SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AMONGST GENERATION Y IN SOUTH AFRICA – DOES GENDER MATTER?

ABSTRACT

Social media has become one of the most popular tools for social interaction, and has transformed how individuals socialise, seek and share information with each other. Despite the widespread usage of social media in South Africa, there is a lack of empirical research studies that crystallise the differences in usage of social media by men and women, and of the relationship between social media usage and behaviour. The purpose of the study was to establish the differences between how men and women use social media and if there are any differences in their behaviour on social platforms. The sample consisted of 1 176 individuals who have used a social media account within the last six months, and interviews were conducted via a self-administered questionnaire. The results indicate that most of the respondents had been on their preferred social media platform for five years or more, are of Generation Y, have a university degree, and were single and living alone. The results demonstrate that there are no statistically significant differences in the usage and behaviour of social media networking sites of men and women. Marketers therefore need to invest in developing and maintaining a presence on social media if they want to develop a loyal following amongst Generation Y. Social media can therefore be leveraged by marketers to disseminate information about new products or products that existing customers had not considered buying at the time of social media interaction.

Key words: *Social Media, Social media usage, Behaviour, South Africa, Gender, Gender differences*

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media refers to communal activities, practices and behaviours among people who congregate online to share information, knowledge and opinions (Safko & Brake, 2009:6). According to Holloman (2012:4), social media is the term to describe the means of communicating and engaging with people. A survey by the Pew Research Centre (2015) found that Facebook is by far the most popular social media site in the world. Globally, individuals are increasingly using multiple social media sites and sites such as Pinterest are dominated by women worldwide. In South Africa, there are 11.8 million Facebook, 7.2 million Youtube and 6.6 million Twitter users (World Wide Worx, 2015). Social media allows consumers the opportunity to actively interact with brands and/or advertising and share them with friends (Logan, Bright & Gangadharbatla, 2012:165). Second screening, is a marketing phenomenon that has been brought about by the advent and popularity of social media. Marketers who aim to be more effective and deliver their messages, should increasingly consider the inclusion of social media into their marketing mix.

Digital advertising media spend continues to outgrow other mediums in South Africa (Maggs, 2015). A report by McKinsey & Company (2013) reports that by 2017, advertising spend on digital media will be three times larger than that of newspaper advertising and will almost match the share going to television. Social media is delivering a new standard of interacting with other people. While social media is becoming increasingly important to Internet users and advertisers or businesses, it is often discussed as a collective medium with little reference to the differences among specific users (Chan-Olmsted, Cho & Lee, 2013:150). Men and women differ in many ways, and according to a Wharton (2007) article, men and women have vastly different shopping habits, women spend more time in shops browsing, while men go in and purchase the desired item and leave the store. Ask Afrika (2013) posits that men and women not only differ with regard to their approach to dating, but also their approach to decision-

making. According to Vermeren (2015), women in South Africa represent the majority of Internet users (71%) and also comprise the most prominent gender group that uses social media (76%). South African women also have 55% more posts on social media than men (Vermeren, 2015). According to Amrop Landelahni (2013), women have been left behind on the technology ladder, thereby creating a digital gender gap.

This research aims to explore the influence of gender on social media usage and behaviour. Social media behaviour is characterised by the perceptions of usefulness and ease of use. Therefore, if a technology is perceived as being useful and easy to use, people will continue to use that technology. Usage, on the other hand, is characterised by the amount of time spent using a technology and the frequency of use.

