The influence of social media communication on South African Millennial consumer purchase intentions of motor vehicle brands.

by

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.
Abstract

This research paper sought out to examine how social media communication influences South African Millennial consumer purchase intentions of motor vehicle brands. The advent of social media and its commercial viability in relation to purchase intention has been the centre of attention for many marketers and brand managers in varying industries. This study focused on the model of firm created content and user generated content and their respective influences on brand e and brand equity. Thereafter, the study examined the effects of brand attitude and brand equity influences on purchase intention.

The study adopted a quantitative research approach among South African Millennial consumers. To this end, primary data was collected by means of an online survey which was disseminated through a self-selection sampling technique by means of a promoted post on the brands Facebook page by inviting potential respondents to voluntarily participate in the study.

The survey yielded a total of 182 qualified participants to which LISREL 8.80 software was employed so that partial least squares (PLS-SEM) analysis could be utilised to establish the reliability and validity of the proposed model which in turn also tested the constructs in relation to the hypotheses.

In spite of what was found in previous studies, the results revealed that firm created content and user generated content did not have a direct positive effect on influencing Millennials' perceptions on brand equity. Although firm created content and user generated content revealed a direct positive influence on brand attitude, it was another interesting result where firm created content yielded a stronger positive relationship on brand attitude than user generated content. Furthermore, testing the relationship between brand attitude and brand equity showed that these two constructs play a pivotal role by influencing South African Millennial purchase intentions.
Keywords

user generated content; firm created content; brand attitude; brand equity; purchase intention; Millennials; social media communication; PLS-SEM
Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

__________________________________________  __________________________
Michael Scarth                                  Date
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## Terminology

A list of abbreviations used in the study are provided herewith for ease of reference:

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<td>AVE</td>
<td>Average Variance Extracted</td>
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<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Brand Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAGR</td>
<td>Compounded annual growth rate</td>
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<td>CR</td>
<td>Composite Reliability</td>
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<td>e-WOM</td>
<td>Electronic word of mouth</td>
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<td>FCC</td>
<td>Firm created content</td>
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<td>n</td>
<td>Sample size</td>
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<td>OBE</td>
<td>Overall brand equity</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>PI</td>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
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<td>PLS-SEM</td>
<td>Partial least squares structural equation modelling</td>
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<td>PwC</td>
<td>Pricewaterhouse Coopers</td>
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<tr>
<td>UGC</td>
<td>User generated content</td>
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1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1. Introduction

The aim of this research was to determine the effects of social media communication on brand equity, brand attitude and brand purchase intention of Millennial consumers in the context of the South African motor industry.

This chapter provides a contextual background in relation to the title of this research and elaborates on the focus of the research. The need for this study is also identified as well as its objectives and contribution to the body of knowledge in the field of social media communication, consumer behaviour and marketing.

1.2. Background to the research problem

The impact of the pervasive nature of digitisation throughout consumer lifestyles has contributed to the evolution of consumer behaviour. Brand managers and marketers are therefore compelled to attempt to predict and prescribe what forms of marketing channels and media communication would best resonate with their existing and potential customer bases.

Researchers have, on the other hand, concentrated on the field of online social networking correspondence in an attempt to comprehend its consequences for brands and brand administration. They have done this by considering the effects that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) (Wolny & Mueller, 2013); online reviews (Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2011; Mangold & Smith, 2012); virtual brand groups (Brodie, Illic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013); brand fan pages (De Vries & Carlson, 2014; S. Smith, 2013); promotions; and user generated content (UGC) (Goldenberg, Oestreicher-Singer, & Reichman, 2012; Kim & Johnson, 2016; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014; A. N. Smith, Fischer, & Yongjian, 2012) have on consumer’s perceptions of brands. Research from De Vries & Carlson (2014) found that firm created content (FCC) contributed a substantial positive impact on a utilitarian value (practical knowledge) function and also contributed a significant positive impact toward a hedonic value function (fun or enjoyment). Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schäfer (2012) contributed to social media communication research by confirming that FCC served as a strong influencer on brand attitude by means of providing practical knowledge for consumers, and that UGC provided positive persuading aspects toward shaping consumer attitudes by means of...
content that was seen to be fun and entertaining.

However, in spite of the growth of research into the theme of online social media communication, opportunities to examine effects of FCC and UGC on brand attitude, brand equity and the influence on purchase intention within a particular cohort still remain. This is of principal significance as one type of correspondence is controlled by the organization (firm created content), while the other (user generated content) is outside the organization’s control (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014).

A distinction must be made between electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and user generated content (UGC), where e-WOM content is simply passed on by consumers while the substance of user generated content is actually created by consumers although both types of communication are seen as important (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014).

Accordingly, the customer-firm engagement landscape has changed dramatically with the widespread use of the internet whereby consumers are now able to influence the opinions of other consumers on brands through the type of content they choose to generate. Social media can also be a double edged sword for firms because of its ability to allow engagement. Engagement opens the firm to negative user generated content. Such user generated content could either be generated with malicious intent or reflect genuine poor brand experience (Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2011). Gensler, Volckner, Liu-Thompkins, & Wiertz (2013) indicate that marketers are cognisant of the impact of the new dynamic of managing brands in the social media environment and consequently take consumer brand storytelling seriously. As the names of brands are used by these communication generators, their use influences the perceptions of these brands (Wolny & Mueller, 2013).

As stated by Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold (2011) negative online product reviews can have detrimental effects with a potential to dilute brand equity by influencing variables such as brand attitudes or purchase intentions. Therefore reputation management is seen as conceivably the most fundamental and critical element of social media marketing, because user-generated content and the valence thereof can significantly impact buying choices of other consumers.

Mangold & Faulds (2009) indicate that marketers and brand managers consider social media an essential marketing and sales tool in a firm’s marketing mix. De Vries &
Carlson, (2014) suggest that this is because social media has proved itself as a critical component of a firm’s marketing strategy by aligning brands with the right type of consumers in order to increase certain behavioural activities such as engagement, collaboration and co-creation. These communication strategies play a crucial role in complementing the organisational strategy to remain relevant and sustainable in a very competitive environment. Social media content also provides critical data on consumer attitudes, behaviours, norms, beliefs and cultural backgrounds, allowing the interpretation of insightful analytics which enhance the organisation’s understanding of its existing and prospective consumers (Kaijasilta, 2013).

According to the 2016 social media marketing industry report (Stelzner, 2016, pp. 5-6) amongst all social media platforms available, marketers list Facebook as the most important. Furthermore marketers indicate a significant increase in advertising spend (67%) to enhance their brands’ performance by adopting the most effective social tactics to optimise consumer engagement

Brand managers and marketers understand the immense value of data emanating from social media through consumer engagement. Stelzner (2016) indicates that 90% of marketers feel that enhancing the critical elements of consumer engagement plays a pivotal role as part of their social media strategies requiring marketers to constantly seek out which approaches are appropriate as well as how and why these are considered as such.

Marketers aim to achieve the best possible engagement approaches because this would enable the brand to cut through the clutter that consumers face on a daily occurrence. Furthermore, brands are faced with complex situations in trying to distinguish themselves from other brands by amplifying their points of difference hoping to provide the consumer with a compelling value proposition.

Brand managers view their marketing mix as most effective when coordinated with online (e.g. search engine optimisation) and offline (e.g. newspaper) channels (Bruhn et al., 2012). This mixed marketing channel approach provides managers with a clear roadmap when crafting and executing certain marketing strategies. According to Myburgh (2015), internet advertising, which will account for 10% of all media advertising spend by 2019, is rising rapidly while television (35%), radio (11%) and newspaper (15%) will remain as the strongest advertising segments.
Focusing on the realm of internet as a type of media, Myburgh's (2015), report further supports that internet penetration in the South African population will reach 70% by 2019.

1.3. The Millennial Consumer

To this end, marketers must understand the growing opportunities to reach consumers through different types of internet advertising such as display, affiliate marketing, social media advertising and mobile phone advertising. Millennials, are regarded as consumers who have grown up and are predisposed to the internet environment and hence their ability to engage and interact on the internet is seen as a natural part of their lives (Mangold & Smith, 2012).

Of the 13 million registered Facebook accounts, 42% are classified as Millennial accounts (Kemp, 2016, pp. 396). Considering the growth-share analysis as per the BCG (Boston Consulting Group) which helps to identify lucrative growth opportunities by segmenting company products and services according to growth and market share (Arline, 2015), for marketers, Millennials are seen to be stars. Stars represent those products or services that a business offers that generate the highest revenue and hold the most market share (Solomon, 2015). This significant and sizeable segment of consumer further justifies the need for marketers to encourage millennial consumer engagement. This in turn leads to pertinent data collection which provides key insights to further leverage the effects of social media communication on Millennials’ brand perceptions and purchase intentions.

Bitter, Kräuter, & Breitenecker (2014) found that social media communication, through Facebook, plays a significant role in assisting consumers to make a decision. These decisions are influenced by peer comments and reviews which are types of user generated content. Wang, Yu, & Wei (2012) found that content generated by the brand form a part of the consumers’ decision making process. Social media communication has become a critical tool for marketers in South Africa and the context of this research is partly focused on firm-created content and user generated content communication disseminated via Facebook.

Marketing to Millennials requires a deep understanding of their psychology as Millennials consider a brand’s personality as a reflection of their own personality (Christodoulides,
Jevons, & Bonhomme, 2012; De Vries & Carlson, 2014; Duh & Struwig, 2015; Jin, 2012). Furthermore, Millennials are open towards and want to engage with brands on social media. This type of engagement is also known as collaborative or co-creative engagement (Mangold & Smith, 2012; Moore, 2012).

Brands that have pioneered collaborative approaches with their consumers when developing or enhancing new products and services as well as winning over and retaining customer loyalty due to the emotional connection have become successful (Brodie et al., 2013; Chandon, 2003; Ind, 2014; Kim & Johnson, 2016)

1.4. High Priced Items

Motor vehicles are big ticket items requiring high involvement during the purchase cycle which is often linked to intense emotional experiences. This is probably because car owners are generally passionate individuals who see their cars as a reflection of themselves. Millennials display a behaviour where their propensity to consume luxurious high quality products are great. Their lifestyle demonstrates individualism where seeking to impress others in their social circles (AutoTrader.com, 2013; Gurau, 2012) is important. This becomes evident as purchasing and owning a vehicle displays a virtue of conspicuous consumption. Vehicle brand equity is viewed in a serious light with consumers as many of them become brand advocates. Nearly a quarter of vehicle owners discuss their vehicle topics over social media with their peers (CMO, 2014, pp. 27). With Millennials owning the majority of Facebook accounts, and also having the majority of spending power over the next decade, car brand marketers should therefore consider how social media communication affects millennial consumer perceptions in respect to their purchase intentions.

Previous research was conducted on how social media communication affects consumer perceptions of brands within the clothing, non-alcoholic and mobile network industries (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014). However, no such research has been conducted within the motor industry of South Africa related to high ticket items such as motor vehicles. This study will extend research already conducted in other industries.

1.5. Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to understand how social media communication influences South African Millennial consumers purchase intentions of motor vehicle
Within this contextual framework, the secondary objectives seek to determine the following variables:

- The strength and significance of user generated social media content influences on brand attitude and brand equity.
- The strength and significance of firm created social media content influences on brand attitude and brand equity.
- The strength and significance of brand attitude influences on purchase intent.
- The strength and significance of brand equity influences on purchase intent.

1.6. Chapter Summary and Layout of the Study

This chapter introduced the background for the study in relation to various types of online communication research that has been conducted. The chapter also highlighted the different types of social media communication where this study has isolated its perspective in the view of firm created social media communication and user generated social media communication. Furthermore, this chapter contextualised this study and brought forth the primary research objectives which linked the secondary objectives.

This chapter is followed by a thorough literature review in chapter two which comprises an evaluation of diverse theory perspectives and credible industry reports which provide the basis of this research.

With the supporting information from chapter two’s literature review, chapter three provides a concise and succinct presentation of seven hypotheses.

Chapter four delivers the research methodology where details of the research design, unit of analysis, sampling method, sample size, research instrument, pilot test, data collection, data analysis are discussed extensively.

Brief commentary of the data results will be presented in chapter five by means of descriptive statistics as well as a short discussion regarding the measurement model assessment.
Chapter six elaborates on a detailed discussion of the results which are linked to each of the seven hypotheses presented in chapter three where key findings and insights are found. Finally, the study concludes by highlighting the main findings and the contribution that these offer for theory and for management. The chapter ends with recommendations for management as well as considerations for future research.
2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The ensuing chapter delivers multiple perspectives by introducing industry reports and crucial arguments provided by developed theory. The macro-economic view of South Africa and the related consumer landscape in particular, focusing on the millennial consumer and the South African motor industry, is the basis for context. The chapter unpacks the relationship and importance of consumer-based brand equity, brand attitude and purchase intention. These antecedents of marketing and consumer behaviour are then contextualised into the realm of social media.

