shell, BPs Castrol brand, Engen, and Chevron (trading as Caltex), with trading market shares of 20%, 20%, 17% and 14%, respectively. The other leading players are Total (10%), Fuchs (4%) and Centlube (3%) (LNG, 2021).

Engen and SASOL started implementing social media in the South African Petroleum Industry as part of their integrated marketing communication around 2015 (Bako, 2016). Engen has LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook social media platforms as a case study. It has an interactive website, allowing consumers to respond quickly to common questions. The company's social media profile with the most followers is LinkedIn with 100 511, followed by Facebook with 28 929, Instagram with 8158, and Twitter with 3121 followers. Therefore, the study engaged a qualitative case study approach to explore the experiences and perceptions of Engen marketers and salespersons, to understand the role of social media marketing on the brand equity of Petronas lubricants since 2018.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

Brand innovation often attracts challenges that might affect the brand equity, market, and financial perspectives (Xu, 2014). It is essential to note that brand innovation challenges that companies face are unique depending on their trade. For instance, Engen can be considered a 'house brand' in South Africa; however, introducing a new product using a different name can affect brand image, loyalty, and brand equity. The Petronas lubricants brand is less than five years old in a competitive market with experienced brands such as Castrol, SASOL, Helix, Total and Caltex. Even though social media marketing activities present opportunities and advantages for brand success (Codey et al., 2016), there are still several challenges. For instance, there remains a gap in defining specific strategic steps and frameworks marketers and salespersons use to impact sustainable brand equity (Bernarto, Berlianto, Meilani, Masman, & Suryawan, 2020; Kasemsap, 2016). Therefore, this study sought to explore Engen marketers' and salespersons' experiences and perceptions on the role of social media marketing activities on the brand equity of automobile lubricants focusing on the Petronas brand, with an interest in establishing critical strategic frameworks toward promoting the brand.

## **1.3. Study Rationale**

Research focusing on the role of SMM on brand equity in the petroleum industry in South Africa is limited, if not non-existent. In addressing this gap, this study sought to contribute to the existing literature by offering a detailed strategic framework that shows how marketers and salespersons in a petroleum and oil company are engaging in social media marketing efforts to influence the brand equity of their new brand in South Africa. Hence, to effectively establish the role of SMM on automobile oil brands in South Africa, the study utilised existing literature to glean and shape the key interests of the study represented in the following objectives and research questions.

## **1.4. Research Objectives**

The objective is to explore how social media marketing influences the automobile oil branding in South Africa, focusing on Engen, Petronas's oil brand equity. The

objectives of this study sought to fill the gaps existing in the petroleum industry research and to particularly:

- a. To explore how impactful Social Media Marketing can be in branding Petronas products in Engen, SA.
- b. To understand the experiences of Engen marketers and salespersons on the role of Social Media Marketing play in the brand equity of Petronas lubricants brand.
- c. To explore alternatives towards improving the Petronas lubricants brand through Social Media Marketing.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

The research questions that helped in achieving the objectives of the study sought to understand:

- a. To what extent is Social Media Marketing impacting the branding of Petronas products in Engen, SA?
- b. What are the Social Media Marketing experiences of Engen marketers and salespersons in the brand equity of Petronas lubricants brand?
- c. What strategies are being used to brand Petronas products by Engen, South Africa?
- d. What kind of alternative social media marketing strategies should be used to improve the Petronas lubricants brand?

### **1.6. Study Delimitations**

This study only focused on the social media marketing of the Engen Petronas brand. It only involved marketers and sales representatives since it sought to explore their experiences and perceptions of the role of social media marketing on the brand equity of the Petronas brand. This study is purely qualitative; hence only semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather relevant data.

### **1.7. Structure of the Study**

These chapters of this study are structured in the following manner:

- **Chapter 1:** Introduced the study and provided a detailed background of what the study entails. It outlined the rationale, the key objectives, research questions and the delimitations of the study.
- **Chapter 2:** Reviews literature on social media marketing activities and brand equity as the key conceptual framework of the study.
- **Chapter 3:** Outlines the methodological procedures of the study. It reflects on the research design, approach and steps used by the researcher in conducting the study.
- **Chapter 4:** Presents, analyses, and discusses the study's findings.
- **Chapter 5:** Summarises and concludes the research study. It provides key recommendations gleaned from the findings and also guidelines for future studies.

The following section explores the literature and the relevant conceptual framework for the study.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2. Introduction

The chapter thoroughly explores key literature on social media marketing and its role on brand equity. The review first discusses social media marketing activities (SMMA) and brand equity as the theoretical background crucial in guiding the thinking of the study. Next, it engages relevant scholarly studies on social media marketing and brand equity. Next, it discusses key existing debates and how they play a role in understanding the interests of this study. Lastly, it addresses the study gap of SMMA use in the automobile oil lubricants industry and how the study contributes to this knowledge.

### 2.1. Theoretical Background

SMMA and brand equity form the conceptual framework (see *Figure 1* below) crucial in guiding the thinking of the study. Scholarly studies and current debates on these concepts critically reflect on how new technologies, particularly social media, has positively leveraged brand equity for different old and emerging brands across industries (Ahmed et al., 2019; Akgun, 2020; Codey et al., 2016). A review of existing studies in SMMA and brand equity played an important role in understanding their possibilities in shaping new products. Thus, the section discusses the characteristics of social media marketing and the various forms it can take in effecting brand equity, particularly in the automobile oil industry.

#### 2.1.1. Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA)

Social media is a phenomenon aided by the Internet's age and increased use of digital media in general. It has encouraged firms to engage with various corporate divisions and has prompted them to explore new means of interaction (Scott & Orlikowski, 2014).

Various authors define social media marketing as a process where social media tools create and facilitate viral communication to promote brands and products (Akgun, 2020; Codey et al., 2016; Stojanovic, Andreu, & Curraz-Perez, 2017). It is considered a platform to popularise websites to gain awareness, make presentations to the online community (Hajli, 2014; Zabadi, Abdullah & Dammas, 2017), and generate social

support among online users and communities (ElAydi, 2018; Jibril, Kwarteng, Chovancova & Pilik, 2019). Akgun (2020, p.4212) considers social media “one of the most potent weapons of marketing”. Scholars consider social media to have a dramatic effect on brands (Ahmed et al., 2019; Codey et al., 2016), providing access to consumers at a global scale and allowing the interaction to share experiences between the users and the brand and people across the world (Akgun, 2020; Jibri et al., 2019).

Social media marketing has various forms and activities discussed broadly across the literature. For example, Kim and Ko (2012) conceptualised SMMA as a platform where different activities are utilised as marketing tools that can be more effective than usual traditional marketing strategies such as billboards and printed advertising. They argue that SMMA takes different forms, including “weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, podcasts, pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking” (Kim & Ko, 2012, p.1481). Similarly, Wibowo, Chen, Wiangin and Ruangkanjanases (2021) note how social network sites (SNS) have increasingly become sources for direct communication and customer engagements for different enterprises. For instance, a study by Tsai and Bui (2021) reveals how word of mouth (WOM), whereby people share their stories and experiences of cruise travel products, has been utilised as a reliable information source.

Kamboj, Sarmah, Gupta and Dwivedi (2017) reflect on the marketing theories and discuss how social media has presented new communication alternatives to interact with new customers and get them involved in creating and shaping brands. They consider social media to be important in facilitating customer participation in building brand trust and loyalty. Bilgin (2018, p.131) categorises SMMA as “interaction, trendiness, information, customisation, and word of mouth communication.” This study considers these aspects to explore the role of SMMA in effecting the Petronas lubricants brand in South Africa since its introduction in 2018.

The emergence of new technologies and social media tools provided immense opportunities for both social and business interactions. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, social media has become an essential part of the consumer’s daily life, with over 2 billion spending over 135 minutes daily (Voorveld, 2019). Hence many consumer brands have increasingly made their presence online as a way to promote their brands to trend

faster (Sharawneh, 2020; Schivinski, Langaro, & Shaw, 2019). Jayasingh (2019) notes that marketers are increasingly using social networking sites to build profiles that can effectively help to communicate and promote their brands. For instance, as of 2016, over 60 million businesses had active Facebook pages (Cohen, 2016, cited by Jayasingh, 2019). This reflects how consumer brands are increasingly capitalising on social media to market their brands, interact with consumers, promote brands and even sell products. With the interest to increase brand visibility, ensure brand engagement and awareness leading to brand equity.

### **2.1.2. The Important Roles of Social Media Marketing**

There are different roles that SMM plays in communicating brands and reaching the target audience. Kim and Ko (2012) highlight five constructs that provide SMM marketing activities with an advantage to help brands effectively communicate. These constructs are entertainment, interactivity, customisation, trendiness, and word of mouth. Figure 1 below shows how these SMMA are crucial for developing brand equity and consumer interaction. The discussions of SMMA help to understand and address the following propositions of the study:

*Proposition 1: Social media is being used in promoting and building Engen lubricant brands.*

*Proposition 2: Engen marketers find it more effective to use social media in building Petronas' brand.*

*Proposition 3: Social media marketing activities are crucial for marketers and salespersons in building brand equity.*

#### **2.1.2.1. Entertainment**

Customers' use of social media for entertainment purposes created a high demand for different brands to be on social media to directly engage consumers to view and familiarise with their products (Kim & Ko, 2012; Trad & Dabbagh, 2020). A study by Nwokah and Aeenee (2017) reveals how using social media platforms such as youtube by Nigerian consumers for inspiration, education, information, and entertainment through watching and sharing videos provided a perfect platform for the business success of automobile dealers in River State. Hence, social media to attract billions of people for entertainment provides a leveraging advantage for businesses to engage with customers to understand their brands.

#### **2.1.2.2. Interactivity**

SMM provides an interactive strategy whereby users interact every day through liking, commenting, and sharing posts (Trad & Dabbagh, 2020). With the understanding that billions of people interact on social media platforms each day, users' likes and comments are considered valuable and crucial in promoting positive engagements and shaping perspectives towards a particular brand (Kim & Ko, 2012; Shen & Yang, 2019). Therefore, Trad and Dabbagh (2020, p.327) consider social media interaction a “key factor that would create and increase customer engagement”. For example, the interactivity of new oil brands in the automobile industry is crucial in getting consumers to familiarise themselves with new brands such as Petronas in a highly competitive environment.