In the following sections of the article, the problem statement is discussed and clarified, and the objectives and hypotheses are discussed. Thereafter, the literature review is provided as background to the usage and behaviour of social media users.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Social media is globally used to connect with others who share similar interests, whether they are family, friends or strangers, with a similar hobby (King, 2015). e-Commerce in South Africa continues to grow and in a study by uAfrica.com (2014), it is suggested that fifty eight per cent (58%) of those surveyed, researched and bought products online and completed more than 10 purchases online annually. Mobile and smartphone penetration in South Africa is currently estimated at ninety two per cent (92%), and a total of eighty per cent (80%) of South African Internet users access the Internet on their mobile phones (Effective Measure, 2013). Effective Measure (2013) further states that instant messaging, email and social networking are the top activities performed on the Internet by South African Internet users. Social media users can easily create individual identities online by uploading profile pictures and including

personal details in the profiles, with the majority of the profile information to be controlled and selectively entered by the profile owner. The opportunity of presenting a different self-image on social media makes social networks more appealing to both men and women (Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis & Kruck, 2012:92).

Haferkamp et al. (2012:91) found that men are more task and information orientated, while women have different motives when using the Internet. Drabowicz (2014:108) suggests that there are differences in the frequency of use and reasons for use of the Internet between men and women in different countries around the world. Although differences between men and women in the use of the Internet have been identified (Lucero et al., 2014; Haferkamp et al., 2012), limited research exists in South Africa on the influence of gender on social media usage and behaviour. It has therefore become imperative to investigate and understand this influence and use such knowledge to develop a better understanding of the commercial behaviour of men and women in South Africa.

3.   OBJECTIVES

Emanating from the research problem, the purpose of the survey conducted for this article was to determine the influence of gender on social media usage and behaviour in Gauteng. The following secondary objectives were formulated to assist in addressing the primary research objective:

- To determine whether gender influences social media usage
- To present a demographic profile of respondents
- To determine whether gender influences social media behaviour

4.   HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested in order to assist in meeting the research objectives:

H_1: There is a significant difference between males and females pertaining to their social media usage for information purposes.

H_2: There is a significant difference between males and females pertaining to their social media usage for social purposes.

H_3: There is a significant difference between males and females and their perceived ease of using social media.

H_4: There is a significant difference between males and females and their perceived usefulness of social media.

H_5: There is a significant difference between male and females pertaining to their intention to use social media.

5.   LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1   Gender differences and social media usage

Connell (2009:9) states that gender alludes to the cultural differences between females and males, and based on biological differences, males and females are different in terms of their natures, preferences, talents and interests (Why Gender Matters, 2007). These differences are, in part, hormonal, physiological and chemical. It can thus be inferred that gender differences can cause men and women to react or behave differently, depending on the situation. With regard to social media usage, World Wide Worx (2015) states that Facebook has become the first social media platform that has seen the exact same take-up by men and women in South Africa. There are 11.8 million Facebook members in South Africa of whom, 5.6 million are

men and the other 5.6 million are women. World Wide Worx further states that, in the use of the Internet and e-Commerce sites in South Africa, there is a clear, but small bias towards men. Twitter, another social media platform, has seen their active user base increase to 6.6 million users in South Africa, and LinkedIn increased by forty per cent (40%) to 3.8 million users (World Wide Worx, 2015).

Hargittai and Hsieh (2011:164) state that gender is an important factor in explaining the intensity of social media usage; they determined that women are more likely to be intense users than men. Chan-Olmsted et al. (2013:166) found that women were the most frequent users of social networking sites. This finding is similar to that of the Pew Research Centre (2013), which found that women were more likely than men to use social media. A study by Odell et al. (2000:857) also found that there were significant differences in the usage of the Internet between men and women. The study further established that most men spend more time on the Internet than women, and that women most often use the Internet for email and research, while men use it for other purposes, including visiting sex sites. Men, according to Odell et al. (2000), are also more likely than women to research purchases, look for news and play games on the Internet.

Longley, Adnan and Lansley (2015:473) found that on Twitter, there was an over-representation of men in the number of users and Tweets sent. Thelwall (2008:1329) determined that in terms of social media usage, women were mainly interested in friendship, while men were interested in dating or serious relationships when engaging on social media. Women, on MySpace, were likely to have more friends and log on more frequently, preferring to have mostly female friends, while men preferred to have a greater number of female friends. In conclusion, Banerjee and Dholakia (2012:200) state that gender differences in terms of access to new technologies, no longer exist. However, there are still some differences in the manner in which these technologies are used by the different genders. Therefore, men and

women use social media/networking for different reasons. Gender differences exist because men and women are wired differently to their environments.