2.2. South African consumer landscape

With consumer confidence at a fourteen year low, coupled with a revised GDP growth for 2016 from 1.5% to a sluggish 0.5%, South African consumers are under pressure as the economy remains flat (Trading Economics, 2016).

Standard & Poore’s and Moody’s rating agencies are currently reviewing the decision to move South Africa into junk status. In addition, the country’s inflation figures have been hovering at an uncomfortable rate of 6.3% and with these negative outlooks, the country is also dealing with one of the worst droughts experienced since 1992 (Euromonitor International, 2016, pp. 1-2).

Uncomfortable rising costs in electricity, fuel, water, food and increasing interest rates are being experienced by South African households where unemployment rates are considered as among the highest in the world (24.5%). More significantly, youth unemployment figures indicate a treacherous range hovering around 35% to 37%. Furthermore, South Africa’s Gini co-efficient index is ranked at fourth in the world, making it one of the highest in the world (Euromonitor International, 2016, pp. 2).

Trends show that consumers have moved into a frugal mind-set demonstrated by behaviours such as repairing goods instead of buying new ones or keeping existing goods for longer periods of time instead replacing or upgrading them (Delaport, 2016).

Given the current consumer lifestyle spending and e-commerce, South African consumers are seen to be lagging behind when compared to world trends in terms of e-
commerce participation. This is attributed to lack of trust in online payment systems and processes (Euromonitor International, 2016, pp. 3). However, even though the actual transactions of buying online accounts for a small portion (3%) of the buying behaviour of the South African consumer, they do adopt internet connected technology such as personal computers or smartphones to assist with gathering information to help with their decision making and purchase intention (Euromonitor International, 2016, pp. 3).

Internet penetration as well smartphone uptake in South Africa is growing at a tremendous pace (Myburgh, 2015, pp. 23). This provides an opportunity for brands to advertise on various internet platforms. Consumers no longer need to contend with one way marketing messages communicated via traditional media like newspapers, television or billboards (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014). Instead, consumers are well equipped to shop around for the same product via many different sellers who are active on the Internet (Mangold & Smith, 2012). E-commerce and m-commerce (mobile phone shopping) enable consumers to use price comparison applications and websites in order to help them find the best possible deal (Delaport, 2016).

A recent e-commerce industry survey published by Effective Measure revealed that South African consumers shopped online because it saved time, provided easy and real time access to product reviews, enabled the viewing of specials and price comparisons (E-commerce industry report, 2016, pp. 3). This survey also revealed that close to 44% were aged between 18 and 39 years old (E-commerce industry report, 2016, pp. 7) supporting the notion that a significant amount of Millennials are active and comfortable with electronic transaction environments.

It is worth noting that the share of advertising spend and the types of channels marketers utilise is discussed below to contextualise advertising trends. According to Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) annual entertainment and media outlook: 2015 -2019 publication (Myburgh, 2015), advertising has a fairly modest compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) forecast of 2.9% from R3.3 billion in 2014 to R3.698 billion in 2019 and newspaper advertising demonstrating similar CAGR forecast figures of 1.9% with a total spend of R6.4 billion in 2014 to R7.1 billion in 2019. Television advertising displays a CAGR of 6.2% from R14.2 billion in 2014 to R19.2 billion in 2019 while radio advertising displays 5.6% CAGR from R4.4 billion in 2014 to R5.9 billion in 2019 (Myburgh, 2015, pp. 18).
Although traditional marketing media, as mentioned above remains active, there is a sizeable shift in favour of internet advertising spend with an expected CAGR of 21.7% equating to a value of R2 billion in 2014 to R5.498 billion in 2019 (Myburgh, 2015, pp. 18). Furthermore, mobile internet access is expected to reach just below 40 million subscribers which is almost 70% of the country’s population (Myburgh, 2015, pp. 43). This demonstrates a 37% growth from 2014. Interestingly, there were 22.8 million smartphones in use by the end of 2014 and this is expected to rise to 52.3 million smartphone handsets by 2019 (Myburgh, 2015, pp. 22-28).

To this end, it is evident that internet advertising spend has shown the largest growth in proportion to all other types of media advertising platforms which further demonstrates

To further contrast Internet consumer behaviour, Kemp (2016) indicates that 43% of internet users searched online for a product or service to make a purchase while 27% of active consumers have made an online purchase. Of those consumers, 12% had used their mobile phone to complete a purchase transaction (Kemp, 2016, pp. 400)

2.3. Branding and South African Consumers

Organisations endeavour to fulfil consumer needs and wants by combining products, services, information and experiences culminating a compelling value proposition. Kotler & Keller (2012) however note that companies offer similar value propositions and therefore rely on their brands to differentiate themselves from their competitors and to help consumers to easily identify and evaluate the company’s offering in a favourable light.

Consumers evaluate their choice of brands by factors like attitude, image, identity, awareness, association, trust and heritage. All of these variables determine the consumer’s perception of a brands strength. They are seemingly exposed to many brands and therefore expect a brand to signal certain characteristics such as quality, functionality, rationality and reliability. Kotler & Keller (2012) indicate that the consumer is more likely to remain brand loyal if the resonance of any of these characteristics is strong.

South African consumers have a low margin of error when financially committing to big ticket items such as a motor vehicle. They also need to contend with challenging
economic circumstances and therefore rely heavily on brands to assist in reducing their perception of risk during their decision making processes (UCT Unilever Institute, 2015). Such big ticket item brands have to provide deeper emotional connection with their consumers as the utility of products and services is not enough to satisfy their needs. Smith, Barwise, & Picard (2014) argue that brands must provide positive experiences and demonstrate their purpose within a consumer’s lifestyle as consumers often buy brands that portray a similarity in relation to their values and beliefs.

A study of the top fifty valued brands in South Africa found that South African consumers demand excellent customer satisfaction (Schmitz, 2015, pp. 5). This study of the top fifty brands in South Africa also notes that customer satisfaction is dependent on whether the firm can offer innovative ways to enable convenience and positive brand experiences which ultimately provides the consumer with a compelling value proposition (Schmitz, 2015). This compelling value proposition should undoubtedly lead to building a positive brand attitude and therefore complements consumer experience and brand performance.

Schmitt & Zarantonello (2009) conclude that experience consists of five dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual, behavioural and social which are positively associated with brand attitude. Schmitt & Zarantonello, (2009) found that brand experience was found to be a stronger predictor for consumer buying behaviour than brand personality. This is significant for experiential brands like BMW, Apple and Nike (considered high-priced items) as. Schmitt, Brakus, & Zarantonello, (2014) assert that offerings to consumers no longer consist of simply providing a product or service but more importantly a positive brand experience relates to an increase of consumption and this is key to a company’s competitive advantage because it affects customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Mauri & Minazzi (2011) note that the purchasing behaviour of the customer has increasingly changed with the development of new technologies. This is supported by Labrecque, vor dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak, and Hofacker (2013), who state that “the evolution of consumer power in the digital age is inter-related with the constructs of consumer power and the empowerment in Internet and social media contexts”. These findings confirm technology’s evolutionary role in the development of these power sources and also confirm the shift in power of these sources from marketers to consumers.
The growth of the digital environment and social media content generated by firms and customer-to-customer interactions contribute toward brand experience and brand attitude (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014). Social media enables consumers to easily share their experiences with a large audience (Gensler et al., 2013). Consumers therefore play a crucial role in influencing other existing and potential consumers’ perceptions and purchase intentions of brands based on their experiences with these brands (Gensler et al., 2013). Accordingly brands are forced to engage with their consumers in a transparent manner as the content of their engagement can become visible and accessible to a broader audience due to the openness of social media content interactions (Gensler et al., 2013).

2.4. Consumers and Social Media

It is therefore vital to understand how to influence and leverage off key influencers in online networking so that brand recognitions can be formed to improve the execution of the brand’s value proposition. Booth, Norman, Matic (2011) note that the influencer holds huge control over the impression of brands and organizations and the fast extension of online networking channels empowers engagement to happen among virtual communities. Social media platforms also enable easy access to information retrieval for consumers. In particular, Millennials are seen to be the most predisposed users to utilising technology and social media. The rise in smartphone technology and the capabilities of application usage offer Millennial consumers another way to fuel their hunger by accessing instantaneous information via the Internet and social media platforms.

Although Millennial consumers use the Internet to gather information during their decision making process, social media has shifted the landscape by establishing itself as a key channel in the electronic commerce-market place leading to a growth in online transactions (Mangold & Smith, 2012). Consumers turn to social media because of its rich content and real time communication interaction functionality amongst peer communities, which in turn helps them make quicker informed purchase decisions (Mangold & Smith, 2012). It is interesting to note however that Gurau (2012) found that Generation X consumers (those born between 1960 and 1976) also displayed a positive attitude toward utilising the internet to conduct purchases.

Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014) indicate that this type of engagement adds a new dynamic
to the ways in which consumers behave as they are now empowered and can influence other consumers’ perceptions and purchase intent of a brand. Firms on the other hand understand these dynamics and have adapted their traditional one way marketing messages into two-way marketing messages by co-creating and collaborating with their followers in developing marketing messages to enhance brand reputation and influence consumer behaviour in favour of their brands with a view to sustain a positive brand attitude (Gensler et al., 2013).

According to Kemp (2016), some of the most active social networking platforms currently used in South Africa are Whatsapp (33%), Facebook (30%), Linkedin (13%), Twitter (12%) and Instagram (10%). According to Kemp (2016), South Africans spend an average of 2 hours and 43 minutes per day on social media. Facebook is ranked as the number one commercially utilised social media platform in South Africa with 13 million registered Facebook accounts. Of these, 8.8 million access the social networking sites through their mobile phones. Goldstuck (2015) also found that 95% of South Africa’s biggest brands were active on Facebook and just over half of these intended to increase their marketing presence with a key focus on content generation through co-creation strategies. Having regard for these figures shows the significant volume of users on Facebook in particular, the Millennial consumer, which further lends credence to the importance for marketers to optimise their consumer social media strategies in order win over this emerging, important and profitable consumer segment.

2.5. Millennial consumers and social media

The review of literature reveals a lack of consensus on the definition of Millennial generation who are also referred to as Generation Y. Moore (2012) classifies Millennials as those born between 1982 and 2000; Gurau (2013) as those born between 1980 and 2000 while Duh & Struwig (2015) classify Millennials as born between 1977 and 1994. Duh & Struwig (2015) go on to elaborate that the lack of segment clarity seems to point toward differences between a generational segmentation and a cohort segmentation. Furthermore, Gurau (2012) argues that it is important to consider different socio-demographic categories within the range of Millennials as their research found three groups of Millennials in various life stages displaying various levels of brand loyalty toward exclusive high ticket items such as cars or laptops. Gurau (2012) confirmed that two groups of Millennials (single professionals and married professionals) demonstrated strong brand loyalty towards exclusive items but single student Millennials displayed a weak to moderate behaviour of brand loyalty toward exclusive items. For the purpose of
this study, the researcher used the definition of a Millennial as chosen by Duh & Struwig (2015) and Moore (2012) in order to demonstrate diversification and better local context. Considering that South Africa’s population is nearing 55 million, those aged between 18 and 39 years old constitute approximately 34% of the population with a balanced split of 49% male and 51% female indicates that Millennials seem to have the majority of the country’s spending power (Statistics South Africa, 2016). As stated earlier, 44% of online shoppers are aged between 18 and 39 years old, supporting the notion that a significant amount of Millennials are active and comfortable with electronic transaction environments (Effective Measure, 2016). Juxtaposed with this report, 30% of South Africa’s population has registered Facebook accounts of which 42% are aged between 20 to 39 years old (Kemp, 2016, pp. 396).

2.6. Millennial characteristics

Millennials are seen to be those who have grown up in the internet age and are seen to be comfortable when using smart devices (connected to the internet) as part of their daily social and operating environments (Mangold & Smith, 2012; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Having consideration for the argument that different socio-demographic groups of Millennials’ loyalty behaviour varies towards exclusive high ticket items further justifies the need to appreciate a Millennial profile and their behaviour toward exclusive high ticket items like cars, in contrast to the context they are examined, for example, an emerging market versus a developed market. According to a report conducted by AutoTrader.com (2013), Millennials demonstrate characteristics of optimism, individualism and deeply trust the experience of their fellow peers by reading consumer reviews and further confirming their high tech-savvy connectedness. Singling out their individualistic trait endorses the notion of conspicuous consumption where they like to impress others and show off their taste in brands. These findings are consistent with findings from examining the potential that social media can provide consumers of luxury brands where Jin (2012) asserts that this individualistic characteristic is also known as self-expression and self-presentation.