#### **2.1.2.3. Customisation**

The use of SMM marketing activities is valued for providing customized information and services, which helps the users interact with the brand more personally (Kim & Ko, 2012). In addition, customization on social media allows a wider reach of potential customers through strategies that create attention to the product hence engaging consumers to engage with the brand (Trad & Dabbagh, 2020).

#### **2.1.2.4. Trendiness**

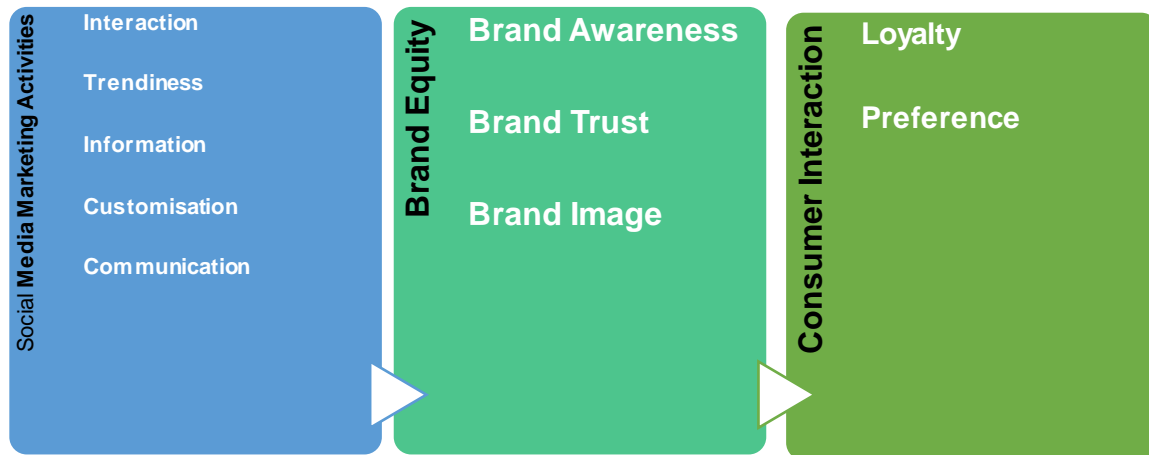
Social media marketing and advertising has been highly associated with providing platforms that are “more catchy, appealing and trendy in order for online customers to patronize their products” (Nwokah & Aeenee, 2017, p.1298). In most cases, brands turn to influencers because of their ability to create trends on marketing brands and encourage customers to buy products they promote (Trad & Dabbagh, 2020). Kim and Ko (2012) argue that social media has enabled the newest information to be spread more quickly, allowing it to be trendy in reaching the targeted audience.

#### **2.1.2.5. Word of Mouth**

The ability of social media platforms to provide current and live word-of-mouth reviews of the products that ensure the product's credibility enables the building and strengthening of relationships between the brand and consumers, which translates into brand trust and brand loyalty (Fang, 2020). It facilitates the practical and valuable sharing of information and interaction among consumers (friends or followers on different social media platforms) and between the brand and the consumers (Fang, 2020; Kim & Ko, 2012).

With the discussions and insight on SMMA above, Figure 1 below outlines a conceptual model utilised in this study to reflect on how SMMA provides broader lenses for ensuring brand equity and building consumer interaction for new brands like Petronas in the automobile industry in South Africa.

**FIGURE 1:CONCEPTUAL MODEL**



### 2.1.3. Brand Equity

Brand equity is crucial in brand management and marketing (Stojanovic, Andreu, & Curraz-Perez, 2017). Brand equity is described as the brand's effect on a consumer's mind (Stajonovic et al., 2017). It is also defined as a differential effect on the consumer response to a brand due to brand awareness (Keller, 2016), or the superiority and advantage demonstrated by the consumer product on the market due to its brand name as compared with other brands (Stajonovic et al., 2017). In this study, brand equity is defined as a brand's ability to positively and significantly attract customer response (Akgun, 2020). With interest in exploring the brand awareness of petroleum products branding and marketers' perceptions of consumer response.

Brand equity as a prominent concept is driven by customer brand awareness and associations, customer brand attitudes/loyalty, and customer perception of brand ethics/quality (Abu-Rumman & Alhadid, 2014; ElAydi, 2018). Therefore, to ensure brand equity through brand awareness, the consumers should identify and trace the brand even if presented under different conditions (Codey et al., 2016). At the same time, brand loyalty is considered a behavioural trait portrayed by consumers to choose a particular brand over another brand (Codey et al., 2016). Brand awareness influences brand quality (Stojanovic et al., 2017); thus, it explains customer responses to a particular brand. Understanding the importance of social media on the brand

equity of petroleum brands is crucial in this study as it helps to explore strategies used by marketers and sales representatives in a South African petroleum company. Thus, though studies reveal that social media marketing influences brand equity (Akgun, 2020; Codey et al., 2016), few, if not none, focus on the role social media marketing might play in the brand equity of petroleum brands.

## **2.2. Building and Strengthening Brand Equity with Social Media**

The increased use of SMMA has transformed how businesses connect with their customers and build trust and loyalty to their brand (Akgun, 2020; Islam & Chitran, 2019). Blogs, social networking sites, content communities, virtual worlds, and collaborative projects are all examples of groups of people who produce and disseminate material both inside and outside of specialized practices. Businesses and firms have since capitalised on using SMMA to ensure brand equity and communicate and create enduring and popular relationships with their customers (Ozuem, Almeida, Pinho & Azemi, 2016).

Interaction in marketing is crucial in shaping the brand since reviews and comments from users help promote brand perception and build brand image (Stojanovic et al., 2017). Social media opened new possibilities in marketing and making a brand visible, primarily through communicating and interacting with the user and the brand, allowing an increased leeway for consumers to follow, subscribe, share, like and even comment on brands (Jayasingh, 2019; Stojanovic et al., 2017). Akgun (2020, p.4212) argues that “activation of brands in social media increases the interaction with their followers, and they act as a magic wand in finding potential customers due to sharing the value they offer to the customer with personalised suggestions and accurate information”. Hence, social media explores brand image, trust, awareness, and loyalty, thus facilitating consumer brands to achieve brand equity (Codey et al., 2016).

The importance of social media platforms (such as Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram) in the day-to-day lives of millions of users who communicate in virtual settings is growing (Rathore et al., 2016). Key and Czaplewski (2017) note that social media networking has a dual purpose in business, including creating and discovering content. This plays an important role in informing distribution and new ways for

discovering and connecting stories and ideas on brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty towards achieving brand equity (Akgun, 2020).

According to Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi and Algharabat (2017), the amassed following of social media platforms by billions of people across the globe has a huge role on how users make choices and conduct business decisions. For instance, a study by Heitman (2021) reveals that about 78% of car buyers in the United States owe their decisions in choosing their next car to social media consultations and reviews of brands they are interested in. Furthermore, over 86% of these buyers are indicated to rely on social media engagement with their automobile brands post-purchase to explore and solicit different services. Evidently, this new mode of communication continues to dominate the cultural landscape and impacts how users interact with different brands and conduct their business (Alalwan et al., 2017). As a result, Garcia-Morales, Martin-Rojas, & Lardón-López (2018) consider social media one of the most successful and persuasive interactional environments in modern life.

### **2.3. Social Media Marketing in Petroleum Industry**

Limited studies have been conducted on the role of SMMA in the South African petroleum industry. Studies that have been done on social media marketing in the petroleum industry have just focused on the challenges and opportunities that social media might present for the petroleum industry (Bako, 2016; Salman, 2019; WebFX, 2021).

In a South African petroleum industry study, Bako (2016) argues that petroleum companies have slowly integrated social media into their marketing communication because they assume their clients are not dependent on social media. Salman (2019) posits four reasons why the petroleum and gas industry should embrace social media. Firstly, he argues that it aids industry alliance, especially for small companies seeking to build sustainable clientele overseas and ensure global awareness for growth relationships. Social media is considered a less expensive way of promoting new products through interaction and communication. Secondly, Salman believes social media is an excellent platform for recruiting young talent that can advance your brand, especially on professional platforms such as LinkedIn. Third, he argues that the petroleum industry involves different environmental and sustainability dynamics,

requiring an effective education medium. Thus, Salman considers social media a mass education medium that petroleum companies can utilise to inform and educate people. Finally, social media provides access to many followers, allowing companies to build their brands or products faster. WebFX (2021) compliments these perspectives by commenting on how social media can go a long way in creating visibility for new petroleum brands, promoting engagements getting people to talk about their petroleum brands, and ensuring brand awareness.

Studies on social media marketing and brand equity have been mostly done on fashion, mobile phones, tourism, health, safety, academic and other brands with a dominant interest and focus on consumer perspectives (Abu-Rumman and Alhadid, 2014; Karamian, Nadoushan, & Nadoushan, 2015; Codey et al., 2016). Existing studies have barely given attention to the experiences and perceptions of marketers and salespersons on the role of social media marketing on brand equity, let alone in the petroleum industry. Therefore, with this dearth in literature, the study significantly contributes to the body of knowledge by reflecting on the role of social media marketing on brand equity on the petroleum brand of Engen Petronas.

#### **2.4. Concluding Summary**

The chapter reviewed the literature and theoretical background of SMMA and brand equity. Next, it outlined the values of these concepts as the conceptual framework guiding the interests of the study. It reflected on how studies unpack the role of social media in representing brand equity. Lastly, it identified the missing gap in the role of SMMA on the brand equity of automobile oil lubricants in South Africa. The next chapter details the methodological process used in this study.

# CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3. Introduction

The methodological process in research refers to the researcher's scientific steps or procedures towards identifying, gathering, selecting, processing and analysing relevant data peculiar to the study phenomenon. It provides a systematic design of the step-by-step process used by the researcher to address the aims and objectives of the research. Scholars commend that this procedural process of conducting research is important in ensuring results that are reliable, valid and trustworthy (Ryder, Mackean, Coombs, Williams, Hunter, Holland, & Ivers, 2020). The primary interests of every methodology process are to clarify how the relevant data towards the completion of the study was collected and, secondly, to outline the procedure for analysing the gathered data (Nayak & Singh, 2021).