5.2   Social media usage

In examining social media usage, the frequency of use, time spent using and, the use of social media for socialising and information gathering or dissemination can be determined (Hughes et al., 2012). According to Netgate (2014), South Africa is the third highest African nation with total Internet users of 20 million, after Nigeria and Egypt. South Africans spend 5.6 hours a day online on a computer and 2.5 hours a day online using a mobile device, and with regard to time spent using social media, South Africans spend 3 hours a day using social media (Netgate, 2014).

According to Netgate (2015), sixty four per cent (64%) of South Africans using Twitter do so to keep up to date with breaking news. Sixty nine per cent (69%) of South African Twitter users identified music, film, food, TV and travel content as the top content categories in which they were interested. News, sports and politics were also high on the list of the most engaging content for Twitter uses in the country. The majority of South African Twitter users were females (56%), while males accounted for forty four per cent (44%) of Twitter users in the country. South Africans peruse a variety of social media platforms (Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and YouTube) at least once a day, whilst platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp are visited multiple times (up to 10 times a day) (Ipsos, 2013).

To achieve large scale adoption, technology needs to be perceived as useful by the adoptees. Technology does not become successful because it is easy to use (Dahl, 2015:13). Williams et al. (2012:127) posit that social media, in the 21st century, has sparked a communication explosion which has resulted in vast changes in the manner people receive and use information. The OED (2015) describes social media as websites and applications that enable users to create

and disseminate content or participate in social networking. The use of social media is increasing exponentially, since social networking sites have become so popular among young Internet users, that the term "Facebook addict" has been added to the Urban Dictionary (Heinonen, 2011:364; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010:64). Social networking is the use of websites that enables people who are like-minded and/or have similar interests to interact with or find each other (OED, 2015). The continuing proliferation of social network usage has the implication that people's circles of influence have increased exponentially, since people are able to influence each other across long distances and geographic boundaries. The power of social media usage was never more apparent than during the infamous, Arab Spring. The speed of communication that digital channels afforded activists was unprecedented. They were able to organise, debate, plan and coordinate much faster than they would have in the past or without social media (Wolman, 2013).

According to King (2015:7), people use social media to stay connected with family and friends, as well as other people with whom they share similar interests. Another study by Powell, Gray and Reese (2013:58) established that people used social media to stay connected and maintain offline relationships with family and friends who are close or geographically far removed from them. Powell et al. (2013:58) determined that social media usage increased when there were no offline interactions with others, and that people used social media to develop offline plans with each other. A study by Kim, Sin and Tsai (2014:175) revealed that social media is also used as information source. They established that males tended to use social media platforms for information more frequently than females did. According to Gul, Shahzad and Khan (2014), consumer choices are increasingly being made on the basis of social media information. Consumers use different online platforms to share ideas, form communities and connect with peers.

Goldstuck (2015) states that in South Africa, Facebook is the most popular social networking site, followed by YouTube and Twitter. Goldstuck (2015) also states that the fastest rising social platforms in South Africa are those that can be called "visual" platforms. YouTube and Instagram grew by fifty three per cent (53%) and sixty five per cent (65%) respectively in 2014. According to Effective Measure (2015), South Africans join social media sites primarily for entertainment, and Facebook and LinkedIn are used to connect with people who have similar interests, and Google+ is used for research. South Africans are also less likely to share interesting content they come across, and when they do share, they share on platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Google+ and not on platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn (Effective Measure, 2015). Research ICT Africa (2012) states that at least twenty five per cent (25%) of all South African Internet users use Facebook on their mobile phone.

Globally, male users of social media are more likely than female users to be attracted to the entertainment features, while female users are more likely to be attracted by the relationship building features of social media networks (Chan et al., 2015:198). A study by Lucero et al.(2014:483) further elaborates on this phenomenon and states that young women report that it is fairly common for them to create a fake social media account to monitor their boyfriends' social media behaviour (Lucero et al., 2014:483).