Mangold & Smith (2012) indicate that Millennials have become accustomed to making purchases online. Mangold & Smith (2012) suggest that these aspects have been so influential in their lifestyles when they look for products or services. However it should be noted that the authors do not stipulate the value categories of these purchases. To this end, Mangold et al., (2012) assert that Millennials access digital media on a daily basis. This indicates that Millennials are in a position to seek out information virtually on
demand and instantaneously lends itself to the notion that they are in a position to make qualified purchase decisions because of the availability of this ‘always on’ world. Mangold & Smith, (2012) also found that Facebook was the most widely used social media platform for Millennials’ information seeking behaviour because of the vast amount of online reviews. The valence of the online reviews played a critical role in influencing the perceptions of millennial consumers. Negative reviews dissuaded their purchase decisions whereas positive online reviews increased their purchase decisions.

Even though Mangold & Smith (2012) confirm that Millennials are heavily influenced by peer-to-peer online reviews when making a purchase, marketers still need to make sure that their customer-brand relationship communication with Millennials remains effective so that they remain top of mind. De Vries & Carlson, (2014) found that co-creation and collaboration through social media enhanced Millennial customer engagement (CE) which had a positive influence on a brand’s performance and brand loyalty. This notion aligns with Mangold & Smith’s (2012) views who confirm that Millennials are prone to favour brands that align to their values.

It is evident that brand managers and marketers have moved away from a product-centric focused message to a customer centric focused message. Simply put, brands have to dig deeper and keep searching for value-added ways to communicate with their consumers by means of information gathered from their consumer insights and they also need to demonstrate their brand’s purpose by answering the question: ‘Why we do what we do’ and not just simply ‘This is what we do’ (Smith et al., 2014).

2.7. South Africa’s motor vehicle landscape

South Africa’s automotive industry contributes approximately 7% towards GDP and employs nearly 31 500 people within the motor vehicle manufacturing segment. Various established international motor vehicle brands participate in the manufacturing segment and are based in the Eastern Cape (FAW, General Motors, Mercedes Benz, Volkswagen) KwaZulu-Natal (Toyota) and Gauteng (BMW, Ford, Nissan) regions and contribute 30.1% of the nation’s manufacturing output and roughly 12% towards the country’s total exports. The manufacturing component produces vehicles for local and export consumption. Latest figures indicate that 566 083 units were produced with 276 873 of those exported (South Africa Automotive Industry Export Manual 2015, 2015). In terms of a global context, South Africa contributes 0.7% of total motor vehicle manufacturing earning it a ranking of 24th – and South Africa’s top export destination in
terms of volume demand is the United Kingdom (South Africa Automotive Industry Export Manual 2015, 2015).

The passenger market is divided into ten segments where the largest portion belongs to the A-category (small car) making up 26% of market share in 2015. The only segment which has shown year on year growth of 8% from 2014 to 2015 is the X-category (crossover car) with 8% market share (NAAMSA, 2016).

At the time of this study, South Africa’s new passenger vehicle sales declined with reported figures of 450 296 units sold in 2013 which reduced to 412 736 for 2015. The outlook for the forthcoming year is expected to decrease to 375 000 units or by a further 9.0% (NAAMSA, 2016). Some of the main contributing factors for the decline are a result of a severe economic slow-down, a weakened exchange rate and a rise in costs, which adversely affect the affordability aspects for consumers. These cost factors increase motor vehicle selling prices and weaken consumer confidence. However, industry reports show that the used car market is buoyant with claimed figures of a 20% increase in sales (Peyper, 2016).

**Alternative transport landscape**

At a high level overview, South Africa’s public transport is made up of railway, bus, taxi and private vehicle ownership. Public transport infrastructure has been under immense development over recent years, particularly within major cities such as Johannesburg, Pretoria, City of Cape Town and Durban. Government considerably increased its expenditure by investing in transport systems like the Gautrain, which serves as a viable alternative to move commuters between Johannesburg and Pretoria with the intent to alleviate severe highway traffic congestion. Bus Rapid Transit system (BRT), found within the major municipalities such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Durban and Pretoria play a significant role in the government’s public transport strategy with the goal of enabling local residents of those municipalities to access a bus station within 500m at any given point of their location. BRT systems construction in outer lying large cities considered significant economic contributors like Nelspruit, East London and Polokwane is underway although they are still considered fairly small in relation to the residents they serve (South African Government, 2016).

Although Government’s efforts to improve transport infrastructure has had a positive impact on citizen’s lives, accessibility to these remains a considerable challenge because
of its size. The lack of safe and reliable public transport forces commuters to rather purchase and drive a car which is the most common mode of private transport in South Africa. The percentage of households owning passenger cars has surged over the past decade- from 19.9% in 2005 to 33.3% in 2014 (Euromonitor International, 2016, pp. 39-40).

Car brands would probably not consider these alternative modes of transport as threat to their business. However they should remain mindful of these macro trends. As society evolves and transport infrastructure develops in an environment where vehicle prices are disproportionately high in relation to earnings, consumers could find themselves increasing their use of public transport as a means to offset the heavy burden of vehicle ownership costs.

2.8. Motor vehicle brands in South Africa

In what is considered an over represented and low volume market in South Africa, consumers have 46 active vehicle brands from which they can choose to purchase (NAAMSA, 2016) as depicted in Appendix B which also illustrates each brand’s sales volume and market for their passenger vehicle segment for the year ending 2015. New vehicle pricing ranges from sub R100000.00 all the way into millions of Rands. The majority of passenger vehicles are fully imported and, as highlighted earlier, the weakening rand has had a significant impact on the price increase of these vehicles forcing potential buyers to reconsider their vehicle options in relation to cost, size and brand.

Committing to a vehicle purchase in South Africa involves a highly emotional and highly involved decision making process. Buying a vehicle is an infrequent cycle where buyers tend to replace their vehicles within a three to five year period. The majority of vehicle sales are sold on credit in the form of a hire-purchase agreement period of up to 72 months (The Banking Association of South Africa, 2016). Car buyers will spend a large portion of their monthly salary on vehicle ownership which often excludes fuel and insurance costs. With respect for purchasing power parity, vehicles are expensive in South Africa especially when compared with countries like the USA and the UK. Therefore, a South African consumer has little room for error when committing to buy a car.

De Vries & Carlson (2014) suggest that buyers of high priced items typically consider
more than one brand and do a lot of research regarding utilitarian functions like technical, safety, comfort and monthly cost details as well as a heavily weighted consideration for the positive hedonic value functions that a vehicle serves, such as fun and enjoyment.

However, most vehicles have similar features and benefits like airbags for safety, climate control for interior cabin temperature management. Consumers are often faced with dilemmas when trying to choose a vehicle and hence they turn to evaluating the brand to help alleviate their concerns of risk. According to Schmitt & Zarantonello (2009) motor vehicle brands rely on positively influencing their consumers’ attitudes towards the brands through a positive brand experience, particularly on experiential marketing which assists buyers understand the brand’s points of difference. (Schmitt et al., 2015, pp. 729) assert the definition of brand experience as ‘sensations, feelings, cognitions and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications and environments’. This type of brand experience research is quite interesting because it involves both the physical product itself and the non-physical product to enhance the consumer’s perceptions and purchase intention.

Motor vehicle brands market their experiential motives in order to promote their offering with advertising efforts which usually portray a certain lifestyle such as an outdoor and adventurous persona associated with a sports utility vehicle (SUV). In particular, the new emerging middle class and upper income groups often see a vehicle as a conspicuous item which signifies their success. This makes choosing a particular brand of vehicle a very important decision. Shukla (2008, pp. 27-30) concluded that conspicuous consumption has strong psychological antecedents such as ‘symbol of success, symbol of prestige, indicator of wealth, indicator of status and enhances consumer image’ and strong brand antecedents associations such as ‘brand symbolism, self-concept and brand image congruency, brand familiarity and brand aroused feelings’. These had positive impacts when examining motor vehicle buying behaviour as their context.

Mangold & Smith (2012) assert that Millennials place a high value on building a connection with their choice of brand and are willing to pay more provided that the brand is consistent with their image and values. AutoTrader.com (2013) indicates that as they describe themselves as innovative, sophisticated and tech-savvy, Millennials demand connected technology enabled infotainment key features in their vehicle choices. Brands that are able to amplify experiential campaigns and offer Millennials characteristics
aligned to how they see themselves are likely to perform well in their respective markets. Moreover, because Millennials are predisposed to utilising the internet for research about vehicle choices, they are exceptionally prone to being influenced by electronic word of mouth in online communities such as Facebook where friends and family members serve as significant influencers (Mangold & Smith, 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014). This further supports the need to better understand how social media communication between users and firms influence millennial consumers purchase intentions of motor vehicle brands.

It is evident that motor vehicle brands are not only faced with a number of complex situations such as volatile exchange rates exacerbated by an unstable political landscape but they need to adapt to their new changing market – the Millennial consumer.

2.9. Social Media Communication

With regard to social media communication, there have been a significant number of detailed articles covering topics that discuss various forms of communication such as electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), online product or service reviews, brand page aesthetics and its content (Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Füller, 2013), peer to peer communication (Wang et al., 2012) and researching the effects of these types of communication on brand equity (Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2011; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015; Severi, Ling, & Nasermoadeli, 2014), brand loyalty (De Vries & Carlson, 2014), brand attitude (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014) and purchase intention (Hajli, 2013; Hutter et al., 2013; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014; Wang et al., 2012).

2.10. Transformation of marketing communication

Gensler et al. (2013) Suggests that the traditional ‘push’ form of marketing communication resulted in consumers being passive recipients whereas companies were in control of what and how the brand management of its communication could take place.

Before the advent of social media, consumers were able to start engaging with companies by leaving opinions about their experiences with the brand’s product or service by making use of their review tool (such as Amazon.com where the consumer ranks a products performance out of 5 and are able to write their comments). Mangold
& Smith (2012). Suggest that although being rather static, this type of customer engagement does hold credible value and still has the ability to influence the purchase intention of other consumers.

In contrast to that, social media communication has taken customer engagement to a new dynamic level where the customer has been empowered to engage with other consumers through social channels about the brands by forming their own content. Labrecque et al. (2013) indicate that this allows those who also have an interest on the brands to be influenced by the type of valence portrayed by the content generated. Marketers view conversations between consumers and the brand as having a significant impact on brand reputation, preference and the willingness to consider the purchase of that brand.

Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014) found that little is known about the effects that user generated content (UGC) and firm created content (FCC) have on brand equity and brand attitude and how this influences purchase intention. However De Vries & Carlson (2014) found that FCC contributed immensely towards a utilitarian value function by providing consumers with practical product knowledge as well as a hedonic value function such as content that was seen to be fun or enjoyable. Further consideration for FCC and UGC was examined by Bruhn et al., (2012) who found that FCC positively impacted brand attitude by providing a utilitarian value function and that UGC contributed significantly toward a positive brand attitude by means of a hedonic value function which ultimately leads to a greater propensity toward purchase intention.

Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014) further posited that not only does brand attitude contribute toward purchase intention but that brand equity also plays a critical role for consumers’ purchasing decisions. To this end, social media communication in the form of UGC and FCC were seen to be possible significant contributors toward brand attitude and brand equity for the purpose of influencing purchase intention.

2.11. Firm created communication

According to Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014), “firm created social media communication is understood as a form of advertising fully controlled by the company and guided by a marketing strategy agenda”.

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Similarly, firm created communication can be aligned to the concept of brand storytelling, a one way channel pre-social media era, which was intended to improve the consumers’ connectedness to the brand. Singh & Sonnenburg (2012) note, however, that brand storytelling within the realm of social media has evolved where the brand and the consumer collaborate in their interactions throughout their journey.

Social media channels offer both firms and customers new ways of engaging with each other. Brodie et al (2013) suggest that it is in the interest of the company to engage with its existing and potential customers by creating content that is relevant and of value with the hope of enhancing the customers perceptions of the brand and the purchase intention of its products and services as those customers have the ability to share and comment regarding the brand’s content, product and services.

Marketers intend that firm created content should positively affect consumers’ perceptions of the related brand and expect consumers to disseminate the content amongst their fellow peers and as such result in one of the best forms of advertising: electronic word of mouth. When comparing the credibility of FCC and UGC, Wang et al., (2012) suggest that consumers tend to trust their peers comments (UGC) about the content rather than that of the brand (FCC).

When consumers “Like” a brand page, they automatically become followers of that brand’s page which opens the consumer to FCC (Beukeboom, Kerkhof, & de Vries, 2015). This is a critical element for brands to be able to convey valuable engaging content and influence their consumers’ perceptions and purchase intentions of the brand.

Firm created social media content has shown that it does create more positive evaluations on brand equity and brand attitude. However, recent research points out that consumers’ perceptions can also be negatively influenced when brands tend to participate too much with their consumers by overloading them with too much content (Homburg, Ehm, & Artz, 2015).

Hutter et al., (2013) also found that there were positive effects with consumer brand page engagement on brand evaluation as well as positive effects on purchase decision making process. However, they also found that if firms post too much content, it resulted in information overload and consumers started to draw on negative perceptions about the brand as it created an annoyance. The research found that brands need to be mindful of
their frequency of content generation as too much content would see diminishing returns on consumer engagement.