The study sought to explore the role of social media marketing on brand equity of the Engen (Petronas) Lubricants in South Africa. Therefore, it conducts qualitative exploratory research. This study's use of exploratory research was important since the "Petronas brand" is new in the South African market. Hence, an exploratory study was useful to gain insight into the experiences of the Engen South Africa marketing team with the "Petronas brand", particularly on their social media platforms. The chapter discusses the choice of research paradigm for the study, the research design, target population and sample, data collection instruments used, the data analysis approach, the research quality control, and the ethical procedures followed.

### 3.1. Interpretive research paradigm

This study is exploratory; thus, it falls within the interpretivism paradigm. The interpretive research paradigm emphasises the importance of qualitative analysis instead of quantitative analysis; hence, the study adopted a qualitative approach. Engaging the interpretivism paradigm in research allows for integrating unique and contextual interests in human society (Dudovskiy, 2021). Therefore, the interpretive approach advances qualitative interests that help the researcher understand the access and interpretation of social realities existing in a particular study phenomenon (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Proponents against interpretivism consider qualitative

research subject to biases and produce knowledge that cannot be generalised. The researcher chose it for this study since it helps to provide an in-depth insight into issues, deliver trustworthy and honest information, and provide multiple valid pieces of information on the role of the study phenomenon (Dudovskiy, 2020). This study utilises the interpretive paradigm to explore the perception of marketing experts on the role of social media marketing on the Petronas brand. It seeks to have an in-depth understanding of the different positive and negative impressions being experienced and measures that can be utilised to maximise the Petronas brand's potential in the market. Therefore, a qualitative case study research design was used.

### **3.2. Qualitative case study research design**

A research design is a blueprint to conduct a research project (Haydam & Steenkamp, 2020). It provides specific thinking procedures that are used in guiding the obtaining of relevant study information needed to address the research problems (Creswell, 2016). According to Haydam and Steenkamp (2020), a research design outlines the procedural plan used by the researcher to accurately answer key research questions, address key objectives, and solicit relevant data. Hence, some scholars consider it a strategic framework for action used to bridge the key study questions and implement a research approach (Creswell, 2016).

There are different research designs: case study design, exploratory design, explanatory design, descriptive design, experimental design, etc. Each research design helps to identify a specific research approach that can be appropriate for conducting a study. Therefore, this study used a qualitative case study design because of its contextual lenses for exploring multiple aspects of study phenomena (Zuhdi, Rainanto, & Apriyani, 2020). The choice of using a case study design was informed by the interest to explore specific information that can only be accessed through in-depth interviews with the Engen marketing team. It helped to explore and understand their perceptions and experiences on the role of social media marketing approaches on the brand equity of the new "Petronas brand" products.

### **3.3. Target population and sample**

A study population refers to a specific group of people that the research is targeting to draw a research sample for study purposes (Blaum, Brunner, Kröger, Braetz, Lorenz,

Gobling, Ojeda, Koester, Karakas, Zeller, & Westermann, 2021). The target population for this study was drawn from the Engen South Africa marketing and sales team. This team consists of Distributor Business Development Executives; Lubes Business Advisors; Trade Marketing Specialists; Customer Experience and Marketing Intel Executives; Media & Communication Executives; Customer Experience & Marketing Intel Executives; Automotive specialists; Route to Market Support Manager; High Street Distributor Key Account Manager; Marketing Coordinators; Technical Advisors; High Street Distributor Key Account Managers, and; Marketing Administrators.

### **3.3.1. Sampling technique**

Sampling refers to selecting individuals or objects representing the entire population in a study (Creswell and Miller, 2013, p.22). There are only two sampling approaches which include non-probability sampling and probability sampling. This study made use of non-probability sampling methods. In non-probability sampling, the elements that make up the sample are selected by non-random methods, and there are three main methods: convenience, quota, and purposive (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). This study was conducted using the purposive sampling method.

Purposive sampling dominantly relies on the researcher's discretion and judgement in selecting and choosing relevant participants to participate in the study (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters, & Walker, 2020). Purposive sampling was used to select a small data set made based on the researcher's criteria which include: (1) being a member of the Engen South Africa marketing team; (2) having a minimum of three working years in the Engen marketing department; (3) those working directly on the Petronas brand; and (4) willingness of the identified participants to participate in the study. This means the researcher targeted key informants with expert knowledge of the Engen Petronas brand and the organisation's marketing processes and can provide detailed information on the challenges and opportunities surrounding the brand and the existing processes. Hence this made the inquiry rich and crucial for gaining expertise, experience and knowledge (Doring, 2021).

### **3.3.2. Selection of the sample**

Fifteen (n=15) participants directly involved in the Engen SA marketing and sales team were sampled for this study. The participants were categorised as follows:

TABLE 1: SAMPLE SIZE SELECTION

Target Population	Sampled Participants Departments	Sample Size
Executives in Marketing & Business Development	Distributor Business Development; Customer Experience & Marketing Intel; Media & Communication	4
Advisors, Coordinators & Administrators	Lubes Business Advisory; Technical Advisory; Marketing Coordination; Marketing Administration	4
Marketing Specialists	Trade Marketing Specialists (2); Automotive specialists (2)	4
Managers	Route to Market Support; High Street Distributor Key Accounts	3

### 3.4. Data Collection Instruments

The data collection process refers to gathering relevant information that is considered essential for measuring or analysing key study variables of interest. This process is done systematically through a uniform approach and specific research instruments (interviews, surveys, observation tools, or secondary data analysis) that are relevant to your study to answer the key research questions, a test given hypotheses and provide an evaluation of the outcomes (Campbell et al., 2020). Hence, for this study, data was gathered using primary qualitative semi-structured interviews and secondary data. These interviews were conducted through face-to-face Zoom meetings. At the same time, the secondary data was accessed from existing literature (journal articles and published books), company reports and relevant, credible online sources.

#### 3.4.1. Semi-structured interviews

The instrument for collecting information from the participant is a semi-structured interview guide. Gani, Rathakrishnan and Krishnasamy (2020, p.140) describe semi-structured interviews as “a form of conversation where the researcher asks questions without strictly following a formalised list of questions.” In this case, the interview guide was used to guide the researcher and the informant on what crucial questions to ask. The researcher asked open-ended questions to allow the informant a degree of flexibility to engage and express their opinion about every question they were asked. The key research questions directly informed the interview questions that were used to develop the interview guide of the study. The use of semi-structured interviews was carefully selected for this study because it allowed the researcher to probe the informants to draw out more information about the phenomenon under investigation.

As an employee of Engen, the researcher had a buy-in to interview the relevant Engen personnel to complete this study. Hence, the researcher first reached out to all the potential participants through email and telephonic conversations to invite them to participate in the study. Following consent, an information letter and consent form was

sent to all the participants who showed interest in the study. The information letter consisted of the detailed study description, the title, purpose, aim, key objectives of the study and a copy of the interview schedule. After agreeing on the appropriate for the interview, a consent form was signed, and a Zoom meeting was scheduled. Considering the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, a Zoom meeting was the most appropriate health measure. The semi-structured interviews were conducted using a similar schedule to gather consistent and relevant information. Each interview lasted between 35-60 minutes, and all the interviews were recorded with the participant's consent. All the Zoom interviews were conducted at a time and place that was comfortable for the participant, and every participant was made aware of their right to withdraw from the study without any consequences whenever they felt uncomfortable.

### ***Pilot test***

A pilot study refers to “a small-scale test of the methods and procedures to be used on a larger scale” (Leon, Davis, & Kraemer, 2011, p.626). To assess the effectiveness of the data collection instrument for this study, the researcher carried out a pilot study with 2 participants who are not part of the Engen marketing team. According to Creswell (2011, p.269), a pilot study allows the researcher to “expose deficiencies and problems in the research instruments and protocols.” The participants suggested the researcher simplifies the questions and make them more direct to help the participants respond more. The researcher made some adjustments to the instruments and simplified the interview questions.

### **3.4.2. Secondary data extraction**

Secondary data involves information that is extracted from existing literature. The study made use of mostly peer-reviewed journal articles and books that were accessed on different online platforms accessible through the online university library database. It also utilised relevant reports and documents that are readily available on company websites and other credible sources. The online data was collected using Cloud-based ETL tools to make data readily available through an Extract, Transform and Load approach (Coomes & Haghbayan, 2020). This means the secondary data extraction followed three stages which include:

- i) **Extraction-** this is the first step which was used to access relevant articles that were used in developing this research study using different online library portals such as EbscoHost, Google Scholar, Sabinet or JStor. The

researcher made use of different journal articles that were extracted using generated keywords such as “Social Media Marketing” and “Brand Equity”, and relevant data were extracted.

- ii) **Transformation-** The extracted data was refined through the transformation stage, sorted, organised, and cleaned. A relevant audit was conducted to remove similar entries, remove studies with missing values of interest, and select more reliable data.
- iii) **Loading-** The final stage involves delivering and organising the transformed and high-quality data single and unified data location, including a drop box for storage and analysis purposes. The loaded data can be summarised in a table format for easier review purposes.

### 3.5. Data analysis

Data collected for this study were analysed using Braun & Clarke’s latent thematic data analysis. This means the study was analysed through a consistent pattern that helps to identify, analyse, and interpret the meaning of consistent themes that are identified using Braun & Clarke’s 15-point checklist, which is as follows:

**TABLE 2: FIFTEEN-POINT CHECKLIST FOR PROPER THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

Process	No.	Criteria
<b>Transcription</b>	1	“The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for accuracy.”
<b>Coding</b>	2	“Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.”
	3	“Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead, the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.”
	4	“All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.”
	5	“Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.”
<b>Analysis</b>	6	“Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.”
	7	“Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of - rather than just paraphrased or described.”
	8	“Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.”
	9	“Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic.”
	10	“A right balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.”
<b>Overall</b>	11	“Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.”
<b>Written report</b>	12	“The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis is explicated.”
	13	“There is a good fit between what the researcher claims to do, and what the researcher shows to be done – i.e. described method and reported analysis are consistent.”
	14	“The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.”
	15	“The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just emerge.”

Source: Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006:96)

Following these identified steps, the gathered and recorded audio interviews were carefully transcribed to ensure the accurate capturing of information. The transcripts were read and re-read and corrected for any errors. Through re-reading the research, the researcher identified consistent terms and phrases used by participants to familiarise themselves with the information and generate key study themes. The data was then categorised and coded into main and sub-themes that are related to social media marketing and brand equity, as displayed by the Engen SA marketing and sales team. These organised themes were then presented as key heading in the presentation of findings. They were interpreted and discussed, reflecting on existing literature and key study theories.