5.3 Social media networking behaviour

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was developed by Davis (1986) as a way of theorising the usage behaviour of computer technology. TAM breaks down the attitude construct into two parts, namely Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (EU) in order to explain computer usage behaviour (Rauniar et al., 2014:9). Rauniar et al. (2014:9) further state that intention is determined by two constructs, namely individual attitude towards behaviour and social norms, or the belief that a specific individual or groups of individuals would approve or disapprove of the behaviour. According to Chinomona (2013:261),

Perceived Usefulness refers to the level to which a person believes that using a particular mobile social software will reinforce the use of a specific social media platform. Perceived Ease of Use refers to the degree to which people find mobile software easy to understand and operate, which triggers the intentions to use the social media software.

Whiting and Williams (2013:366) determined that the majority of social media users worldwide interact with social media for the purpose of social interaction with family, friends, colleagues and old acquaintances. Social media is also used globally to express individual opinions and thoughts. According to a TNS research survey report (TNS Research Surveys, 2009), the most prevalent activities for South Africans on social media include sending messages, updating statuses, inviting friends to events or online groups, and following another individual's activities. Vermeren (2015) purports that females used social media less for business purposes compared to their male counterparts. Females used social media to stay connected with family and friends, whilst males used social media to gather information they need for research purposes, to obtain relevant contacts, build their influence, and ultimately increase their status.

Globally, a larger percentage of females are active on the various social media platforms. A total of 22% of females using the Internet are active on Twitter compared to just 15% of males. Seventy one per cent (71%) of the total online population worldwide uses Facebook, with females constituting 76% of the users on Facebook as opposed to 66% of males. In addition, females also have twice the number of posts on social media and have 8% more friends than males. This indicates a perceived usefulness or ease of use of social media platforms and therefore, the intentions to use social media (Vermeren, 2015). A study by Lin and Lu (2011:1159) established that gender makes a notable difference in the effect of perceived benefit and the continued intention to use social media. Males, although with fewer followers or members on a social media platform, still enjoyed using social media. They perceived that

expanding their social circle would be useful, whilst the enjoyment of females with regard to social media usage was affected by the number of members they had. In a study by Hooper and Kalidas (2012:263), it was established that people were clear on what acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on social media is. Respondents to the study regarded polite and respectful behaviour as acceptable from family, and a more professional approach was expected from colleagues. Behaviour was deemed unacceptable when information that was published by friends, was too personal. The study further determined that family should not use foul or coarse language or post explicit messages on a personal profile. It also became clear from the study that social media users were more comfortable to express themselves freely on social media platforms and engage with other users, as it was not done in a face-to-face environment (Hooper & Kalidas, 2012:264).

6.   METHODOLOGY

The empirical part of the study was quantitative and descriptive in nature. A non-probability sampling approach was followed and a convenience sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The population comprised of all social media users in Gauteng, and the respondents were selected based on the recency of their use of a social networking site. Only respondents who had used a social media site within the previous six months were selected for participation. The data was gathered over a six week period in 2015 through the use of a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire comprised of four sections which included structured questions with predetermined response options. A total of 1 176 questionnaires were completed and used for data analysis.

The data was coded, captured and edited. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS 21) was used in the analysis of the results. The frequency distribution of the results for each scale item was analysed to determine whether or not the data was normally distributed.

Distribution normality is assessed in order to determine if parametric or non-parametric tests should be employed in the testing of the hypotheses. Distribution of results is regarded as normal if the skewness (symmetry) is less than 2.00 and the kurtosis (peakedness) of the distribution is less than 7.00 (West, Finch & Curran, 1995). The distribution for all the scale items for this study was considered normal as it fell within these parameters. Parametric tests were therefore used for testing the hypotheses. The independent sample t-test was used to measure whether a significant difference existed pertaining to the usage and behaviour of social media, between males and females. A Pearson Product Moment correlation was calculated to determine whether a correlation existed between the social media usage and behaviour of males and females in South Africa.