Millennial consumers are seen to display positive behaviour toward communication engagement with firms which seem to espouse value and belief systems similar to their own (Mangold & Smith, 2012). With regards to the benefits of FCC discussed earlier, it is evident that FCC contributes favourably toward shaping a positive brand attitude (Bruhn et al., 2012; De Vries & Carlson, 2014) and therefore also contributes favourably toward brand equity (Gensler et al., 2013).

2.12. User generated communication

The Internet has evolved from the Web 1.0 era, which was predominantly a consumption based environment where interaction among users was extremely limited, into a new dynamic space known as the web 2.0 era where an explosive growth has occurred in terms of user communication interaction within various virtual communities (Labrecque et al., 2013). This new dynamic means that brands and their customers are now interacting in a real time environment where views are expressed from both party’s concerned which are drivers in shaping consumers’ perceptions and purchase intentions of brands.

User generated content (UGC) according to the OECD (2007, pp. 4) is defined as follows: “(i) content that is made publicly available over the Internet, (ii) content that reflects a certain amount of creative effort, and (iii) content created outside professional routines and practices”. Smith et al., (2012) expand on the definition of UGC and indicate that it takes the form of peer-to-peer communication that is brand related subject matter which stimulates a brand’s awareness, brand knowledge as well as purchase intent. This type of communication has been found to have various degrees of influence depending on the type of social media platform that is utilised such as Twitter, Youtube or Facebook (Smith et al., 2012).

Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014) distinguishes between electronic word of mouth and user generated content in that electronic word of mouth is focused around written messaging that is shared amongst fellow peers and is seen as something that is conveyed as opposed to user generated content that could be one of many types of content such as videos, visuals, written messages, podcasts etc. These can also be formed organically by the user and then shared.
Facebook is considered a critical platform that enables the manifestation of user generated content. Schivinski & Dabrowski, (2014) indicate that this type of communication is seen as an important component for brands’ conversations and also provides insights for customers who are searching for information during their decision making processes. Furthermore, Kim & Johnson, (2016) found that positive brand related user generated content on Facebook had a substantial influence on consumers’ electronic word of mouth conversations which further induced brand engagement as well as positively influencing consumers’ attitudes and purchase intent for the related brand.

Marketers understand that there is immense value to be found by better understanding the dynamics of this type of communication for their brand management strategies. The insights gathered from analysing and listening to conversations amongst consumers generate brand equity and brand attitude enhancements. Severi et al (2014) indicate that marketers leverage off of these to influence the consumers purchase intention.

Consumer to consumer conversations have been magnified through social media such as Facebook brand pages where consumer sentiment can be witnessed by all of those who choose to follow the brands page. The dynamics of UGC demonstrates the shift in control of communication and conversations away from the firm (Hutter et al., 2013).

Brand performance in social media requires an intricate understanding of how the brand portrays itself as a personality to the consumer. It should be able to resonate with the consumer in the most possible positive way by demonstrating elements of transparency and trust. Gensler et al (2013) notes that brand management through consumer generated content must be co-ordinated with care and a high level of attention to detail as consumer generated content can bolster brand evaluation amongst peers if there is an element of trust within online communities where there are reviews and recommendations (Bitter et al., 2014). Hajli (2013) however cautions that when there are reviews and recommendations presented anonymously, there is diminishing levels of trust amongst peers.

Literature reviewed indicated that social media communication can have positive effects on brands. It was also found that if a company posts too much content to consumers, there are diminishing returns of customer engagement and the development of negative sentiment (Hutter et al., 2013). These findings concur with research indicating that
negative online word of mouth will dilute brand equity (Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2011).

2.13. Brand equity

Brand equity raises an interesting discussion due to its diverse background associated with many perspectives in the field of research. Past research associates the term ‘equity’ to a financial value to measure a brands value and right over to the polar opposite where a brands value (equity) is measured from a subjective perspective associated with latent variables which are associated with a psychological aspects of the consumers mind (Keller, 1993). Keller (2009) stipulates the constructs that make up consumer-based brand equity as: brand salience, brand performance, brand imagery, brand judgements and brand feelings as illustrated in Figure 1. According to Kotler & Keller (2012, pp. 140), “brand equity is the added value endowed on products and services. It may be reflected in the way consumers think, feel, and act with respect to the brand, as well as in the prices, market share, and profitability the brand commands”.

Figure 1 Keller’s consumer based brand equity model.

![Figure 1 Keller's consumer based brand equity model](image)

Source: (Kotler & Keller, 2012)

However Aaker's (1992) view on brand equity comprises of brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand associations as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Aaker's consumer based brand equity model

![Figure 2 Aaker's consumer based brand equity model](image)
There are similarities between Aaker (1992) and Keller (2009) where a common denominator refers to a behaviour from a consumer-based perspective. Therefore this research considered these views and made use of Aaker’s 1992 consumer based brand equity theory (CBBE).

2.13.1. **Brand equity and social media**

The advent of social media and its potential communication implications serves as a critical marketing tool for brands to enhance their value in the minds of consumers. This means that firms need to re-evaluate their path to achieving their goals in relation to their branding strategies. Keller, (2015) provides crucial guidelines suggesting that it is imperative that firms design, implement and execute brand architectural strategies which provide a clear roadmap for which brand elements can be enhanced for new or existing products and services. Having regard for social media communication and its proven high value, firms need to consider their social media communication as a high priority when crafting brand strategies. Keller (2015) suggests a three step process to enhance brand equity which brand managers should consider with their social media strategy in mind where: (i) Defining the brand potential (ii) Identifying brand extension opportunities and (iii) Branding of new products and services.
Regarding the brand equity constructs: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand associations, Severi et al., (2014) confirmed that social media communication positively impacted each of these constructs, therefore bolstering brand equity. Similarly Smith, (2013) confirmed that brand-consumer engagement on Facebook had a positive impact on brand equity. Although these studies confirm social media’s valuable contribution toward brand equity, Schivinski & Dabrowski (2015) argue that different perspectives of social media communication such as firm created content and user generated content must be considered, as well as the related effects on the constructs of consumer based brand equity as per Aaker, (1992).

2.13.2. Firm created social media content and brand equity

Marketers create content on social media with the intention to positively influence their consumers’ evaluation of the brand where various types of brand content such as brand storytelling (Gensler et al., 2013), attractive brand pages (Hutter et al., 2013) and useful product knowledge information help to induce customer-firm engagement (De Vries & Carlson, 2014) which are found to enhance brand equity. Schivinski & Dabrowski, (2015) revealed that FCC positively influenced brand awareness and association but did not yield favourable results toward influencing brand loyalty and perceived brand quality. Having regard for Millennials prerequisite that a brand is expected to resonate with their values and beliefs, there is an opportunity to examine FCC effects on enhancing brand equity perceptions of Millennials in the context of motor vehicle brands.

2.13.3. User generated social media content and brand equity

Hajli (2013) points out that peer-to-peer conversations within virtual communities shape and influence consumers’ evaluations of brands where consumers tend to demonstrate higher levels of trust with other users’ content more than that of the brand’s communication. Trust is a key aspect in building brand equity as it demonstrates a promise that a brand makes and this in turn aligns itself with the constructs of brand equity as illustrated in Figure 2. User generated content was found to contribute significantly toward brand equity when elements such as co-creation, virtual community conversation and self-concept were prevalent (Christodoulides et al., 2012). Although these are useful drivers to better understand UGC inducement, Schivinski & Dabrowski (2015) found that UGC also contributes favourably towards brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality which in turn are the key constructs of Aaker’s (1992) consumer based brand equity model. However, it must be noted that managing brands
and consumer content in a social media environment does come with its fair share of challenges as negative sentiments or negative comments can dilute brand equity (Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2011).

Millennials are predisposed to utilising the internet to conduct product information searches to help them with their purchasing decisions (Mangold & Smith, 2012) and find that their fellow peers provide content that is trustworthy (Hajli, 2013), fun and enjoyable and with these findings there remains an opportunity to further examine Millennials UGC effects on fellow Millennials perceptions of brand equity in the context of motor vehicle brands.

Having regard for the two diverse types of social media communication discussed and their relevant association with brand equity, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H1a**: Firm-created social media communication positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of brand equity.

**H1b**: User generated social media communication positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of brand equity.

### 2.14. Brand attitude

Traditionally, attributes are associated with a product in relation to its tangible characteristics such as durability, features and performance. However literature reviewed suggests that brand attitude is also influenced by subjective variables which comprise of brand awareness, brand image, brand reputation which are derived from brand associations (Low & Lamb, 2000; Villarejo-ramos, 2005).

According to Kotler & Keller (2012, pp. 103) “people acquire beliefs and attitudes through experience and learning. Attitudes are a person’s enduring favourable or unfavourable evaluations, emotional feelings, and action tendencies toward some object or idea. The consumer arrives at attitudes toward various brands through an attribute evaluation procedure, developing a set of beliefs about where each brand stands on each attribute”. Park, Macinnis, Priester, & Eisingerich (2010) support this and go on to add that their definition of attitude, in the context of a brand, show the degree of valence in relation to positive experiences or negative experiences with which an attitude on an object (a brand) is evaluated.

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Bruhn et al., (2012) found that brand attitude, in relation to the definitions described above, is a critical component of the building blocks associated with consumer based brand equity development. However Schmitt & Zarantonello (2009) argue that brand experience is a separate aspect from brand attitude and that brand experience immensely contributes toward brand equity and this is supported by Schmitt et al., (2014). Although it is evident that there are varying schools of thought regarding brand attitude and brand experience, it seems that these two constructs are used interchangeably and therefore this study made use of brand attitude as a construct where brand experiences were drivers in shaping consumer attitudes.

2.14.1. Firm created social media content and brand attitude

Marketers and brand managers seek to develop content that resonate with their consumers so that they demonstrate positive attitudes toward the brand, especially when their evaluations take place during the purchasing decision cycle post purchase cycle where firms encourage their existing and potential consumers to engage in online reviews and commentary (Hajli, 2013). Consumer-firm engagement is a critical element toward enhancing consumer attitudes toward the brand and Brodie et al., (2013), De Vries & Carlson, (2014) found that consumers who were highly engaged with a brand also demonstrated strong positive attitudes toward the brand furthermore. Although co-creation and social interaction are useful drivers for consumer-firm engagement, Hutter et al., (2013) asserts that social media platforms such as Facebook have the propensity to positively influence consumers’ attitudes toward a brand through its intangible characteristics such as brand page aesthetics, intuitiveness and content generated by the brand. All aspects listed above were taken into consideration when discussing the diverse components of firm created content and to this end Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014) found that FCC generated on social media positively influenced consumers’ brand attitudes.

Although the characteristics described above are important for marketers to consider, Hajli (2013) notes that consumer attitudes are very reliant and sensitive to the level of trust. According to Alvandi, Fazli, & Amiri (2014) consumers’ increase in trust arrives when the content from both the firm and user, the brand page usefulness and helpful interactivity are seen to be positive and genuine.
Anonymity is an aspect of trust that a brand’s page needs to be mindful of which. As Barreto (2014) points out, consumers are less inclined to be influenced by peers whose recommendations, reviews or other generated content displays a lack of credibility by its source. These kinds of reviews could potentially harm the brand and create negative attitudes toward the brand from the consumer (Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2011).

2.14.2. User generated social media content and brand attitude

Labrecque et al., (2013) assert that the power of influence and persuasion has shifted from the control of the brand to the consumer since the Web 2.0 era began. Loosely put, consumers have access and the ability to create and share interactive content in the realm of social media. Bruhn et al. (2012) suggest that behaviours in this regard have a far and wide reach across many audiences and often the UGC is generated to serve as a value-add to other users by providing something that is enjoyable, humorous and interesting.

Literature supported by Dhar & Jha (2014) describes important attributes like positive online experience reviews, recommendations from fellow peers and electronic word of mouth. Furthermore, Dhar & Jha, (2014) also confirmed that interactive conversations between users on social media had a positive influence on their peers’ attitudes towards the brand. This was supported by the study undertaken by Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014) confirming further that UGC played an important role by positively influencing brand attitude through Facebook.

Jin (2012) asserts that the utilitarian aspect of brand attitude in the context of luxury brands on Facebook, where their research focused on consumers gratification aspects, revealed that self-expression attitude and self-presentation attitude were strong drivers for users to generate content. When considering these characteristics with those evaluated through research surrounding Millennials, there are similarities. Self-expression reflects the consumer’s personality and central beliefs and expresses these values to others, and this is congruent with the findings from Moore (2012). Secondly, self-presentation attitudes convey a certain social image in order to gain acceptance from social interactions (Jin, 2012). This functional approach serves the purpose of satisfying these consumers’ needs for the brand to reflect their social status and to assist in projecting a particular image in a social setting.
Therefore in the context of associating brand attitudes relationships with UGC, FCC and brand equity with millennial consumers and high priced items, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2**: Brand attitude positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of brand equity.

**H3a**: Firm-created social media communication positively influences the brand attitude of South African Millennial consumers.