### **3.6. Data Quality Control**

In qualitative research, it is essential to ensure that the study is reliable and trustworthy. Reliability in qualitative research requires the use of detailed textual descriptions that are accessed from credible sources and accurate transcriptions of primary data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure that this study is reliable and trustworthy, the study made use of the following steps:

***Rigorous Process-*** Rigour refers to sufficient and acceptable research standards, including using appropriate theoretical constructs, relevant and current literature, relevant data, clear sample, defined study context, and traceable data collection and analysis procedures (Tracy, 2010). The study used these processes as detailed in the methodological procedure. Relevant data was acquired through clear interview procedures that lasted between 35-60 minutes.

***Credibility-*** Achieving the credibility of the study is shown through the research of research. Creswell (2011) notes that credibility refers to the confidence and truthfulness that can be placed in the research findings. This is achieved through the use of detailed descriptions of information from reliable and relevant data sources and more than one approach to collecting data, thus triangulation. This study made use of both primary and secondary data sources through careful observation and prolonged engagements to ensure the authenticity of the gathered information hence achieving credibility of the study.

**Transferability** refers to the process whereby the study's research findings can be transferred to an entirely new setting with different participants (Neumann, 2014). Clearly outlined research objectives and methodological process used in this study to ensure that the same process can be reproduced in a different context, achieving transferability of research.

**Confirmability**- This is a situation whereby the findings of the study can resonate and be confirmed with other researchers or studies. The researcher achieved confirmability by clearly outlining the steps that the researcher took in analysing the data as an audit trail that can be used by other researchers' interests in testing or reproducing similar results in a different context.

**Dependability**- refers to the stability of the research findings over a long period of time. For the researcher to guarantee the dependability of the research, the supervisor and the peer review process at the university were engaged in examining and reviewing the study from the proposal stage to the final article. This ensured that the study output was dependable and consistent with key research interests and guidelines.

### **3.7. Ethical considerations**

The study adhered to Wits University's ethical standards and procedures for conducting research. It adhered to the 'do no harm' principles of research (Kuper, Lingard, & Levinson, 2008). This means the protection of participants was held in high regard, and the following procedures were undertaken to ensure their protection:

#### ***Gatekeepers letter***

The gatekeeper's letter was sought from Engen, South Africa, as a measure to protect the participants and the organisation.

#### ***Voluntary participation***

In a research study, participants voluntarily participated and retained their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. The participants were debriefed on the study details through an information letter. In their acceptance to participate in the study, the participant signed the consent letter.

### ***Informed consent***

No research interview takes place before the participant's consent and signing of the consent form. Thus, the researcher ensured that the participants understood the nature of the research, gave their consent to participate in the study, and signed a consent form. The information letter and consent form were sent to the participant before the interview, and the researcher ensured that the consent was signed before the interview.

### ***Confidentiality and anonymity***

Confidentiality and anonymity are highly prioritised in research interviews. In this study, the identity of the participants was not revealed. The participants were informed that the researcher and the supervisor only had access to all recorded interviews and transcripts. Each participant was coded using code names instead of the real names of the participants, and no identifier was recorded with the responses. Any information that might lead to the identity of the participant was used in the study to ensure that the participant remained anonymous in the presentation of the results.

### ***Ethical clearance***

Before conducting the study, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Wits Business School Research ethics committee. This ensured that all relevant ethical standards were adhered to.

## **3.8. Concluding Summary**

The chapter provided detailed procedures of how the relevant data for the study was gathered. It outlined how the study utilised an interpretive paradigm and qualitative exploratory research approach and conducted in-depth interviews. The gathered data was transcribed and organised for the presentation of findings. The next chapter presents, analyses and discusses the key study findings.

# CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

## 4. Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the research methodology for the study. The study used a qualitative approach, and data were analysed using thematic analysis. Data was collected from the Engen South Africa marketing and sales team. The team consisted of Distributor business development executives, Lubes Business advisors, Trade Marketing Specialists, Customer Experience & Marketing Intel Executives, media & Communication Executives, Automotive specialists, route to market support manager, high street distributor key account manager and marketing administrators. Table 1 below details the information of the participants.

**Table 1: Participants' Information**

Interviewee	Type of enterprise	Gender	Industry	Years of experience
Interviewee 1	Sales Support	Male	Petroleum	20
Interviewee 2	Sales	Female	Petroleum	13
Interviewee 3	Marketing	Male	Petroleum	7
Interviewee 4	Marketing	Female	Petroleum	6
Interviewee 5	Marketing	Female	Petroleum	6
Interviewee 6	Marketing	Female	Petroleum	10
Interviewee 7	Marketing	Male	Petroleum	12
Interviewee 8	Marketing	Male	Petroleum	10
Interviewee 9	Marketing	Male	Petroleum	12
Interviewee 10	Sales Support	Male	Petroleum	25
Interviewee 11	Sales	Male	Petroleum	16
Interviewee 12	Marketing	Male	Petroleum	7
Interviewee 13	Technical	Male	Petroleum	8
Interviewee 14	Sales	Female	Petroleum	15
Interviewee 15	Sales	Female	Petroleum	10

The experience of all the participants interviewed for this study ranged between 6 to 20 years in the enterprise field and in the petroleum industry, thus assuring the wealth and depth of their information shared. In light of this, the study sought to explore the way social media marketing influences the Engen, Petronas oil brand equity in South Africa. The chapter analyses and discusses the data. Data is analysed using thematic analysis. The themes that emerged from the research questions are presented below.

## 4.1. Emerged themes

The study had five themes which emerged from the research questions and study responses. The themes and subthemes are presented in Table 2 below:

**Table 2: Emerged themes**

Themes	Sub-themes
<b>How social media marketing influences branding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand awareness</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Social development</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Types of content posted</li> </ul>
<b>Experience of marketers and salespersons in social media on brand equity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaching key performance indicators</li> <li>• Brand measuring success</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies being used in petroleum branding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of celebrities and influencers</li> </ul>
<b>Barriers to successful brands on social media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of understanding</li> <li>• Communication challenges</li> <li>• Focusing on reach and not engagement</li> </ul>
<b>Alternatives to improve the lubricants brand through social media marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media tactics the brand can use to improve current performance</li> <li>• Social media platforms effective for brand communication</li> </ul>

## 4.2. Presentation of results

### 4.2.1. Theme 1: Role of social media marketing on branding

The above theme focuses on the impact that social media marketing has on branding Petronas products. From this theme, five sub-themes emerged, which are discussed below:

#### **4.2.1.1. Sub-theme 1: Brand awareness**

Brand awareness is the ability of the customers to recall the brand and include it in their consideration set (Sarigollu, 2014). Social media marketing aims at creating brand awareness. This is what some of the participants had to say:

*“Our goal with our social media campaigns is to create or lead to brand awareness”* [Participant 1].

*“Informing and educating the consumer on the brand, price and functions and to inform consumers on where to find the product”* [Participant 2].

The participant also added that;

*“Social media entices the consumers on the latest promotions”* [Participant 2].

Adding to this, participant 8 stated that SMM helps.

*“To create awareness around the brand, new products and the benefits of the product”.*

The above concurs with Codey et al. (2016), who state that social media impacts brand image, brand trust, brand awareness, and brand loyalty, thus facilitating consumer brands to achieve brand equity.

#### **4.2.1.2. Sub-theme 2: Communication**

Social media opened new possibilities in marketing and making a brand visible, primarily through communicating and interacting with the user and the brand, allowing an increased leeway for consumers to follow, subscribe, share, like and even comment on brands (Stojanovic et al., 2017) Social media marketing impacts on the visibility and communication of the company. A participant claimed that:

*“Visibility and to communicate directly with the younger generation, with gen x and y because social media has become an important communication tool for them”* [Participant 3].

Another role of social media marketing in terms of communication was engaging directly with customers. Social media marketing allows marketers to engage and conduct customers directly. A participant expressed that

*“Trying to engage more directly with consumers and trying to promote positive social activities that are engaged in besides supplying petroleum products”* [Participant 4].

Akgun (2020, p.4212) argues that “activation of brands in social media increases the interaction with their followers, and they act as a magic wand in finding potential customers due to sharing the value they offer to the customer with personalized suggestions and accurate information”.

#### **4.2.1.3. Sub-theme 3: Social development**

In a different view, the results showed that social media marketing had a role on the youths and their development. A participant lamented that

*“To bring attention to youth development and focusing on the central role in Engen’s social investment and sponsorship initiatives”*. The same participant goes on to mention that *“the company remains dedicated to positively engaging and contributing to the future success of young South Africans and ensure that social media campaigns deliver the message”* [Participant 5].

Salman (2019) believes social media is an excellent platform for recruiting young talent that can advance your brand, especially on professional platforms such as LinkedIn.

#### **4.2.1.4. Sub-theme 4: Education**

Social media is considered a mass education medium that petroleum companies can utilise to inform and educate people (Salman, 2019). The above being said, another of social media marketing is to educate customers. A participant mentioned that:

*“To educate the public about our products and their benefits”* [Participant 7].

Moreover, another participant added that:

*“We use social media to introduce and educate our customers about our products”* [Participant 9].

The results showed that, unlike other industries, the petroleum industry requires customers to be educated on the brands the company will be selling. Thus, social media marketing aims at educating these people about the brands.

#### **4.2.1.5. Sub-theme 5: Type of content posted on social media platforms**

The type of content posted has an role on the brand, and it helps shape the brand. The study results showed that social awareness campaigns have a role on branding. A participant stated that:

*“Social awareness campaigns that appeal to the South African market. Such as, when it's holidays in South Africa, and individuals and families will be on the roads, we appeal for them to stop at our service stations. Those posts that appeal to the South African market attract the most attention”.*

Furthermore, the results showed that when a new product is launched, this is used to shape the brand.

*“When a new product is launched, social media is used to promote the product. The content is aimed to attract the attention amongst the youth (via Facebook)”* [Participant 2].

The participants also talked about promoting the service stations as part of shaping the brand. A participant lamented that

*“Promotions of our service stations, specials and community projects. We get more engagements with initiatives that are based on current social issues in South Africa such as Gender-based Violence”* [Participant 4].