7. RESULTS

7.1 Reliability

Reliability is the indicator of a measure's internal consistency. A measure is reliable when different attempts used to measure the same thing, arrived at the same conclusion/result (Zikmund & Babin, 2010:248). Malhotra (2010:319) indicates that reliability is assessed by determining the proportion of systematic variation in a scale. The Conbrach's alpha is the most commonly used estimate of a multiple scale's reliability. Conbrach's alpha takes values between 0, which means there is no consistency (items are statistically independent), and 1, which means there is complete consistency between the items. Scale items with a coefficient alpha between 0.80 and 0.96 are considered to be very reliable and when the coefficient alpha is below 0.60, the scale has poor reliability (Zikmund & Babin, 2010:49). An important property of the coefficient alpha, is that the value increases with an increase in the number of scale items measured (Malhotra, 2010:319).

The reliability of the five measurement scales used in the study was assessed through the application of the Cronbach alpha technique. Malhotra (2010:319) states that a Cronbach alpha value of at least 0.6 can be considered as an acceptable level of reliability. The reliability values for the different measurement constructs in the study are illustrated by Table 1. According to this Table, all the measurement sets are deemed reliable, as they all reflect a value above the minimum acceptable value of 0.6.

Table 1: Reliability statistics

Scale/construct	Conbrach's alpha
Social media usage	0.633
Social media ease of use	0.820
Social media perceived usefulness	0.863
Intentions to use social media	0.800
Social media usage for information purposes	0.722

7.2 Validity

Van Tonder and Ehlers (2011:164) state that validity is attained when the content of the questionnaire is aligned to the research objectives. The following activities were performed to ensure validity and reliability:

• A self-administered questionnaire was designed, which was directly aligned with the research objectives.

• The necessary adjustments were made to the questionnaire, based on feedback obtained from the pilot study.

• A large sample size was used to increase the accuracy of the results. According to Burns and Bush (2010:60), a larger sample size results in the data being more truthful.

- The expertise of STATKON (the Statistical Consultation Services) of the University of Johannesburg was employed to analyse the data gathered and to ensure the correct measurement of the results.

7.3   Demographic profile of respondents

The total number of respondents who participated in the study was 1 176. All of these respondents indicated that they had used a social networking site within the last six months. The majority of the respondents numbering 468 (39.8%) indicated that they had a university degree (B-degree or honours), whilst 376 (32%) indicated only having a matric/Grade 12 (refer to Table 2). With regard to employment status, the largest proportion (38.9%) indicated that they were full-time employed by an organisation, whilst the second largest group (33.2%) consisted of full-time students and the remaining respondents (9.3%) were unemployed (refer to Table 2). Table 2 further illustrates that 52.5% of the respondents were single and living alone, 23.7% lived with their parents, and 21.3% indicated that they were married or living with a partner. In terms of gender, the majority (55.6%) of the respondents were female, while 44.4% were male (refer to Table 2). The home language of the majority of the respondents was English (35.5%), followed by the Nguni language group (isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiSwati, isiNdebele) (22.4%), Sotho (Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana) (22.2%), Afrikaans (9.1%) and Venda/Tsonga (5.2%). The majority (75.9%) of the respondents were Generation Y, born between 1977 and 1994, followed by Generation Z (14.7%), who were born between 1995 and 2012.