**H3b**: User generated social media communication positively influences the brand attitude of South African Millennial consumers.

### 2.15. Purchase intention

According to Ajzen (1991), there are three independent determinants that predict a person’s intentions: attitudes toward an act or behaviour, combined with perceived behavioural control and subjective norms. This is the basis of the theory of planned behaviour, which is used to predict deliberate and planned behaviour. The theory postulates that the more positive or favourable each determinant demonstrates, the more likely the intention will take place.

In the context of social media, consumer’s reach out to various platforms (Facebook, Twitter or Youtube) in order to gather information to conduct their research which will assist in making informed purchase decisions (Smith et al., 2012). This type of behaviour is therefore associated by means of acting out an intention derived from an attitude. Through these social media channels, consumers are susceptible to various kinds of information they are exposed to such as firm created content and user generated content. These forms of communication which consist of peer comments or reviews on products and services, opinions formed in online communities and views expressed by opinion leaders. The vast array of studies show that these forms of communication shape and influence consumer’s attitudes toward brands and brand equity and thus significantly influence the intent to purchase (Cheong & Morrison, 2008; Wang et al., 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014).

An interesting alternative perspective from a study by Dhar & Jha (2014) found that consumers categorised as extroverts were more inclined to have high engagement with
a brand and were also more inclined to have a higher purchase intention than those categorised as introverts.

### 2.16. Brand attitude and brand equity relationship to purchase intention

As the digital revolution unfolds, certain norms are likely to be disrupted due to the influences of rapid innovation. This is witnessed where the norms associated with purchase intent have evolved due to the influences of social media. Millennials, as discussed earlier, are those individuals who are seen to be comfortable with operating in a “connected” world where instantaneous information is made available through devices such as smart phones, tablets or desktop computers. Therefore, this instantaneous information-enabled environment brings about a new way of Millennials reaching decisions in order to assist their purchase intentions (Mangold & Smith, 2012).

Mikalef, Giannakos & Pateli (2013) argue that in their study (which consisted of 82% of Facebook users), the intention to purchase when consumers were browsing for products were driven by factors such as utilitarian motivation where useful product knowledge and hedonic motivation, such as enjoyable and fun information, positively aroused consumer attitudes toward the brand. Gurau, (2012) postulates that Millennials demonstrate a strong attitude toward purchasing a brand and remaining loyal to that brand if it were a high priced item like a motorcar. Interestingly, the findings from Hutter et al., (2013) compliment this notion where it was found that from a motor vehicle brands, Facebook created brand activities such as brand page commitment created high levels of brand awareness which positively influenced purchase intentions. Staying with Facebook as a means for stimulating purchase intent, Mangold & Smith (2012) found that Millennials were prone to using either a company website or Facebook as preferable means to help their purchase decision-making. To this end Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014) found that brand attitude and brand equity through Facebook contributed substantially toward purchase intent.

With respect to purchase intention, the notion of brand attitude and brand equity is expected to positively influence purchase intention and therefore the following hypotheses are proposed:
H4: Brand equity positively influences South African Millennials’ purchase intentions.
H5: Brand attitude positively influences South African Millennials’ purchase intentions.

2.17. Conceptual framework

The constructs that were discussed in detail have been illustrated for ease of reference in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 Proposed hypothesis conceptual framework

Source: (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014)

Seven hypotheses are presented where the direction of the arrow depicts which construct is expected to positively influence another construct. The labels represented by alpha-numeric (H1a through to H5) represent the hypotheses generated throughout chapter two.

2.18. Chapter summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive and coherent discussion which set out to clarify the important window of opportunity which identified the need for this research by conducting a thorough contextual review of robust literature and industry reports associated with the topic. The diversity of providing academic theory as well as industry reports brings forth a stage of authenticity. The combination of the articles point out that social media communication affects the perceptions and purchase intentions of
millennial consumers from the peer-to-peer communication and from brands. There is substantial literature that supports these types of communication in a social network setting and it is evident that consumers exposed to social media like Facebook are able to influence brand attitudes, brand equity and purchase intention and these consumers are also prone to be influenced in the same regard. In conclusion of this chapter, it is a justifiable approach towards a contribution of theory of social media communication, consumer behaviour and marketing. This study provides valuable knowledge through research in the context of the South African motor vehicle industry by better understanding the largest and most significant consumer, the Millennial.
3. CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1. Introduction

This research sought out to understand how social media communication affected the purchase intentions of Millenial consumers on motor vehicle brands. Chapter one discussed the background of various research conducted in relation to marketing and brand communication in the context of an online electronic business operating environment. Chapter two combined relevant theory congruently with a perspective focused on business industry reports which enabled the development of the research questions by means of hypotheses.

The introduction, background and literature review serve as an overarching purpose statement. However the research questions (secondary objectives) and hypotheses enable the research to be compartmentalised in relation to the constructs which in turn enable predictions from the hypotheses to be answered in the study (Creswell, 2014).

3.2. Research question 1

What is the relationship between firm created social media communication and brand equity?

H1a: Firm-created social media communication positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of brand equity.

3.3. Research question 2

What is the relationship between user generated social media communication and brand equity?

H1b: User generated social media communication positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of brand equity.

3.4. Research question 3

What is the relationship between brand attitude and brand equity?
H2: Brand attitude positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of brand equity.

3.5. Research question 4

What is the relationship between firm-created social media communication and brand attitude of consumers?

H3a: Firm-created social media communication positively influences the brand attitude of South African Millennial consumers.

3.6. Research question 5

What is the relationship between user generated social media communication and brand attitude of consumers?

H3b: User generated social media communication positively influences the brand attitude of South African Millennial consumers.

3.7. Research question 6

What is the relationship between brand equity and purchase intention?

H4: Brand equity positively influences South African Millennials’ purchase intentions

3.8. Research question 7

What is the relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention?

H5: Brand attitude positively influences South African Millennials’ purchase intentions.
4. CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

In chapter 2, important literature related to academic theory was discussed and use of industry reports identifying current trends to contextualise this research were used. Each subtopic found in the literature review supported the significance of the content written. Each subtopic therefore built up evidence to indicate what the current trends were in terms of South Africa’s landscape; that the new consumer is a Millennial; how these consumers are accustomed to using social media; and what sort of theoretical perspective has been used to see how social media communication influences millennial perceptions and purchase intentions.

The following chapter is dedicated toward defining the concepts and rationalisation of the research methodology chosen. The choice of research methodology is discussed through topics surrounding the research design; identification of the target population and the unit of analysis. The sampling method and sample size are reported in detail. The research instrument and rating scale provide clarity for understanding the relevance that each section of the instrument serves for the research. Lastly the pilot test, data collection, data analysis and the limitations of the research methodology acknowledge how the research was disseminated.

4.2. Research design

Research designs are found in three different investigative structures namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. These methods provide guidance and a suitable direction for the researcher to conduct the investigation proposed under the research topic (Creswell, 2014). For ease of explanation, a road map which describes preliminary considerations for the chosen research has been outlined in Figure 4. This provides an explanation regarding the intentional choice for the methodology employed (Saunders & Lewis, 2012)
Creswell, (2014) advises that each research method is underpinned by a certain type of research philosophy. This notion is also supported by Saunders and Lewis (2012). The authors go on to stress that the choice of research philosophy has a significant influence on the researcher’s view and shapes the way in which the research is conducted. Four broad research philosophies are found in research literature: Positivism, Realism, Interpretivism, and Pragmatism.

This research project examined existing literature which assisted the researcher to formulate a set of hypotheses. The goal was to determine how certain variables affected other variables where a number of outcomes produced a result. These outcomes would explain a particular cause and effect (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). This explanation aligns itself with that of a positivism philosophy. This outlook is considered as a scientific method which holds more for quantitative research than it does for qualitative research (Creswell, 2014; Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Quantitative research is typically framed around closed ended questions and hypotheses and have a numerical approach where statistical analyses are conducted typically through surveys in order to examine the relationships between variables (Creswell, 2014).
Research methods consist of two approaches which are either inductive or deductive. An inductive approach is found in research that attempts to contribute toward building a new theory and is closely linked to qualitative research where theory is an outcome (Wilson, 2014). A deductive research approach is used when hypotheses are developed and then applied from existing theory (Wilson, 2014) to test and explain causal relationships between variables (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). In the matter of this research project, this was contextualised by testing the effects of firm created content (FCC) and user generated content (UGC) on brand equity, brand attitude and purchase intention.

A robust quantitative research method makes use of independent and dependent variables where the use of variables allow the researcher to either compare, relate or describe an independent variables impact on the dependent variable (Creswell, 2014).

Research studies comprise of exploratory, descriptive and explanatory studies. Exploratory studies are suitable for qualitative research and allow researchers to conduct interviews, descriptive studies are best suited for quantitative research by means of a survey method which aims to describe what occurred in a certain situation where data is collected through questionnaire surveys and explanatory studies extend descriptive studies where this type of research may be used in qualitative and quantitative research and seek an explanation behind a particular occurrence where methods such as statistical surveys and attitude surveys are employed (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

An appropriate research strategy must fulfil the requirement to ensure the right type of data is collected, and interpreted in the right way, in order achieve the purpose of the research employed. A survey strategy is the correct method to be used for a quantitative study because it provides numeric description of attitudes, opinions or trends of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2014). Having regard to this research, a large sample of participants’ attitudes were examined where they were all tasked with answering the same set of questions. This strategy also allowed the researcher to access a large sample of respondents in a quick and cost effective manner and the findings collected with relative ease in a short space of time (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Survey methods are administered by means of a set of structured questions which are coded in the form of numbers and the collection of the data is conducted through various
platforms such as telephone, mail, the Internet or personal interviews (Fowler, 2009). As was seen as pertinent to this study the survey questionnaire was conducted through the use of the Internet – more specifically via Facebook, where the researcher ensured that the questionnaire was related to the correct sample frame (Fowler, 2009).

As discussed earlier in the chapter, quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods are used in research and this study set out to explicitly make use of a quantitative research only and therefore is deemed as a mono-method (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, utilising a quantitative method through the use of a survey allows the examination of relationships between variables by means of a statistical analysis which provide observations against existing theory. To this end the observations are discussed by objective data results (Creswell, 2014). Fowler, (2009) goes on to assert that the advantage of analysing a large sample size of respondents enables the researcher to draw on conclusions which may be classified as representative of the sample population.

Research has a time implication which acts as a constraint. The implication of this research required a survey to be conducted over a period of two months. Other constraints such as the requirement to disseminate the questionnaire to a multitude of participants were given consideration too. Given these implications, a cross-sectional study was best suited and would still yield favourable quantitative results to examine the outcome of the variables surveyed (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). If this study required the tracking of a certain development of changes over time, then a longitudinal study would have been considered, but it is not relevant in this case (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.3. Target population

According to Fowler (2009), a population consists of a complete group of people who share approximate characteristics and this is supported by Saunders & Lewis (2012). In the context of this research, the study set out to examine how social media communication influences Millennial consumer purchase intentions on motor vehicle brands in South Africa. More specifically, the social media platform was narrowed down to Facebook. Millennials were categorised as those aged between 18 and 39 years old and Kia, Renault and Hyundai were used for motor vehicle brands. Accordingly, the target population was Millennials in South Africa who are Facebook social media users.

4.4. Unit of analysis
The identified unit of analysis was the individual member of the South African Millennial or Generation Y cohort who are social media users, in particular, Facebook users as described in the target population section. As discussed earlier, during the literature review it was discovered that there is no definitive definition of a Millennial where the spectrum of ages ranged from birth years from 1977 (Duh & Struwig, 2015) through to the year 2000 (Gurau, 2012). Having regard to the broadness of Millennial ages, industry reports show that 62% of Facebook users in South Africa fall within this age group (Kemp, 2016, p. 396).

4.5. Sampling method

According to Saunders & Lewis (2012, pp. 132), a sample is defined as “a subgroup of the whole population” where the population is defined as the complete set of group members that share very similar characteristics. Fowler, (2009) argues that a sample is not only assessed by the characteristics but also as to how well the sample frame corresponds to the population that the researcher seeks to describe. Furthermore, Fowler, (2009) suggests that a sample frame should also be assessed by its comprehensiveness and efficiency. Having regard for these definitions, an appropriate sample method should be determined which is dependent on whether or not the total population, as well as the full list of all its members are known, which refers back to the sampling frame (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Due to the interactive real time dynamics of Facebook, the followers or fans relevant to motor vehicle brands are able to ‘Like’ and ‘Un-like' the brand’s pages at any given time which means that there are new people choosing to follow the brand pages and there are people choosing to un-follow the relevant brands pages. This dynamic interaction means that a precise and accurate list of the population is not possible to determine. However the researcher was mindful that a sample had to be representative of its target population as it produced reliable and valid estimates of the population from which it is drawn (Wegner, 2012). Therefore the entire population list could not be obtained by the researcher (Saunders & Lewis, 2012) and the sample members were not selected randomly (Wegner, 2012, p. 153). Accordingly, the results obtained from these surveys will have limited external validity (Sue & Ritter, 2012). Therefore a non-probability sampling technique was used. Non-probability sampling contains a variety of sampling techniques such as quota sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, self-selection sampling and convenience sampling (Saunders & Lewis, 2012), the appropriate non-probability sampling technique of self-selection sampling was utilised.
where the explanation, discussion and defence thereof is found further on in this chapter.