The study results show that majority of the content posted on the Engen social media platforms is aimed at getting people's attention and engagement. Anada, Hernández and Lamberti (2015) explain that in the present day, in order to achieve the desired brand image, brands can no longer rely on one-way communication only but requires engaging and incorporating consumers in social media marketing activities.

In addition, the content that is posted attracts customers' attention:

*“The partnerships that the products in the campaign have, such as with celebrities, attract the most attention. Innovative products such as apps that are created to assist the audience in finding products are also posted”* [Participant 6].

Another participant stated that:

*“Content that focuses on the benefits of using our products, the posts that attract the most attention are the ones that use celebrities/Influencers”.*

This concurs with Knoll and Matthes (2017), who state that the use of influencers and celebrities or well-known opinion leaders who have a high social value to influence others is a well-known marketing strategy.

#### **4.2.2. Theme 2: Experience of marketers and salespersons in social media on brand equity**

The second theme focuses on the experience that marketers and salespersons have when it comes to the role that social media play in brand equity. There are two sub-themes that emerged from this theme and are discussed below:

##### **4.2.2.1. Sub-theme 1: Reaching key performance indicators**

Social media engagement is the measure of the number of people that interact with a company’s social media accounts and content. Engagement is a good way of measuring the performance of the content you are creating on social media pages (Barger & Labrecque, 2013). The results showed that key performance had not been reached because of poor engagement in social media campaigns. A participant mentioned that:

*“No, they have not due to the poor engagement we receive on our social media campaigns compared to our brand being the number one petroleum company in the country” [Participant 1].*

Adding to the previous comment, a participant stated that:

*“No, they have not. There are few engagements on our social media platforms” [Participant 4].*

Moreover, people still are not aware of the brand’s aim to assist people:

*“No, quite a few people still don’t know about our innovative efforts to assist customers” [Participant 6].*

Another participant expressed that:

*“No, they have not been reached, our social media campaigns do not get enough engagement, and for a brand as big as ours in South Africa, we don’t have a big audience on our social media platform”.*

Thus, when it comes to the experiences of marketers and salespersons, it can be seen from the results that social media engagements were not reached due to different reasons that have been discussed above. The results showed that other participants argued that key performance was reached:

*“Yes, in terms of visibility because we are the most followed petroleum company on social, but when it comes to the perception of our brand in terms of being harmful to the environment even though efforts are being made to prove otherwise”.*

The results showed that the participants argued that the key performance indicators might be reached, but that does not mean they are successful. A participant stated that:

*“Our KPI indicators are based on the amount of audience our campaigns reach; across all our platforms, we do have a wide reach, so therefore it has been reached even though this might not necessarily mean it is successful”.*

In a similar vein, Anada, Hernández and Lamberti (2015) explain that in the present day, in order to achieve the desired brand image, brands can no longer rely on one-way communication only but requires engaging and incorporating consumers in social media marketing activities.

#### **4.2.2.2. Sub-theme 2: Measuring the success of a brand on social media**

When it comes to measuring the success of brands, there are different ways that participants talked about. A participant stated that:

*“It measures its success on audience read and how many people engage and view our posts” [Participant 1].*

Adding to this, another participant stated that:

*“Success is measured on the quantity of the audience that has been reached” [Participant 10].*

Reach is a great indicator of the company's potential audience size. Reach measures how far the content message would have spread on social media (Schivinski et al., 2016). The majority of the participants stated that another way to measure success was through social media reach. A participant stated that

*"We measure our performance with reach because we are unlikely to gain goodwill with the public at large, so focusing on engagement alone will not work. Reach is more vital as a metric to weight our success on social media"* [Participant 3].

Another participant concurs that:

*"The brand measures its success on reach although this might not be the biggest indication of the message being received successfully"*.

On the other hand, a participant mentioned that:

*"The success is measured on reach, which doesn't always mean the audience understands the campaign"* [Participant 6].

Thus, reaching many customers does not mean all the reached people understood the campaign and that it was a success. Literature state that understanding reach, engagement and the influence that social media is having can help in measuring the success of a brand (Ananda et al., 2015).

Scholars reveal that social media is a relatively new marketing phenomenon, and there is thus a naiveté about how engagement should be created, tracked, and measured (Barger & Labrecque, 2013; Schivinski et al., 2016). As a result, most marketers are still sharpening their experiences and seeking to understand how evaluations and the role of their social campaigns can be measured. Evidently, a participant indicated that there is a lack of measuring tools and said:

*"This information is currently not available because the current social media campaigns are not evaluating the impact of the reach"* [Participant 2].

Adding to this, another participant stated that:

*"Now we only measure audience reach, which is not the best way to measure success"*.

There is still a gap in measuring and tracing the role of social media campaigns and sales.

#### **4.2.3. Theme 3: Strategies being used to brand Petronas products by Engen SA**

The third theme focused on the strategies being used by the brand Petronas. One sub-theme emerged, and it is discussed below:

##### **4.2.3.1. Sub-theme 1: Use of celebrities and influencers**

When it comes to the use of celebrities and influencers as strategies, some participants stated that:

*“Not necessarily; the posts with influencers do not get more engagement than posts that focus on social investments and other relatable content”.*

The results further showed that celebrities and influencers were not used on media platforms. A participant stated that:

*“Social media celebrities and influencers have not been used in marketing campaigns; in our side of the business, we focus on visibility in the African market”.*

A participant concurs that

*“No, it doesn’t work for us because we are more concerned with social projects and corporate social responsibility. As a result, we do not rely on celebrities and influencers to promote our brand”.*

Furthermore, the results showed that social media posts use everyday citizens so that customers can relate. A participant commented that:

*“We do not really use celebrities; currently, our campaigns focus on the use of everyday citizens for the posts to be relatable with our target audience”.*

Adding to what the previous participant said, another participant added that

*“Not necessarily; the posts with influencers do not get more engagement than posts that focus on social investments and other relatable content”.*

This concurs with Anada et al. (2015) explain that in the present day, in order to achieve the desired brand image, brands can no longer rely on one-way communication only but requires engaging and incorporating consumers in social media marketing activities.

In a different light, some of the results also showed that some participants had positive comments on the use of celebrities:

*“Celebrities play a bigger role in perception rather than sales. We have more positive engagement when a celebrity is involved in our social media campaigns”* [Participant 3].

In addition, celebrities are used in some campaigns. A participant gave an example:

*“Yes, in the use of formula one racing, celebrities are used in the Lubricants campaigns”*. Another participant concurs that *“Yes, there is a use of international celebrities in some of the campaigns”*.

Literature by Knoll and Matthes (2017) states that the use of influencers and celebrities or well-known opinion leaders who have a high social value to influence others is a well-known marketing strategy.

#### **4.2.4. Theme 4: Barriers to success brands on social media**

The results found that there are several barriers to the success of brands on social media. These emerged into sub-themes and are discussed below:

##### **4.2.4.1. Sub-theme 1: Lack of understanding**

The results showed that there was a lack of understanding of the brand. This can be seen from the literature by Salman (2019), which states that the petroleum industry involves different environmental and sustainability dynamics; thus, it requires an effective education medium. The literature shows the need for education so that people can understand the products and brands offered by Engen. Drawing from the above, a participant mentioned that:

*“No understanding what attracts our audiences’ interest and not measuring our success on social media efficiently”*.

Adding to this, a participant commented that

*“Understanding what attracts the youth to campaigns, using more trendy campaigns would help the success of the brand” [Participant 4].*

Hence, these results show that having an understanding of what is required is a barrier to the success of brands on social media. It is important that marketers use strategies after having an understanding of what exactly is going on. Another participant stated that:

*“No understanding of what content encourages engagement from our target audience”.*

#### **4.2.4.2. Sub-theme 2: Communication challenges**

The results showed that another barrier to brand success was that there were communication technicalities. A participant stated that:

*“The campaigns are not personified – not humanized, and it was not differentiated enough – the unique formulas are not highlighted”.*

Another barrier that impedes the success of the brand is the negative image that the company gets from social media platforms. A participant mentioned that:

*“The negative image as a mass carbon emitter and that is not necessarily our fault as a brand; it’s the industry perception itself”.*

Thus, communication is important when it comes to the success of brands. Jayasingh (2019) states that social media opens new possibilities in marketing and making a brand visible, primarily through communication and interaction with the user and the brand.

#### **4.2.4.3. Sub-theme 3: Focusing on reach and not engagement**

Another barrier is that of focusing on reach, not engagement. The results showed that the majority of the participants commented that reach does not mean customers are engaging. A participant stated that:

*“Not focuses on audience engagement more. Reach doesn’t always guarantee that the campaign message is reached”.*

In addition, another participant commented that:

*“Focusing on reach rather than engagement and not using local celebrities to promote products”.*

The results further show that the use of not using local celebrities and influencers was also a barrier to the success of the brand. This strategy was lacking in the social media strategies that were used to make the brand successful. A participant stated that:

*“Not localising the products enough by using South African influencers/celebrities”.*

Moreover, the lack of measurements in place to determine the success of social media campaigns. A participant stated that

*“The company not having better metrics to determine the success of our social media campaigns. Impressions and clicks do not always determine a successful campaign” [Participant 15].*

This concurs with Stojanovic et al. (2017), who state that engagement is the most important metric for measuring the way people interact with the brand on social platforms.

#### **4.2.5. Theme 5: Alternatives to improve the brand through social media**

The fifth theme focuses on the alternative that is being used to improve the Petronas brand through social media. There are two sub-themes which emerged from the theme, and these are discussed below:

##### **4.2.5.1. Sub-theme 1: Social media tactics the brand can use to improve current performance**

The results showed that to improve current performance, there is a need to do research on the platforms and ways that attract customers. A participant stated that:

*“Yes, by doing more research on what attracts our audience, by using social media platforms such as Twitter to see what attracts regarding lubricant/petroleum campaigns and shaping our campaigns to cater more to our intended audience”.*

In addition, the results showed that there is a need for a strategy to plan in terms of the social media platforms that are favourable. Another participant stated that:

*“Having a social media strategy plan that caters to different social media platforms LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram etc. also being on YouTube to show the highlights of the products”.*

Another strategy that was mentioned was using platforms which allow for engagements with customers. A participant stated that:

*“Engaging more directly with younger audiences and championing more environmental issues”* [Participant 3].