Table 2: Demographic profile of respondents

Demographic variable		Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	55.6
	Male	44.4
Combined age	Generation Y	75.9
	Baby boomer	2.9
	Generation Z	14.7
	Generation X	6.5
Home language	English	35.5
	Nguni	22.4
	Sotho	22.2
	Afrikaans	9.1
	Venda/Tsonga	5.2
	Other	5.6
Highest level of education	University degree (B-degree/ honours)	39.8
	Matric	32
	Technical college diploma	10
	University of Technology diploma	9.7
	Postgraduate degree (Masters/doctorate)	3.7
	Primary school completed	0.3
	Some high school	4.5
Marital status	Single (living alone)	52.5
	Married or living with a partner	21.3
	Living with parents	23.7
	Remarried	0.3
	Divorced or separated	2.1

Table 3 illustrates that the majority of the respondents (36.1%) had been active on their preferred social network site for over five (5) years, seventeen (17.3%) had been active for more than four (4) years, but less than five (5) years, while only a small percentage, 6.5%, had been active for less than a year. With regard to the amount of time spent on the preferred social network site per session, the majority (54.3%) indicated that they spent less than 30 minutes, while twenty eight per cent (28.9%) indicated that they spent between 30 minutes and 1 hour

actively on the social network site per session. A small percentage (9.4%) indicated that they spent more than 2 hours being active on their preferred social network site.

Table 3: Time spent on preferred social network

Time on social network variable		Percentage (%)
Length of time active on social network	5+ years	36.1
	2+ years, less than 3 years	14.2
	3+ years, less than 4 years	15.7
	Less than 1 year	6.5
	4+ years, less than 5 years	17.3
	1+ years, less than 2 years	10.1
Time spent per session	< 30 minutes	54.3
	30 minutes – 1 hour	28.9
	1 – 2 hours	7.5
	2+ hours	9.4
Log in frequency	Several times a day	72.3
	Once a day	14.6
	< once a day, but more than once a week	7.1
	Once a week	2.6
	< once a week, but more than once a month	1.8
	Other	0.4
	Once a month	1.1

A total of seventy-two per cent (72.3%) of the respondents indicated that they logged onto their preferred social network site several times in a day, fourteen (14.6%) indicated that they logged on once a day. A small percentage, 1.1%, indicated that they logged on once a month (refer to Table 3).

7.4   Respondents' social media network usage

To measure the current usage of social media, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement, 1 being Strongly disagree and 5 being Strongly agree, with a series of statements. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present the standard deviation and mean scores for the level of agreement respondents indicated for each statement regarding their use of their preferred social media network site.

Table 4.1: Social media usage for information purposes

Statement	Std. dev.	Mean
I use this social network to find and spread information	1.25	3.53
This social network is primarily for information	1.20	3.23
I use this social network to keep abreast of current events	1.12	3.62

From the results of Table 4.1, it is apparent that with a mean score of 3.62, the respondents agreed with the statement that "I use this social network to keep abreast of current events". The respondents also expressed strong agreement with the statement that "I use this social network to find and spread information" (mean score = 3.53). The respondents were somewhat neutral in their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement that "This social network is primarily for information", indicating that although the discovery and dissemination of information is a major part of their social media usage, it is not the only reason for use of social media.

Table 4.2: Social media usage for social purposes

Statement	Std. dev.	Mean
I use this social network to keep in touch with friends	1.05	4.07
I use this social network because my friends do	1.33	3.11
This social network is primarily for socialising	1.15	3.67

It can be noted from Table 4.2 that respondents are relatively neutral in their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements, "I use this social network because my friends do" (mean score = 3.11), indicating that the influence of friends on the usage of social media might be minimal. From Table 4.2, it is also noted that the respondents used their preferred social network to keep in touch with their friends (mean score = 4.07), it follows then that the respondents would display strong levels of agreement with the statement that "This social network is primarily for socialising" (mean score = 3.67).

7.5   Respondents' social media network behaviour

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement for the following statements relating to their social media network behaviour. The standard deviation and mean scores are presented in Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3.