This research project is focused predominantly on social media communications influence on South African Millennial consumers and the effects that this type of communication has on brand equity, brand attitude and purchase intention. Therefore the sampling method required the questionnaire to be available to Millennials who follow at least one of the motor vehicle brands on Facebook: Hyundai SA; Kia SA; Renault SA. At the time of the research project, it was noted that Hyundai SA had a following of more than 300 000 fans, Kia SA had a following of more than 295 000 fans and Renault SA had a following of more than 125 000 fans (Socialbakers, 2016).

This research project deliberately ignored demographic analysis of race, education or economic status but, rather set out to seek and develop insightful observations that were examined from objective data results (Fowler, 2009) as to how social media communication (FCC and UGC) influences Millennial consumer purchase intentions through brand equity, brand attitude.

Before a decision is made to conduct a research study, careful consideration must be made regarding the type of data that could be collected and the ease of access for that data as well as the time frame in which the data is collected, analysed and reported (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). With this in mind several factors such as the need to examine the effects observed by social media communication, the unit of analysis being Millennials and the potential for this study to add value for social media marketers in the motor industry were considered by the researcher.

Further considerations were taken into account regarding the sampling technique where quota, snowball and convenience sampling techniques were used in survey questionnaires disseminated through Facebook. Many research articles have been published about social media, but it was also found that not many published articles discussed the best types of sampling techniques required for research through Facebook as found by Katherine (2014). However, Baltar & Brunet (2012), Bhutta (2012) and Gregori & Baltar (2013) all confirm that virtual snowball sampling seems to be the most suitable form of conducting research through Facebook because the hard to reach factor of the population is made easier.

However, using Facebook as a platform to pursue research in a business context is a
relatively new and exciting avenue (Gregori & Baltar, 2013) and Facebook has proven features which are suitable for research purposes (Katherine, 2014). Community groups or brand pages are created and fans join these pages because they share a similar interest or attribute for the related brand. These individuals portray similar characteristics and therefore provide a setting where researchers are able to conduct research surrounding a topic that is reflective of these individual's interests. Although some disadvantages regarding online sampling was discussed earlier, these sample populations may be representative of the population (Katherine, 2014).

The sampling technique administered in this study adopted the use of self-selection (Saunders & Lewis, 2012; Wilson, 2014) which was found to be a different angle where the researcher deliberately disregarded using a personal Facebook account which demonstrated that a high degree of personal network bias was eliminated. This contributed immensely toward garnering a robust and original sample of the target population. Instead, the survey was disseminated by means of a bespoke promoted post through the use of Hyundai, Renault and Kia South Africa's Facebook page. An example of one of the promoted posts is illustrated below in Figure 5 and Appendix C. Although the survey could have been shared by participants, which has a slight degree of virtual snowballing, participants were not actively encouraged to do so.
Although self-selection has a disadvantage of attracting respondents who may inherently have a strong association with the brand and feel compelled to show their strong opinions, there is also a distinct advantage that the sample data were very good and represented an accurate profile of the Millennial cohort where the utilisation of virtual snowball sampling may potentially have diluted the quality of the survey due to participants considering it to be spam or as an imminent threat to duping them into divulging their personal details, hence relating to privacy issues (Baltar & Brunet, 2012).

When the survey post was promoted, participants clicked on a link which diverted them to the survey page, which was branded according to the corporate identity of the respective motor vehicle company to ensure consistency, familiarity and professionalism. A cover letter addressed to the respondent accompanied the survey explaining the purpose of the survey and the letter made it explicitly clear to the respondent that the survey should be completed on a voluntary basis and that no
personal information would be required and all data would be kept strictly confidential.

4.6. Sampling size

This research project was administered through the use of quantitative analysis which required the examination of objective data collected by means of a structured online Likert scale survey questionnaire disseminated through Facebook. The statistical analysis of the study required the examination of the relations among exogenous and endogenous variables by means of structural equation modelling (SEM) (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011; Kline, 2011; Mancha & Leung, 2012).

Mancha & Leung (2012) explain that the design of the study must be considered because each latent variable, some examples in this study are brand equity or brand attitude, is measured by multiple indicator variables. Mancha & Leung (2012) also caution that the range of values chosen for the Likert scale have an impact on the covariances among the latent variables and to this end a range of seven was seen to be adequate for this study.

During the literature review, the researcher discovered a number of published articles which made use of SEM where sample sizes varied between 141 (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014) and 533 (Kim & Johnson, 2016) participants. However Mancha & Leung (2012) recommend that a sample size in the region of 200 participants would be adequate but caution that reaching a number of 400 participants would result in poor performance and generalizability of the SEM model. Further investigation regarding an adequate sample size for SEM was confirmed by Hair et al., 2011; and Kline (2011) who also concluded that an approximate number of 200 observations would suffice provided partial leased square structural equation modelling was employed (PLS-SEM) which was the case for this study.

Having regard for the recommended sample size, the survey conducted for this research returned a total of 476 respondents of which 294 (61.7%) were disregarded from the analysis because of response incompletion or ineligibility due to the crucial qualifying parameter questions set in section one of the questionnaire as illustrated in Appendix A. A total (n) of 182 (38.3%) eligible respondents were analysed where this sample size was suitable for the analysis software employed.
4.7. Research instrument

This research project set out to examine how social media communication influenced Millennial consumers purchase intentions of motor vehicle brands. To that end, Millennials are seen to be those who are predisposed to living and operating in a world connected to the internet and are comfortable in conducting their own research online, like Facebook, to seek opinions about products and services (Mangold & Smith, 2012). Therefore, it was appropriate to engage with this type of audience and to conduct the survey via Facebook.

The researcher employed the use of an online survey software supplier, Survey Monkey, where a link was displayed on the relevant promoted post. Each motor vehicle brand namely Hyundai, Kia and Renault had their own unique link designed which steered the survey participant to a branded questionnaire page as presented in Appendix A. This was a structured questionnaire which consisted of six sections where the first section required the participant to engage in qualifying questions to ensure their eligibility. To ensure that the participants were eligible, they had to confirm that their age fell between 18 and 39 years old, which according to the literature review revealed that Millennials are identified as those born between 1977 and 2000 (Duh & Struwig, 2015; Moore, 2012). The other qualifying criteria required the participant to confirm that they followed the relevant motor vehicle brand on Facebook and that they actively read posts created by the motor vehicle brand (firm created content) and that they read content relevant to that motor vehicle brand posted by their peers (user generated content).

The remaining five sections comprised of 18 questions where each section included questions relating to each latent variable namely: User generated content, Firm created content, Brand equity, Brand attitude and Purchase intention. Each were represented in the form of a seven point Likert scale which was pertinent toward testing the hypotheses proposed during the literature review in chapter two.

According to Creswell (2014), the use of an existing research instrument must be able to establish strong validity of scores from previous published and credible authors. The validity in quantitative analysis should demonstrate that the items do measure what they were intended to measure and the items measure hypothetical constructs (Creswell, 2014). According to Saunders & Lewis (2012), content validity refers to the extent a data collection tool, such as a questionnaire, provides enough data to answer the research question and meet all the objectives. Construct validity is defined as the extent the
questions asked actually collect data about what they are intended to measure (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Each construct or latent variable was represented from section two through to section six on the survey. Each construct had been tested from previous research and is discussed below.

The measurement description is described by a heading in each section and the items which are pertinent to each construct are outlined in Tables 4.1 to 4.5 below.

4.7.1. Brand equity

Brand equity is measured using the four-item overall brand equity scale adopted from Yoo & Donthu (2001). This scale enables the comparable measurement between a product that has been branded versus a product without branding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content measurement item</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[OBE1] “It makes sense to buy [brand] instead of any other brand, even if they are the same”</td>
<td>Overall brand equity</td>
<td>(Boonghee Yoo &amp; Donthu, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[OBE2] “Even if another brand has the same feature as [brand], I would prefer to buy [brand]”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[OBE3] “If there is another brand as good as [brand], I prefer to buy [brand]”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>[OBE4] “If another brand is not different from [brand] in any way, it seems smarter to purchase [brand]”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Yoo & Donthu (2001)

4.7.2. Brand attitude

Brand attitude was measured using three items adapted from the works of Low & Lamb (2000) and Villarejo-ramos (2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content measurement item</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[BA1] “I have a pleasant idea of [brand]”</td>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>(Low &amp; Lamb, 2000)(Villarejo-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[BA2] “[Brand] has a good reputation”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© University of Pretoria
I associate positive characteristics with [brand]" Source: Adapted from Low & Lamb (2000)

4.7.3. Purchase intention

Purchase intention was measured using three items adapted from the research of Yoo, Donthu & Lee (2000) and Shukla (2011).

Table 4.3: Purchase intention scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content measurement item</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[PI1] &quot;I would buy this product/brand rather than any other brands available&quot;</td>
<td>Brand purchase intention</td>
<td>(B. Yoo et al., 2000)(Shukla, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[PI2] &quot;I am willing to recommend that others buy this product/brand&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[PI3] &quot;I intend to purchase this product/brand in the future&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Yoo, Donthu & Lee (2000) and Shukla (2011)

4.7.4. Firm created social media communication

Firm-created social media communication was measured using four items adopted from Mägi (2003), Tsiros, Mittal & Ross, Jr. (2004) and Schivinski & Dabrowski (2015).

Table 4.4: Firm-created social media communications scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content measurement item</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[FC1] &quot;I am satisfied with the company’s social media communications for [brand]&quot;</td>
<td>Firm-created social media communication</td>
<td>(Tsiros et al., 2004)(Mägi, 2003)(Schivinski &amp; Dabrowski, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[FC2] &quot;The level of the company’s social media communications for [brand] meets my expectations&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[FC3] &quot;The company’s social media communications for [brand] are very attractive&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[FC4] &quot;This company’s social media communications for [brand] perform well, when</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
compared with the social media communications of other companies"

Source: Adapted from Tsiros, Mittal & Ross, Jr. (2004) and Schivinski & Dabrowski (2015).

4.7.5. User generated social media communication

User generated social media communication was measured using four items adopted from Mägi (2003), Tsiros, Mittal & Ross, Jr. (2004) and Schivinski & Dabrowski (2015).

Table 4.5: User-generated social media communications scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content measurement item</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[UG1] “I am satisfied with the content generated on social media sites by other users about [brand]”</td>
<td>User-generated social media communication</td>
<td>(Tsiros et al., 2004) (Mägi, 2003) (Schivinski &amp; Dabrowski, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[UG2] “The level of the content generated on social media sites by other users about [brand] meets my expectations”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[UG3] “The content generated by other users about [brand] is very attractive”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[UG4] “The content generated on social media sites by other users about [brand] performs well, when compared with other brands”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Tsiros, Mittal & Ross, Jr. (2004) and Schivinski & Dabrowski (2015).

4.8. Rating scale

As discussed earlier, sections two through to six of the questionnaire were in the form of a seven point Likert scale. This requires continuous categories which were labelled and numbered from strongly disagree, which if selected by the respondent was given a score of one and strongly agree which if selected by the participant was given a score of seven. These scores are calculated and used for analysis and interpretation discussed in chapter five and six. The Likert scale allows the respondent the freedom to choose whether they are not certain if they agree or disagree which demonstrates fairness (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).
Rhemtulla, Brosseau-Liard, & Savalei (2012) show that data collected with 5 or more categories can be treated as continuous if their distribution does not stray too much from a symmetric distribution and is suitable when using SEM.

4.9. Pilot test

Before distributing the questionnaire to the target sample, a pilot test was conducted amongst 30 participants to establish the reliability and validity of the measurement scales, to confirm if participants understood the items included in the questionnaire to remove any repetition and to make necessary adjustments prior to its full release as recommended by Creswell (2014).

A website link was posted to the personal profile Facebook account belonging to the researcher where a message explained the purpose of the link and the study where participants voluntarily completed the survey. According to Ornstein (2013), quantitative surveys are generally pretested with 20 to 50 convenient samples which are similarly representative of the intended population. The researcher had access to monitor the number of respondents and closed the survey once the number of completed surveys exceeded 20 (n=30). This ensured that the researcher had control of the data collection and could monitor any relevant feedback. The usefulness of disseminating a pilot questionnaire via the researchers Facebook page allowed the researcher to evaluate the validity, reliability and appropriateness of the questionnaire. Once the pilot test was closed no errors such as spelling mistakes or incorrect weightings were found where no editing was required.