On the other hand, using social media to engage with other stakeholders.

A participant stated that:

*“Social media platforms can be used to promote live engagements with company representatives to educate audiences about the campaigns and products to avoid misinterpretation”* [Participant 7].

Therefore, the above-mentioned social media tactics are important in improving brand performance. The use of social media influencers was also raised as a tactic to improve the performance of the brand. A participant stated that:

*“The use of social media influencers could help bring more attention to our social media pages in order to spread awareness about our campaigns to the youth”* [Participant 5].

When it comes to influencers, it is vital to use local influencers that are relatable to South Africans. A participant stated that

*“To use a local influencer to promote our products because not all South Africans may recognise the international celebrity. Using international and local celebrities could attract more attention”* [Participant 8].

Using social influencers to educate the audience and announce new products. Another participant added that:

*“Using Local celebrities in our campaigns in order to reach a wider audience”.*

Khamis et al. (2017) state that the use of influencer marketing is becoming a major marketing tool for brands all over the world. In addition, Awobamise and Jarrar (2018) state that the endorsement, influence and reach of influencers when they review or speak about a product or brand has on consumers is very high.

It is important to have metrics in place to ensure that the targeted audience understands the messages being communicated. A participant stated that:

*“Leveraging on our affiliation with big brands and international influencers. Such as having more posts to show our brand association and having those influencers support our campaigns”.*

The social learning theory by Bandura in 1963 states that people learn indirectly from social interactions. Individuals are motivated to behave in certain ways by social agents.

#### **4.2.5.2. Sub-theme 2: Social media platforms effective for brands communication**

Social media allows companies to engage and connect with their customers and audience. These platforms include LinkedIn, Twitter, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, and other new platforms like TikTok (Jayasingh, 2019). In terms of social media platforms that can be used for brand communication, the results showed that participants mentioned different platforms and how they can be used. A participant mentioned that:

*“Twitter to conduct market research and to understand our target audience and Facebook to reach our target audience”.*

Another participant commented that:

*“LinkedIn because it’s the most filtered out of all the social media platforms. It is more professional. It also makes it easier to target audiences better”.*

In a similar vein, another participant (4) concurs that:

*“LinkedIn because it has the biggest following and it is easier to target the relevant audience on the platform”.*

The results also showed that some participants stated that all social media platforms are powerful and effective. A participant stated that:

*“All social media platforms are powerful branding tools if they are used correctly. There isn’t one that stands out. However, LinkedIn is the most effective if you want to get your message to your audience. Whilst Instagram is good, and Facebook and YouTube are the best for audience interactive”.*

Another participant added that:

*“Instagram and Twitter, Instagram to shape our image and education our audience and Twitter for market research to understand the target audience better through targeted campaigns”.*

A participant commented that:

*“Instagram and Facebook, because most of the youth uses those social media platforms”. In addition, another participant stated that “YouTube and Facebook are amongst the top three most used social media platforms, and they make it easier to encourage engagement”.*

When focusing on the social media platform that is effective, the participants looked at the reasons why the platforms are effective. It is important to focus on the brand’s target market and focus on the platforms they use.

### **4.3. Discussion of results**

The research was focused on exploring how social media marketing is influencing the Engen, Petronas brand equity in South Africa. The objectives included exploring how impactful social media marketing can be in branding Petronas products in Engen, SA. Secondly, to understand the experience of Engen marketers and salespersons on the role social media marketing play in the brand equity of Petronas lubricants brand. Thirdly, to identify strategies being used to brand Petronas products by Engen South Africa. Lastly, to explore alternatives towards improving the Petronas lubricants brand through social media marketing.

#### **4.3.1. Role of social media marketing on branding**

The results from the marketing experts at Petroleum showed that social media marketing had a role on branding Petronas products in Engen. Social media is aimed at brand awareness, communication, social development and education of the brand. The results by the marketing experts at Engen showed that the role of social media marketing was to encourage brand awareness. The results established that campaigns were done to create brand awareness for new products and the benefits of the brand. These results agreed with the literature by Codey et al. (2016), stating that social media impacts brand image, brand trust, brand awareness, and brand loyalty, thus facilitating consumer brands to achieve brand equity. In addition, the

experts also showed that social media impacted Engen in terms of communication. Social media marketing provides a platform for communication between customers, young people and marketers. This communication encouraged customers to engage and comment on the company's brands. Thus, showing that social media can be useful when it comes to Petronas brand. The findings also established that social media marketing was impactful on the youths and their development. However, this added to literature that only focuses on social media marketing to recruit youths. It further focuses on the role of social media on youth development, social investments, and the brand's contribution to the future success of the youths in South Africa. Furthermore, the study found that social media marketing was impactful as an educational medium. Marketing experts used different platforms to educate and inform people about brands and products. The study also established that the type of content being posted influenced the role that social media marketing had on branding Petronas products. The results showed that content posted aimed at attracting people's attention, engaging them, educating, and informing them. All of this played a role in the role that social media marketing had on branding Petronas products.

#### **4.3.2. Experience of marketers and salespersons in social media on brand equity**

The participants that were interviewed in this study had a wealth of experience ranging between 6 to 20 years as marketers and salespersons. Experienced marketers and salespersons have different marketing practices and customer experiences in developing brands (Zafari, 2017). The views shared by participants in this study helped to reflect on the role of social media platforms when it comes to reaching key indicators of social media marketing of the Petronas brand. The results showed that it is important for marketers and salespersons to know the reasons why key indicators have been reached or not. Furthermore, the results showed that key indicators were not reached because of poor engagement on social media platforms. Many people are still not aware of the brand, and some do not understand the campaigns. With these sentiments, one might assume that there is a lack of application of trendy social media strategies when it comes to engaging the Petronas brand on social media platforms. Moreover, it is also important to know that though social media might attract a wide reach, it does not mean that it automatically translates to engagement. However, though there might not be new oil brands, it is essential to note that the reach advances

the necessary brand awareness, which might eventually lead to consumer interaction, especially in a market with highly competitive oil brands.

Measuring the success of a brand on social media is important to ensure that the experience that marketers and salespersons have is useful. When it comes to measuring the success of a brand, Ananda et al. (2015) noted that reaching many customers does not mean all the reached people understood the campaign and that it was a success. Literature state that understanding reach, engagement and the influence that social media is having can help in measuring the success of a brand.

#### **4.3.3. Strategies being used to brand Petronas products by Engen SA**

The strategy that is being used by Engen is the use of influencers and celebrities. The study established that influencers and celebrities have not been very helpful, especially when international celebrities were used. The findings also revealed that the posts in which influencers and celebrities were used did not get much engagement. However, this does not concur with literature that states that the use of influencers and celebrations is desired as a new strategy to increase brand success. The study also established that celebrities play a bigger role in the campaigns, especially when they are well known. This concurs with Knoll and Matthes (2017), who state that the use of influencers and celebrities or well-known opinion leaders who have a high social value to influence others is a well-known marketing strategy.

#### **4.3.4. Barriers to successful brands on social media**

The study also established the barriers to the success of brands in social media marketing. There are a number of barriers that were identified. Lack of understanding was one of the barriers, and the results showed that once the audience does not understand the campaign or social media posts, this impacts the brand's success. This was seen to be high within the petroleum industry due to the involvement of the environment and sustainability issues. In addition, communication challenges are also a barrier to brand success. Whilst focusing on reach and not engagement also posed barriers. It is important to focus on engagement because reaching people does not mean they are engaged with the brand. In support of the above, Stojanovic et al. (2017) also state that engagement is the most important metric for measuring the way people interact with the brand on social platforms.

#### **4.3.5. Alternatives to improve the brand through social media**

With regard to the alternatives to improve the Petronas brand through social media marketing, the results identified social media tactics that can be used to improve the current performance. The results established that there should be more research on the needs and what attracts the audience. Also, having a strategic plan before using social media platforms. This will help increase engagement and not just increase reach. The use of social media influencers was also raised as another tactic that can be used. The study further states that influencers or celebrities used must be known people who the audience can relate with. The findings revealed the use of influencers or celebrities, which also was identified in the literature that the use of influencers is becoming a major marketing tool. However, it is important to note the use of local or well-known influencers and celebrities as a new perspective that has been identified in the study. Furthermore, the social media platforms used in our study are important for effective brand communication. The study established that the majority of social media platforms are effective, but LinkedIn was outstanding because of its professional nature. Therefore, it is important for marketers to choose platforms that speak to the audience they are targeting. In addition, looking at the reasons behind the use of a platform and see if it relates to the social media marketing strategy plans.

#### **4.4. Concluding Summary**

The chapter presented the study findings. The chapter presented five themes, and each theme had subthemes. The chapter presented data which was collected from Engen South Africa's marketing and sales team. The major findings were that social media marketing had a role on branding. Also, the type of content posted on social media platforms had a role on the success of the brand. In addition, measuring the success of a brand is important, and not all people are engaged with the brand. Moreover, it is important to note that the use of local influencers and celebrities is effective and allows the audience to engage and relate to the brand. There are barriers when it comes to the success of social media marketing on brands, and these include lack of understanding, communication challenges and focusing on reach, not engagement. The results also showed the alternatives and strategies that can be used to improve the performance of the brand. The study established that there should be

strategies in place, and the use of the correct social media platforms is also important. The next chapter provides the study's conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5. Summary**

The previous chapter presented, analysed and discussed the findings of the study. It unpacked detailed perspectives shared by participants and reflected on the relationship with literature on social media marketing and brand equity. The chapter provided an understanding of the important role of social media marketing in branding Petronas lubricants. With detailed insight, this chapter summarizes and concludes the study.

The key findings of the study were that social media marketing had a role on branding. The review of the literature and the views shared by experts in marketing and sales in the petroleum industry reveal that social media platforms have played a significant role in conscientizing people about their brands. Thus, the participants concluded that the type of content posted on social media platforms had a role on the success of the Petronas lubricant brand.

The study also helped to reflect on critical issues pertaining to measuring the success of social media use. For instance, the participants highlighted that measuring a brand's success is important, as not all people are engaged with the brand. Moreover, it is important to note that the use of local influencers and celebrities is effective and allows the audience to engage and relate to the brand.