Table 5.1: Social media ease of use

Statement	Std. dev.	Mean
This social network is flexible to interact with	0.93	3.95
I find It easy to get this social network to do what I want	1.02	3.83
It is easy to become skilful at using this social network	1.02	3.92
I find this social network easy to use	0.84	4.30
Interaction with this social network is clear and understandable	0.86	4.20

Table 5.1 illustrates how easy the respondents found it was to use their preferred social network site. With a mean score of 4.30, it is clear that the respondents agree strongly with the statement "I find this social network easy to use". To further illustrate the usability of the social network, the respondents again strongly agreed with the statement "Interaction with this social network is clear and understandable" (mean score = 4.20). Furthermore, the respondents agreed with the statement that "I find it easy to become skilful at using this social network" (mean score = 3.95). This illustrates the amount of time, according to the respondents, that it takes to become proficient at using their preferred social network.

Table 5.2: Perceived usefulness of social media

Statement	Std. dev.	Mean
Using this social network enables me to get reconnected with people who matter to me	1.05	4.00
I find this social network useful in my personal life	1.15	3.67
Using this social network enhances my effectiveness to stay in touch with others	1.02	3.89
Using this social network makes it easier to stay in touch	0.97	4.00
Using this social network makes it easier to stay informed about others	0.92	4.01

Table 5.2 presents the perceptions regarding useful social networks as identified by the respondents. The respondents found that the use of their preferred social network site enabled them to reconnect with those who mattered to them (mean score = 4.00), the respondents also displayed strong agreement with the statement "I find this social network useful in my life" (mean score = 3.67). What the respondents found their preferred social network most useful for, was staying informed about others, which is in agreement with the statement "Using this

social network makes it easier to stay informed about others". A mean score of 4.01 was achieved.

Table 5.3: Intentions to keep using social media

Statement	Std. dev.	Mean
I intend to use this social network for communicating with others	1.02	3.94
I intend to use this social network to get reconnected with people who matter to me	1.08	3.84
I will continue to use this social network for social networking	0.98	4.06

Table 5.3 presents findings on the intentions of the respondents to continue using social media. The respondents indicated strong agreement with the statement "I intend to use this social network for communicating with others" (mean score = 3.94), strong agreement was also indicated for the statement "I intend to continue using this social network for social networking" (mean score = 4.06). This is indicative of the usefulness of the social network, otherwise, the respondents would not have intended to continue using the social network.

Finally, given the findings discussed, it can be concluded that hypothesis 1 which states that there is a significant difference between males and females pertaining to their social media network usage for information purposes, cannot be accepted as no significant difference between males (mean = 10.70) and females (mean= 11.09; p-value = 0.006) and their overall use of social network sites for information purposes, can be observed. This also applies to hypothesis 2 stating that there is a significant difference between males and females pertaining to their use of social media for social purposes. The reason being that males had a mean score of 10.47, females had a mean score of 11.14 and the observed p-value was 0.205, implying that no significant difference can be established between how the two groups use social media for social purposes. Hypothesis 3 stating that there is a significant difference between males and

females pertaining to their perceived ease of using social media is also rejected, since males had a mean score of 19.68, while females had a mean score of 20.62 and the observed p-value was 0.000. This implies therefore that a statistically significant difference was not observed between the two groups. Hypothesis 4 stating that there is a significant difference between males and females pertaining to their perceived usefulness of social media is rejected, since males had a mean score of 18.85 while females had a mean score of 20.13 and the observed p-value was 0.000, implying that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups. Finally, Hypothesis 5 stating that there is a significant difference between males and females pertaining to their intention to use social media, is also rejected. The motivation being that males had a mean score of 11.40, females had a mean score of 12.18 and the observed p-value was 0.000, implying that a significant difference could not be observed between the two groups. In all five cases, the alternative hypotheses for the study are therefore accepted (H_{A1}-H_{A5}).

8. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study indicate that the respondents spend a considerable amount of time on social media (Table 3), with respondents (54.3%) indicating that they spent less than 30 minutes logged onto their preferred social network, but over 72% indicated that they logged on several times in a day. This indicates to marketers that social media is a medium for advertising that needs to be given attention and strategies are to be developed pertaining to maximising their organisation's top-of-mind presence with their particular target audience.