4.10. Data collection

After receiving confirmation of ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria’s Gordon Institute of Business Science, illustrated in Appendix D and confirmation of a successful evaluation of the pilot test, three individual brand specific (Hyundai, Kia and Renault) website links were created by using the online software survey tool, Survey Monkey where the research instrument discussed earlier was administered. The rationale for creating an individual brand link ensured consistency with corporate identity, professionalism and clarity for the respondent which meant the risk of confusion resulting from having multiple brand names on one survey questionnaire and mistrust was eliminated. According to Saunders & Lewis, (2012) a survey is considered a popular means of data collection from a large pool of people because it
demonstrates that the findings gathered are representative of the population sampled and is considered cost effective. Each motor vehicle brand’s survey web-link was posted to their Facebook newsfeed page but it is necessary that the researcher discloses that due to certain execution constraints experienced by Hyundai and Renault, their posting of the survey took place at later stages. Kia posted the survey from mid-July 2016, Hyundai one week later and Renault from the beginning of August 2016. Gregori & Baltar (2013) argue that even though online surveys display disadvantages such as being perceived as spam and impersonal, conducting a survey through Facebook tends to create a more trustful confident feeling for the respondent, which plays a role by securing a better response rate. The surveys were closed by the end of the third week of August 2016.

Survey Monkey allowed real time monitoring of the self-administered surveys where the collection of primary data was analysed daily to understand how many eligible surveys had been completed. Facebook uses an algorithm that is aligned to promoting content more prominently to users if the content is seen to generate a lot of interest in terms of user engagement. Appendix E illustrates Facebook insights describing key performance areas surrounding the brands survey posts and the user engagement. Each survey was well received amongst the Millennial Facebook users which meant that it did not require any reminder prompts because of the successful reach to the intended audience. Respondents were assured that the time taken to complete the questionnaire would not last longer than ten minutes which is an important aspect to ensure optimum respondent engagement and assists in reducing non-response rates as suggested by Ornstein (2013) that surveys of this nature should not exceed 25 minutes.

Respondents were notified by means of a welcome letter explaining the purpose of this research and their participation was completely voluntary which included full anonymity. As discussed, qualifying questions were set in place to establish eligibility and the balance of the survey questions pertinent to measure each construct could not be skipped by the respondent (Gregori & Baltar, 2013). Respondents that did not meet the qualifying criteria, or did not complete the survey questionnaire in full, were disregarded from the analysis of data.

A sample questionnaire is annexed hereto as Appendix A.
4.11. Data analysis

Data preparation

After each survey link was closed, the data were exported and consolidated into one raw Microsoft Excel file where the researcher used a filtering process to reach a point of clean usable data. First, the researcher removed all data where surveys had not been completed in full, then the researcher made use of the qualifying questions as discussed in section one to determine respondent eligibility. Eligibility required respondent to read both posts regarding firm created content and user generated content. If the respondent only read one type of content, then this resulted in their ineligibility. The indicator variables from section two through to section six were coded alpha-numerically in order to assist with the analysis output. For example, “I am satisfied with the Facebook communication from Hyundai SA” was coded into FC1 where “FC” represents firm created content and the number “1” represented question one of that latent variable.

Demographics

A sample of the demographic data collected, provided a description of the respondents in order to validate their age group as Millennials as well as gender.

Descriptive and multivariate analysis

The collected primary data was analysed using LISREL 8.80 for Windows statistical software (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006) which imports the data from Microsoft Excel and a 95 percent confidence interval (Field, 2009) was used for the analysis. This software imports external data from Microsoft Excel and allowed the researcher to perform descriptive analysis (Creswell, 2014). Descriptive analysis provides the reader with sufficient context to gain a good sense of the characteristics represented by the questions presented in the Likert scale such as demographics, histograms and trends (Creswell, 2014). The software was also employed to conduct partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) for multivariate analysis of the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 3.

Cronbach’s alpha was employed in order to validate the questionnaire to establish whether the Likert scale was reliable and consistently reflected the constructs being measured (Field, 2009).

Partial least squares path modelling SEM analysis (PLS-SEM)
Partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) has been used in over 100 articles published in the top 20 marketing journals. PLS-SEM has gained popularity in the field of marketing and consumer behaviour business studies where theory is extended. Due to its robust and modern approach, PLS-SEM allows researchers to make the most of explaining the variance and relationships of dependent latent constructs (Hair et al., 2011), often viewed as something that is subjective such as measuring and explaining brand attitude.

Observed variables are those which can be measured and are considered indicators to assist the inference or describe the impact on latent variables, (Hair et al., 2011; Kline, 2011). This research study set out to test hypotheses generated by the researcher in chapter two where each hypothesis represented a latent variable. These latent variables are firm created content, user generated content, brand attitude, brand equity and purchase intention. The Likert scale was employed as a means to capture the observed variables which served as measurable indicators for the latent variables (Kline, 2011).

PLS-SEM consists of observed and latent variables which may be dependent or independent. Due to the multiple variables, PLS-SEM enables multivariate analysis, interpretation and assessment of the measurement of independent latent variables influences on dependent latent variables (Hair et al., 2011).

According to Hair & Ringle (2011), PLS SEM analysis is useful where smaller sample sizes (n<200) are available as well as smaller observant variables per latent variable (observant variable < 5) and therefore PLS SEM is considered as a more robust approach.

The details of the results from PLS-SEM analysis are discussed in the next chapter.

4.12. Research limitations

Although it is imperative that the research methodology employed by the researcher is adequately justified through rationale and logical explanations, it is also acknowledged that certain conditions or restrictions by the techniques and context used pose limitations discussed below.

By employing self-selection sampling and allowing participants the opportunity to share the survey brings forth some drawbacks where the decision for the participant to complete the survey due to an associated characteristic or trait with that brand may
demonstrate self-selection bias (such as a strong opinion) and this can lead to the representativeness of the examined population being jeopardised (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

The researcher acknowledges that there are various popular social media platforms through which social media communication is disseminated (Smith et al., 2012) such as Youtube, Twitter and Instagram and therefore this research has limited itself to analysing results pertinent to Facebook only. Furthermore, the context of this study is conducted within the South African motor vehicle industry amongst mainstream brands. The scope of the automotive industry runs wide where other modes of transport such as used cars, trucks or motorbikes could be examined. Furthermore, there are various types of motor vehicle brands categorised as luxury brands and emerging brands which may yield different results.

4.13. Chapter summary

This chapter incorporated the research methodology rationalisation pertinent for this research project. Positivism formed the basis of the research philosophy and the research method was framed around a quantitative analysis. The development of the hypotheses from chapter 2 meant that a deductive approach was then applied. Due to this research being quantitative, a descriptive study by means of an online Likert scale survey as a means of a research instrument was disseminated via Facebook. This meant that a non-probability sampling technique known as self-selection was employed after the target population was identified. The data were collected by an online database known as Survey Monkey. After a successful pilot test of the survey was confirmed, the official research survey went live for an approximate period of six week where a sample size consisting of 472 participants was collected. However after a stringent qualifying criteria, 182 respondents were used as part of the study. A statistical analysis package known as LISREL 8.80 was used to provide descriptive and inferential analysis. PLS-SEM was employed as a suitable means to employ a robust analysis of the conceptual model framework which consisted of firm created content, user generated content, brand attitude, brand equity and purchase intention. The chapter closed off with the discussion surrounding the limitations of the study.
5. CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter sets provides commentary based on the results from the primary quantitative data collected and analysed by means of the research methodology discussed in chapter four. The commentary begins with descriptive statistics followed by light commentary for each latent variable. The chapter moves on to an assessment of the measurement model in relation to its reliability and validity. The closing points of this chapter describe the crucial results from the PLS-SEM analysis from the hypotheses generated from chapter two.

5.2. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics bring forth the purpose of providing simple yet detailed context regarding the sample that was measured and analysed. Ideally, the objective from descriptive analysis is to demonstrate that the sample is a strong and accurate representation of the target population. In this study the population is Millennial consumers in South Africa who follow motor vehicle brands (Kia, Renault and Hyundai) through the use of social media (Facebook).

5.2.1. Sample demographic composition

Although demographic composition often consists of race, income, gender and age, this study deliberately discarded race and income. For descriptive purposes, adequate context is generated by describing the age distribution of Millennials as well as their gender which is presented in Tables 5 and 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5 Sample distribution by age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of the respondents were aged between 25 and 34 years old (65%), and the oldest of the Millennial (35-39 years old) cohort represented the smallest sample of 31 (17%) respondents.

### Table 6 Sample distribution by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid percentage</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to the gender mix, the majority of respondents accounted for males constituting 130 (71%) respondents. Although it was not an intention of the study to analyse gender specifically, this sample is skewed toward the male gender and the premise that motor vehicle content generally attracts men more than women in the context of South Africa may explain this outcome.

### 5.3. Latent variable descriptive analysis

Table 7 represents the latent variables tested from the hypotheses generated in chapter two where the results are derived from a sample of 182 respondents who completed the seven point Likert scale survey which was measured from one (strongly disagree) through to seven (strongly agree). The objective for these descriptive statistics provides clarity surrounding the 25th percentile and 75th percentile.

### Table 7 Descriptive statistics summary of the latent variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Construct</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>25th Percentile</th>
<th>75th Percentile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firm created content</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User generated content</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall brand equity</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Firm created (FCC) social media communication:** Four items were used to measure the construct in relation to the consumers’ satisfaction for the brand’s communication, whether the level of the brand’s communication met the consumers’ expectations; whether the brand’s communication was attractive; and whether the consumer felt that the brand’s communication performed well when compared to other brands’ communications. Most of the respondents scored on the higher end of the scale. As seen from the 25th percentile and 75th percentile columns, 50% of responses fell between 4.25 and 6.25.

The strongest observed construct in relation to FCC showed that 35% of respondents indicated that they mostly agreed with the following: “I am satisfied with the content generated by (Kia/Hyundai/Renault’s) Facebook content”.

**User generated (UGC) social media communication:** Similar to firm created social media communication measurement items, four items were used to measure the construct in relation to the consumers’ satisfaction for other users (peer to peer) communication; whether the level of the users communication met the consumers’ expectations; whether the users communication was attractive; and whether the consumer felt that the users communication about the brand performed well when compared to other users communications about other brands. Most of the respondents scored on the higher end of the scale. As seen from the 25th percentile and 75th percentile columns, 50% of responses fell between 4.0 and 6.0.

The strongest observed construct in relation to UGC showed that 26% of respondents indicated that they somewhat agreed with the following: “I am satisfied with the content generated on Facebook by other users about (Kia/Hyundai/Renault)

**Overall brand equity:** Four items were used to measure the consumers’ brand loyalty, knowledge, features and consumption experience. Most of the respondents scored on the higher end of the scale. As seen from the 25th percentile and 75th percentile columns, 50% of responses fell between 4.5 and 6.75.

The strongest observed construct in relation to OBE showed that 41% of respondents indicated that they strongly agreed with the following: “Even if another brand has the same feature as (Kia/Hyundai/Renault), I would prefer to buy (Kia/Hyundai/Renault)”,

**Brand attitude:** Three items were used to measure the consumers’ perceived reputation of the brand; whether there were positive characteristics associated with the brand; and
whether the consumer had a pleasant idea of the brand. Most of the respondents scored on the higher end of the scale. As seen from the 25th percentile and 75th percentile columns, 50% of responses fell between 5.3 and 7.0.

The strongest observed construct in relation to BA showed that 42% of respondents indicated that they strongly agreed with the following: “(Kia/Hyundai/Renault) has a good reputation”.

**Purchase intention:** Three items were used to measure purchase intention where the consumers’ indicated their propensity to purchase the brand; whether they would recommend the brand to others; and whether the propensity to purchase this brand in favour of another brand. Most of the respondents scored on the higher end of the scale. As seen from the 25th percentile and 75th percentile columns, 50% of responses fell between 4.66 and 7.0.

The strongest observed construct in relation to PI showed that 49% of respondents indicated that they strongly agreed with the following: “I intend to purchase a (Kia/Hyundai/Renault) in the future”.

With regard to each variable (n=182), the data displays a skew distribution to the left and statistical analysis guidelines recommend that the median is then considered the best representation of the central location of the data.

The variability (standard deviation) from each construct were relatively similar. The variability is seen to be acceptable in relation to the median value and indicates that the median of each construct is a good representation of the data (Field, 2009; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Considering each latent variable construct, the Likert scale output, as depicted by the scores presented by the 25th and 75th percentile, showed that most of the respondents shared a similar level of agreeableness throughout.

**5.4. Measurement model assessment**

This section presents the reliability results of the questionnaire used in the survey and the validity results present how well the indicator variables (the questions used in the
survey) are aligned with the latent variables (constructs). This is followed by a discussion of the hypotheses results.