The findings of the study established that there are barriers when it comes to the success of social media marketing on brands, and these include lack of understanding, communication challenges and focusing on reach, not engagement. The results also showed the alternatives and strategies that can be used to improve the performance of the brand. The study established that there should be strategies in place, and the use of the correct social media platforms is also important. The next section will summarise the chapters, followed by the study's conclusions and key recommendations.

## **5.1. Summarization of Chapters**

The study aimed to explore how social media marketing influences the Engen, Petronas oil brand equity in South Africa. The study objectives were to explore how influential Social Media Marketing can be in branding Petronas products in Engen, SA. The second one was to understand the experiences of Engen marketers and salespersons on the role of Social Media Marketing play in the brand equity of Petronas lubricants brand. The third objective was to identify strategies being used to brand Petronas products by Engen, South Africa. Lastly, to explore alternatives towards improving the Petronas lubricants brand through Social Media Marketing.

The literature review chapter discussed social media marketing and brand equity. Social media marketing is a process where social media tools create and facilitate viral communication to promote brands and products. Social media is believed to have a great role on brands. Most brands have been capitalizing on social media for marketing and customer interactions. Brand equity is important when it comes to marketing and brand management. Brand equity as a prominent concept is driven by customer brand awareness and associations, customer brand attitudes/loyalty, and customer perception of brand ethics/quality. Social media impacts brand image, trust, awareness, and loyalty, thus facilitating consumer brands to achieve brand equity. Within the petroleum industry, companies are slowly using social media in their marketing media.

The research methodology chapter discussed the methodology that was used for the study. The study is an exploratory study which falls within the interpretivism paradigm. The study adopted a qualitative approach. The target population for this study will be drawn from the Engen South Africa marketing and sales team. This study will make use of non-probability sampling methods. In non-probability sampling and purposive sampling, a small data set selection was made based on the researcher's criteria which include: (1) being a member of the Engen South Africa marketing team; (2) minimum of three working years in the Engen marketing department; (3) those working directly on the Petronas brand; and (4) willingness of the identified participants to participate in the study. This means the researcher targeted key informants with expert knowledge of the Engen Petronas brand and the organisation's marketing processes and can provide detailed information on the challenges and opportunities surrounding

the brand and the existing processes. Data was collected using interviews which took between 35-40minutes. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.

Chapter four focused on data analysis. The major findings were that social media marketing had an impact on branding. Also, the type of content posted on social media platforms had a role on the success of the brand. In addition, measuring the success of a brand is important, and not all people are engaged with the brand. Moreover, it is important to note that the use of local influencers and celebrities is effective and allows the audience to engage and relate to the brand. There are barriers when it comes to the success of social media marketing on brands, and these include lack of understanding, communication challenges and focusing on reach, not engagement. The results also showed the alternatives and strategies that can be used to improve the performance of the brand. The study established that there should be strategies in place, and the use of the correct social media platforms is also important.

## **5.2. Conclusions**

The study aimed to explore how social media marketing influences the Engen, Petronas brand equity in South Africa. The study aim was achieved by collecting data from the Engen South Africa marketing and sales team. The results were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study had five themes which were discussed. The findings established that social media marketing is important for branding. Also, there are strategies and alternatives that marketers and salespersons need to use for social media marketing to improve their brand equity. However, the limitations of the study were that data was only collected from Engen Petronas in South Africa. The study focused on the petroleum industry only. Thus, the findings might not be generalized to other industries.

### **5.2.1. Achieving Research Objectives**

*To explore how impactful social media marketing can be in branding Petronas products in Engen, SA.*

The study results showed that social media marketing had a role on branding. It leads to brand awareness, allows for communication and social development and educates the audience. The results showed that all of the above are ways in which social media influenced branding. In addition, the type of content posted also played a role in the

role that social media marketing had on branding Petronas products. Practitioners can benefit from social media marketing in that it allows them to share information with many customers at once, thus creating awareness for their brands. In addition, marketers can educate their customers and are able to interact with them. This makes it easier for customers to understand information about the brands.

*To understand the experience of Engen marketers and salespersons on the role social media marketing play in the brand equity of Petronas lubricants brand.*

The results showed that key indicators were not reached because of poor engagement on social media platforms. Many people are still not aware of the brand, and some do not understand the campaigns. Moreover, it is also important to know that reach does not mean engagement. Furthermore, measuring the success of a brand on social media is important to ensure that the experience that marketers and salespersons have is useful.

*To identify strategies being used to brand Petronas products by Engen South Africa.*

The study established that influencers and celebrities have not been very helpful, especially when international celebrities were used. The findings also revealed that the posts in which influencers and celebrities were used did not get much engagement. However, this does not concur with literature that states that the use of influencers and celebrities is desired as a new strategy to increase brand success. The study also established that celebrities play a bigger role in the campaigns, especially when they are well known. With regard to social media marketing, practitioners need to use local celebrities that customers can relate to and that they are familiar with. This allows customers to relate to and choose the brands. In addition, practitioners should use social media influencers after they have educated consumers about the products so that it is easier for them to accept the brands.

*To explore alternatives towards improving the Petronas lubricants brand through social media marketing.*

The results established that there should be more research on the needs and what attracts the audience. Also, having a strategic plan before using social media platforms. This will help increase engagement and not just increase reach. Social media influencers were also raised as another tactic that can be used. The study

further states that influencers or celebrities used must be known people who the audience can relate with. The findings revealed the use of influencers or celebrities, which also was identified in the literature that the use of influencers is becoming a major marketing tool. However, it is important to note the use of local or well-known influencers and celebrities as a new perspective that has been identified in the study. Furthermore, the social media platforms used in our study are important for effective brand communication. The study established that the majority of social media platforms are effective, but LinkedIn was outstanding because of its professional nature.

### **5.2.2. Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

This study will only focus on the social media marketing of the Engen Petronas brand. It will only involve marketers and sales representatives since it seeks to explore their experiences and perceptions of the role of social media marketing on the brand equity of the Petronas brand. This study will be purely qualitative; hence only semi-structured interviews will be conducted.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

- **Use of influencers and local celebrities**

The results have shown that there is a high need to use celebrities and influencers as a way to improve the impact of the Petronas oil brand. Thus, this study recommends the use of local celebrities and influencers with which the audience can relate. The use of celebrities and influencers can empower the brand through their ability to engage audiences on social media platforms. With the understanding that social media users are highly guided by entertainment and social media trends, influencers and celebrities can go a long way towards customizing the brand, ensuring interaction, and engaging consumers to talk about the brand on different platforms, thus ensuring word of mouth. Literature by Knoll and Matthes (2017) concurs that the use of influencers and celebrities or well-known opinion leaders who have a high social value to influence others is a well-known marketing strategy. This shows that practitioners should use well-known celebrities and influencers to enable customers to relate to and engage with the brand.

- **Measuring on engagement**

Stojanovic et al. (2017) also state that engagement is the most important metric for measuring the way people interact with the brand on social platforms. Therefore, it is important for marketers to measure engagement on various platforms. Engagement is the most important metric for measuring the way people interact with the brand on social platforms. Therefore, marketers should always measure the engagement that is taking place on their social media platforms.

- **Researching on platforms**

The study also recommends marketers research the social media platforms that their target market is using. Reaching and engaging with the correct audience is important rather than just posting on the wrong platforms. Practitioners should send some questions to customers, asking them what they think about the various platforms so that they get to know which platforms customers like. This can be regularly done since customers' preferences change with time.

## REFERENCES

- Akgün, Z. (2020). The Impact of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Equity, Customer Response and Purchase Intention: A Research on Fast Fashion Brands. *Business & Management Studies: An International Journal*, 8(5), 4211-4240. <https://doi.org/10.15295/bmij.v8i5.1672>
- Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R. & Stephen, A.T. (2020). The future of social media in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* volume. **48**, 79–95. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00695-1>
- Bilgin Y. (2018). The Effect of Social Media Marketing Activities On Brand Awareness, Brand Image And Brand Loyalty, *BMJ*, (2018), 6(1), 128-148. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15295/bmij.v6i1.229>
- Cooley, D. & Parks-Yancy, R. (2019). The Effect of Social Media on Perceived Information Credibility and Decision Making, *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 18(3), 249-269, DOI: 10.1080/15332861.2019.1595362
- Coomes, E. A., & Haghbayan, H. (2020). Interleukin-6 in COVID-19: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Reviews in medical virology*, 30(6), 1-9.
- Creswell, J. W. (2011). Controversies in mixed methods research. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 4(1), 269-284.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ebrahim, R. S. (2020). The Role of Trust in Understanding the Impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Equity and Brand Loyalty, *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 19(4), 287-308, DOI: [10.1080/15332667.2019.1705742](https://doi.org/10.1080/15332667.2019.1705742)

- EIAydi, H.O. (2018). The Effect of Social Media Marketing on Brand Awareness through Facebook: An Individual-Based Perspective of Mobile Services Sector in Egypt. *Open Access Library Journal*, 5, 4977. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1104977>
- Fang, Y. (2020). In the Web2.0 Era, Social Media Marketing Brings Business Opportunities to Enterprises. *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 8, 923-931. DOI: [10.4236/ojbm.2020.82057](https://doi.org/10.4236/ojbm.2020.82057).
- Gani, A., Intiaz, N., Rathakrishnan, M. and Krishnasamy, H.N., 2020. A pilot test for establishing validity and reliability of qualitative interview in the blended learning English proficiency course. *Journal of critical reviews*, 7(5), pp.140-143.
- Gökerik, M., Gürbüz, A., Erkan, I., Mogaji, E. & Sap, S. (2018). Surprise me with your ads! The impacts of guerrilla marketing in social media on brand image, *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 30(5),1222-1238. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-10-2017-0257>
- Ibrahim,B., Aljarah, A., & Ababneh, B. (2020). Do Social Media Marketing Activities Enhance Consumer Perception of Brands? A Meta-Analytic Examination, *Journal of Promotion Management*, 26(4), 544-568, DOI: [10.1080/10496491.2020.1719956](https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2020.1719956)
- Ismail, A.R. (2017). The influence of perceived social media marketing activities on brand loyalty: The mediation effect of brand and value consciousness, *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 29(1), 129-144. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-10-2015-0154>
- Jayasingh, S. (2019). Consumer brand engagement in social networking sites and its effect on brand loyalty, *Cogent Business & Management*, 6:1, 1698793, DOI: [10.1080/23311975.2019.1698793](https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2019.1698793)