The results also indicate that the respondents used social media to gather and disseminate information (Table 4.1) and also to socialise (Table 4.2). This creates a dilemma for marketers as they can no longer just use social media to "Push" marketing messages to their audiences, and should rather be prepared to maintain a dialogue with their key audiences. Maintaining a

dialogue with the audience would have the effect of allowing the marketer or organisation the opportunity to not only educate their customers, but also to reach much larger audiences. The organisation should actively target those who are very influential on social media and have large followings, by incentivising them with the product or money. These influencers will mention and spread the marketing message of the organisation to their audiences.

With regard to the usefulness of social media, the results demonstrate that a majority of the respondents found social media to be very useful in reconnecting and staying connected with, and informed about others who matter to the respondents (Table 5.2). This provides an opportunity for marketers or brands that creates a compelling offering for their customers to maintain contact and give information on different or complementary products on offer. By so doing, the organisation is cross-selling other products to the customer, of which the latter was not aware. Frequent posts on features and benefits of the product/s and how the products can be used optimally, will help satisfy the need for information. The perceived usefulness of social media, especially in terms of staying informed about others, implies that the respondents research others who matter to them in order to keep up to date with what they are doing and what they find interesting. This can be leveraged by the organisation by incentivising the influencers to become brand ambassadors and share positive information about the product or the organisation. Incentives can be in the form of cash, discounts on purchases, contest rewards or branded rewards. Influencers can post their positive experiences with the product without being too intrusive; this can be done by including product promotions in the everyday life activities of the influencer.

Pertaining to the intentions to use social media, Table 5.3 illustrates that the respondents intend to continue using social media, and it is clear from the results that both males and females have every intention to continue to use social media. No significant differences pertaining to males and females and their intentions to use social media, were observed. For an organisation this

means that the investments made in establishing social media presence can still yield a return in the long term. Long-term and continuing investments need to be made by organisations to determine the nuanced differences that males and females display with regard to how and why they use social media. Organisations should establish presence on multiple social platforms including micro blogging sites such as Twitter, Blogger and Tumblr, whose presence on instant messaging platforms such as the Twitter and Facebook messenger, will allow organisations to respond in real-time to service failures and improve relations with customers.

Users' intentions to continue using social media are clear and should provide comfort that the use of social media is not a fleeting trend that will no longer be of relevance in the near future. The results of the study also reveal that the majority (75%) of the respondents were Generation Y (born between 1977 and 1994), and this together with the demonstrated intention to use social media, further illustrates that social media presence be viewed as a long-term investment into communications with key audiences. A total of 35% of the respondents spoke English as their first or home language and over 39% of them had a university degree. Marketers must therefore understand that there is no need to construct different marketing messages on social media, in an attempt to cater for different languages. The respondents are a sophisticated group and the digital communication does not need to be supplemented with other offline mediums. Essentially, the organisation can conduct digital marketing campaigns and they could be successful.

9.   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The use of a convenience sample and the geographic location of the study make the results of the study representative of only those participating in the survey. The limitation in the generalisability of the results to the entire South African population is a major problem. There are many social media platforms, and the current study did not analyse which and how each

platform was used by the respondents, only a general view of all social media platforms is given. In light of these limitation, future research should be conducted on a variety of geographic locations across South Africa (other than only the Gauteng Province) in order to ascertain whether people in different geographic locations use social media differently, and/or what the similarities are. Future research should also be conducted on which social media platforms are used for what reasons.

10. CONCLUSION

The current study investigated whether gender had an influence on social media usage and behaviour among male and females in Gauteng, South Africa. The results showed that although there might be some differences between how males and females used and behaved on social media, these were not statistically significant. Social media is primarily used by both males and females in South Africa for information gathering and dissemination, and socialising purposes. This therefore implies that marketers do not need to construct separate marketing strategies in targeting males and females on social media. Males and females can, therefore, be targeted effectively on social media with various marketing messages, such as informative, sales-driven and brand-building messages. Future research needs to be conducted into which social media network platforms are used for information gathering and/or sharing, and which are used primarily for socialising.

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