- Jibril, A.B., Kwarteng, M.A., Chovancova, M. & Pilik, M. (2019). The impact of social media on consumer-brand loyalty: A mediating role of online based-brand community, *Cogent Business & Management*, 6(1), 1673640, DOI: 10.1080/23311975.2019.1673640
- Kim, A.J. & Ko, E. (2012). Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brand, *Journal of Business Research*, 1480-1486.
- Koay, K.Y., Ong, D.L.T., Khoo, K.L. & Yeoh, H.J. (2020). Perceived social media marketing activities and consumer-based brand equity: Testing a moderated mediation model. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 33(1), 53-72. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-07-2019-0453>
- Kubheka, B. Z., Carter, V., & Mwaura, J. (2020). Social media health promotion in South Africa: Opportunities and challenges. *African journal of primary health care & family medicine*, 12(1), e1–e7. <https://doi.org/10.4102/phcfm.v12i1.2389>
- Leon, A. C., Davis, L. L., & Kraemer, H. C. (2011). The role and interpretation of pilot studies in clinical research. *Journal of psychiatric research*, 45(5), 626-629.
- Lubes'N'Greases. (2021). *South Africas Lubricants Market Springs Back - Lubes'N'Greases*. Retrieved from <https://www.lubesngreases.com/magazine-emea/south-africas-lubricants-market-springs-back/>
- Nwokah, N. and Aeenee, F. (2017). Social Media Marketing and Business Success of Automobile Dealers in Rivers State. *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management*, 7, 1298-1319. doi: [10.4236/ajibm.2017.712092](https://doi.org/10.4236/ajibm.2017.712092).
- Research and Markets. 2021. *The South African Petroleum Industry in South Africa 2021*. Retrieved from

<https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5324607/the-south-african-petroleum-industry-in-south> .

Salman, A. (2019, June 24). Why Social Media Marketing Is Important For Oil & Gas Companies? Retrieved from <https://rapidboostmarketing.com/why-social-media-marketing-is-important-for-oil-gas-companies/>

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research Methods for Business Students* (7th edition). Harlow: Pearson.

Schivinski, B., Langaro, D. & Shaw, C. (2019). The Influence of Social Media Communication on Consumer's Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions Concerning Brand-Sponsored Events, *Event Management*, 23 (6), 835-853

Sharawneh, T. (2020). Social media marketing activities and brand loyalty in the telecommunication industry: The mediating role of brand affect. *Journal of Innovations in Digital Marketing* Vol. 1, No. 1 , pp.1 – 10.

Shen, L. and Yang, X. (2019). Platform Brand Value: Construct and Measurement — An Empirical Research Based on the Data of Social Media. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 7, 174-197. doi: [10.4236/jss.2019.711013](https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2019.711013).

Trad, N. and Dabbagh, M. (2020). Use of Social Media as an Effective Marketing Tool for Fashion Startups in Saudi Arabia. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 8, 319-332. doi: [10.4236/jss.2020.811029](https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2020.811029).

Tsai, F.M. & Bui, T. (2021). Impact of word of mouth via social media on consumer intention to purchase cruise travel products, *Maritime Policy & Management*, 48(2), 167-183, DOI: 10.1080/03088839.2020.1735655

Voorveld, H.A.M, Noort, G.V., Muntinga, D.G., & Bronner, F. (2018). Engagement with Social Media and Social Media Advertising: The Differentiating Role of Platform

Type, *Journal of Advertising*, 47(1), 38-54, DOI:  
10.1080/00913367.2017.1405754

Voorveld, H.A.M. (2019), Brand Communication in Social Media: A Research Agenda,  
*Journal of Advertising*, 48(1), 14-26, DOI: 10.1080/00913367.2019.1588808

Wibowo, A., Chen, S.C., Wiangin, U., Ma, Y. & Ruangkanjanes, A. (2021).  
Customer Behavior as an Outcome of Social Media Marketing: The Role of  
Social Media Marketing Activity and Customer Experience. *Sustainability*,13,  
189. [https:// dx.doi.org/10.3390/su13010189](https://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su13010189)

## **Appendix A: Topic Approval Letter**



Reference: Ms Jennifer Mgolodela  
E-mail: [jennifer.mgolodela@wits.ac.za](mailto:jennifer.mgolodela@wits.ac.za)

08 November 2021  
Person No: 2188165  
PAG

Ms MZ Zungu  
Unit 808, Greenstone Ridge  
45 Stoneridge Drive  
Greenstone Hill  
1609  
South Africa

Dear Ms Mpumelelo Zungu

**Master of Business Administration: Approval of Title**

We have pleasure in advising that your proposal entitled *The impact of social media marketing activities on brand equity of an automobile oil brand in South Africa* has been approved. Please note that any amendments to this title have to be endorsed by the Faculty's higher degrees committee and formally approved.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Bosman'.

Mrs Marike Bosman  
Faculty Registrar  
Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management

## Appendix B: Gatekeeper's Letter

20 January 2022

Dear Zandile,

I trust you are well. I refer to your request to complete your dissertation which is based around the Marketing and Brand equity of Automotive Lubricants.

The Title of your research is: ***The impact of social media marketing activities on the brand equity of an automobile oil brand in South Africa.***

As you explained, the research will be purely qualitative and that only semi-structured interviews will be conducted. The 15 respondents interviewed will remain anonymous. You also indicate and confirm that no reference will be made to any Engen brands.

The aim of your research is to:

1. To Explore how impactful Social Media Marketing can be in branding automobile oil products in SA.
2. To understand the experiences of marketers and salespersons on the role of social media marketing in brand equity of automobile oil brands.
3. To identify strategies being used to brand automobile oil products in an automobile oil marketing company in SA.
4. To explore alternatives towards improving automobile brand equity through social media marketing.

You have our approval to proceed, subject to the following conditions:

1. All data on the business shared in your report must only be data currently available in public domain (Integrated reports etc). No business confidential data should be made available in your report. Should you want to use any data that is not in the public domain, please highlight the data you wish to use and request approval from the Lubricants BPI manager and myself.
2. Please ensure that you use a personal format for your slides and not the Engen branded slides as the output of your research is your personal work.
3. Please ensure that you obtain signed consent forms from all of the Engen interviewees you engage with.

I believe that your research will be very insightful and would encourage you to share your findings with the relevant internal stakeholders.

I am sure you will do well! All the best!

Kind regards,



---

Sharveen Maharaj  
General Manager - Lubricants Division



---

Bongsi Bako  
Manager, Marketing & Business Development



---

Michael Bowers  
Manager, RTM Support (Line Manager)

## Appendix C: Ethical Clearance Letter

Graduate School of Business Administration  
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg



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

### Ethics Clearance Certificate

**Ethics protocol number:** WBS/BA2188165/894

*This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below)*

This certificate is only valid if accompanied by formal permission from the relevant stakeholder(s).

<b>Project title</b>	The impact of social media marketing activities on brand equity of an automobile oil brand in South Africa
<b>Investigator / Researcher</b>	Miss Mpumelelo Zandile Zungu
<b>Nature of Project</b>	MBA (Consultancy Project)
<b>Decision of the Committee</b>	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed confidentiality.
<b>Issue Date of Certificate</b>	27/01/2022
<b>Expiry date</b>	Date of submission of the project report
<b>Chairperson</b>	Ms Ayanda Magida ☎ +27 11 717 3953 ✉ <a href="mailto:ayanda.magida@wits.ac.za">ayanda.magida@wits.ac.za</a>

#### Declaration by Researcher

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

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

Signature

27 January 2022

Date

## Appendix D: Information Sheet



### STUDY INFORMATION DOCUMENT

**Study title: The impact of social media marketing activities on the brand equity of an automobile oil brand in South Africa.**

**Introduction:**

I, Mpumelelo Zandile Zungu are doing research on Brand Equity. The objective here is to explore how social media marketing is influencing an automobile oil brand in South Africa. The objectives of this study seek to fill the gaps existing in the petroleum industry research and to particularly.

**Invitation to Participate:** I am inviting you to take part in a research study

**What is involved in the study:**

1. To Explore how impactful Social Media Marketing can be in branding automobile oil products in SA.
2. To understand the experiences of marketers and salespersons on the role of social media marketing in brand equity of automobile oil brands.
3. To identify strategies being used to brand automobile oil products in an automobile oil marketing company in SA.
4. To explore alternatives towards improving automobile brand equity through social media marketing.

**Risks of being involved in the study:** There will be no risk involved.

The Participant will be given pertinent information on the study while involved in the project and after the results are available.

**Confidentiality:** Personal information will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be available to the Principal Investigator Mpumelelo Zandile Zungu and her Supervisor Dr Emmanuel Quaye.

**Anonymity** Participants' confidentiality and anonymity are maintained as the questionnaire does not request any personally identifiable information such as names or contact information. There will be no personal costs or direct benefits to you to participate in this project. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the survey at any stage.

**Contact details of researcher:**

**Name:** Mpumelelo Zandile Zungu

**Email address:** [zzandile@yahoo.com](mailto:zzandile@yahoo.com) or [2188165@student.wits.ac.za](mailto:2188165@student.wits.ac.za)

**Cell phone no.:** 0760360010

**Contact details of supervisor**

**Name:** Dr Emmanuel Quaye

**Email address:** [emmanuel.quaye@wits.ac.za](mailto:emmanuel.quaye@wits.ac.za)

**Tel no.:** 0117173541

If you have any questions about this research during or after your participation, feel free to contact me or my supervisor with the details listed above

Date: January 2022

## Appendix E: Interview Schedule

Type of Enterprise	
Gender	
Industry	
Years of Experience	

### Interview Questions

1. What are the brand's aims/objectives when it comes to social media?
2. What type of content has been posted in shaping the brand? And what type of posts seem to attract much attention for the targeted audience?
3. Have the Key Performance Indicators Is been reached?
4. How does the brand measure it's success on the social media platforms?
5. Does the use of celebrities or influencers on your social media platforms help the brand in sales of your products?
6. What are the brands biggest barrier to success on social media?
7. Are there any Social Media tactics you think the brand can use improve its current performance?
8. Which social media platform is most effective for the brands communication?