5.4.1. Reliability analysis

Reliability requires an assessment to ensure that the questionnaire (measure) consistently reflects the variable that it is measuring. By employing Cronbach’s alpha, which is the most common and traditional way to measure scale reliability (Field, 2009), enables the researcher to corroborate the scale reliability used for the research by means of measuring its internal consistency. Loosely put, the rationale tests whether there is a reasonable degree of inter-correlation between the items. Guidelines suggest that the closer Cronbach alpha ($\alpha$) is to 1.0 the higher the reliability. However Tavakol & Dennick (2011) suggest a minimum value of 0.8 and Field (2009) supports the minimum value of 0.7 to be used as a guideline. A value below 0.7 suggests either a poor inter-relatedness between the items; a possibility of heterogeneous variables; or a low number of questions were used (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

However, Peterson & Kim, (2013) argue that composite reliability (CR) should also be considered as an alternative because Cronbach’s alpha has been viewed as lower bound for underestimating true reliability. The authors assert when true reliability is estimated using SEM that CR allows the construct loadings to vary. Hair & Ringle (2011) confirm that CR does not assume that all indicators are equally reliable. The guidelines recommend that any value above 0.7 are acceptable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent Variable</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
<th>CR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firm created social media communication</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User generated social media communication</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall brand equity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Having considered the guidelines discussed, the alpha values and CR values shown in Table 8 are a good score from 0.90 or higher.

5.4.2. Validity

Reflective measurements to evaluate the conceptual model were utilised (Hair et al., 2011). Convergent validity was assessed to understand how well the indicator (observed) variables correlate with each other within their associated latent variable construct where the following measure was employed: Average variance extracted (AVE).

Table 9 AVE values per variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent Construct</th>
<th>Average variance extracted (AVE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firm created social media communication</td>
<td>0.849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User generated social media communication</td>
<td>0.834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall brand equity</td>
<td>0.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>0.847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>0.861</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The AVE of the constructs, displayed in Table 9, showed values higher than the acceptable value of 0.50 ranging from 0.847 to 0.861. An AVE value higher than 0.50 means that the latent variable explains more than half of the indicators variance which in this study showed a strong convergent validity (Hair et al., 2011).

5.4.3. Pearson correlations

Once reliability and validity have been verified, there is a prerequisite to examine how well the relationships among two latent variables within the model are correlated which are denoted by the size of the relationship. This requires a Pearson product-moment-correlation test and it is not intended to test the theoretical model as a whole. The guideline parameters indicate values between -1 (negative correlation) or +1 (positive correlation). A 0 value denotes no correlation, therefore a value closer to -1 or +1 represents the strength of the correlation and its related direction (Field, 2009).
Within the parameter range of -1 and +1, a correlation strength value from 0.10 to 0.29 is considered weak; 0.30 to 0.49 is considered moderate and 0.50 to 1.0 is considered substantial (Field, 2009).

### Table 10 Pearson correlation matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>FC</th>
<th>UG</th>
<th>OBE</th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>PI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.80**</td>
<td>0.63**</td>
<td>0.71**</td>
<td>0.67**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UG</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.59**</td>
<td>0.64**</td>
<td>0.63**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBE</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.78**</td>
<td>0.89**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.85**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: FC= Firm created content, UG= User generated content, OBE= Overall brand equity, BA= Brand attitude, PI= Purchase intention.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

As illustrated in Table 10, each variable's correlation yielded a value larger than 0.5 demonstrating a positive linear relationship and are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

### 5.5. Structural model assessment

The following section brings forth the results surrounding the hypotheses generated from the literature review in chapter two. Whilst the Pearson’s product-moment-correlation only considers two variables in a linear relationship, a structural path coefficient considers the relationship of variables in the context of the entire conceptual model, as illustrated in Figure 3. These results are based on comprehensive reliability analyses that indicated good reliability of the conceptual model. Furthermore, this section seeks to explicate the correlations as well as the direct and indirect effects of the exogenous variables (firm created content and user generated content) on the endogenous variables (brand attitude, brand equity and purchase intention) and the direct and indirect effects of the inter-relationships of the endogenous variables. Secondly, this section seeks to explicate as much of the variance as possible from the conceptual model specified.

For ease of reference, the structural model has been inserted by means of a diagram as illustrated in Figure 6 to show the distinction of the exogenous variable (FCC and UGC) and endogenous variables (BA, OBE and PI). The directional arrows also illustrate the direct and indirect causal paths. The thickness of and numbers on the arrows represent...
the path coefficients ($R^2$ values) and explain how significant the effect of one variable is on another variable. The thicker the arrow or closer the coefficient value to 1, the more substantial the relationship. According to Hair et al., (2011), results of $R^2$ values of 0.20 or larger, with regards to endogenous variables, are considered good, especially in research studies where consumer behaviour, attitudes and persuasion are major factors such as in the instance of this study examining the effects of Millennial consumers perceptions and purchase intentions in South Africa.

The structural model including the coefficients of determination (directional arrows) and path coefficients (numbers on the arrows) are depicted in Figure 6

**Figure 6 Structural path analysis**

5.6. Hypothesis testing

For ease of reference, each hypotheses test results have been isolated and presented in a case-by-case basis as presented from Table 11 to Table 17.

**Hypothesis 1a: Firm-created social media communication positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of brand equity.**

Hypothesis 1a proposed that FCC had a direct positive and influential relationship on Millennials perceptions of the relevant motor vehicle company’s overall brand equity. The Cronbach’s alpha (0.93) and CR (0.95) scores reported values higher than 0.70 indicating that the survey statements (indicator variables) were reliable and the AVE scores (0.84) indicated that the statements related to the construct were valid. The
Pearson product-moment-correlation showed a good positive correlation value (0.63 > 0.50) between the two constructs within the model in relation to purchase intention.

**Table 11 Cronbach’s alpha, CR, AVE, Pearson’s correlation in respect of firm created content and brand equity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal consistency reliability</td>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convergent validity</td>
<td>AVE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear correlation with brand equity</td>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural path coefficient</td>
<td>R² values</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

The path coefficient between firm created content (FC) and overall brand equity (OBE) yielded a seemingly weak relationship of 0.08. The guideline required a value larger than or equal to 0.20 to demonstrate relationship significance. Furthermore, a p-value of 0.36 > 0.05 demonstrated that a path relationship between FC and OBE was not statistically significant. Therefore the results showed that firm created social media content did not positively influence overall brand equity and H1a was thus rejected.

**Hypothesis 1b: User generated social media communication positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of overall brand equity.**

Hypothesis 1b proposed that UGC had a direct positive and influential relationship on Millennials perceptions of the relevant motor vehicle company’s overall brand equity. The Cronbach’s alpha value (0.92) and CR value (0.95) showed values higher than 0.70 indicating that the survey statements (indicator variables) were reliable and the AVE scores (0.83) indicated that the statements related to the construct were valid. The Pearson product-moment-correlation showed a good positive correlation value (0.59 > 0.50) between the two constructs within the model in relation to purchase intention.

**Table 12 Cronbach’s alpha, CR, AVE, Pearson’s correlation in respect of user generated content and brand equity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal consistency reliability</td>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© University of Pretoria
Convergent validity  |  AVE  |  4  |  0.83
Linear correlation with brand equity  |  Pearson correlation  |  4  |  0.59
Structural path coefficient  |  R² values  |  |  0.10

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The path coefficient between user generated social media communication (UG) and overall brand equity (OBE) yielded a seemingly weak relationship of 0.10. The guideline required a value larger than or equal to 0.20 to demonstrate relationship significance. Furthermore, a p-value of 0.17 > 0.05 demonstrated that a path relationship between UG and OBE was not statistically significant. Therefore the results showed that user generated social media communication did not positively influence overall brand equity and H1b was therefore rejected.

**Hypothesis 2: Brand attitude positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of overall brand equity.**

Hypothesis 2 proposed that BA had a direct positive and influential relationship on Millennials perceptions and purchase intention of the relevant motor vehicle company’s overall brand equity. The Cronbach’s alpha value (0.90) and CR value (0.94) showed values higher than 0.70 indicating that the survey statements (indicator variables) were reliable and the AVE scores (0.84) indicated that the statements related to the construct were valid. The Pearson product-moment-correlation showed a good positive correlation value (0.78 > 0.50) between the two constructs within the model in relation to purchase intention.

**Table 13 Cronbach’s alpha, CR, AVE, Pearson’s correlation in respect of brand attitude and brand equity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal consistency reliability</td>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convergent validity</td>
<td>AVE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear correlation with brand equity</td>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural path coefficient</td>
<td>R² values</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**
The path coefficient between brand attitude (BA) and overall brand equity (OBE) demonstrated the strongest relationship value of 0.66 amongst all of the latent variables. The guideline required a value larger than or equal to 0.20 to demonstrate relationship significance. Furthermore, a p-value of $0.00 < 0.05$ demonstrated that a path relationship between BA and OBE was statistically significant. Therefore the results showed that brand attitude positively influenced overall brand equity and thus H2 was accepted.

**Hypothesis 3a: Firm-created social media communication positively influences the brand attitude of South African Millennial consumers.**

Hypothesis 3a proposed that FCC had a direct positive and influential relationship on Millennials attitudes toward the relevant motor vehicle brands. The Cronbach’s alpha value ($0.93$) and CR value ($0.95$) showed values higher than $0.70$ indicating that the survey statements (indicator variables) were reliable and the AVE scores ($0.84$) indicated that the statements related to the construct were valid. The Pearson product-moment-correlation showed a good positive correlation value ($0.71 > 0.50$) between the two constructs within the model in relation to purchase intention.

**Table 14 Cronbach’s alpha, CR, AVE, Pearson’s correlation in respect of firm created content and brand attitude**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal consistency reliability</td>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convergent validity</td>
<td>AVE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear correlation with brand attitude</td>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural path coefficient</td>
<td>$R^2$ values</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

The path coefficient between firm created content (FC) and brand attitude (BA) yielded a seemingly strong relationship of 0.55. The guideline required a value larger than or equal to 0.20 to demonstrate relationship significance. Furthermore, a p-value of $0.00 < 0.05$ demonstrated that a path relationship between FC and BA was statistically significant.
significant. Therefore the results showed that firm created social media content positively influences brand attitude and hence H3a was accepted.

**Hypothesis 3b: User generated social media communication positively influences the brand attitude of South African Millennial consumers.**

Hypothesis 3b proposed that UGC had a direct positive and influential relationship on Millennials attitudes toward the relevant motor vehicle brands. The Cronbach’s alpha value (0.92) and CR value (0.95) showed values higher than 0.70 indicating that the survey statements (indicator variables) were reliable and the AVE scores (0.83) indicated that the statements related to the construct were valid. The Pearson product-moment-correlation showed a good positive correlation value (0.64 > 0.50) between the two constructs within the model in relation to purchase intention.

**Table 15 Cronbach’s alpha, CR, AVE, Pearson’s correlation in respect of user generated content and brand attitude**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal consistency reliability</td>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convergent validity</td>
<td>AVE</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear correlation with brand attitude</td>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural path coefficient</td>
<td>$R^2$ values</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The path coefficient between user generated social media communication (UG) and brand attitude (BA) yielded a seemingly good relationship of 0.20. The guideline required a value larger than or equal to 0.20 to demonstrate relationship significance. Furthermore, a p-value of 0.02 < 0.05 demonstrated that a path relationship between UG and BA was statistically significant. Therefore the results showed that user generated social media communication positively influences brand attitude leading to H3b being accepted.

**Hypothesis 4: Brand equity positively influences South African Millennials purchase intentions.**

Hypothesis 4 proposed that BE had a direct positive and influential relationship on Millennials’ purchase intention of the relevant motor vehicle brands. The Cronbach’s
alpha value (0.94) and CR value (0.95) showed values higher than 0.70 indicating that the survey statements (indicator variables) were reliable and the AVE scores (0.85) indicated that the statements related to the construct were valid. The Pearson product-moment-correlation showed a good positive correlation value (0.89 > 0.50) between the two constructs within the model in relation to purchase intention.

**Table 16 Cronbach’s alpha, CR, AVE, Pearson’s correlation in respect of brand equity and purchase intention.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal consistency reliability</td>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha</td>
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<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convergent validity</td>
<td>AVE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear correlation with purchase intention</td>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
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<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural path coefficient</td>
<td>R² values</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The path coefficient between overall brand equity (OBE) and purchase intention (PI) yielded a seemingly strong relationship of 0.58. The guideline required a value larger than or equal to 0.20 to demonstrate relationship significance. Furthermore, a p-value of 0.00 < 0.05 demonstrated that a path relationship between OBE and PI was statistically significant. Therefore, the results showed that overall brand equity positively influences purchase intention and H4 was therefore accepted.

**Hypothesis 5: Brand attitude positively influences South African Millennials purchase intentions.**

Hypothesis 5 proposed that BA had a direct positive and influential relationship on Millennials’ purchase intention of the relevant motor vehicle brands. The Cronbach’s alpha value (0.90) and CR value (0.94) showed values higher than 0.70 indicating that the survey statements (indicator variables) were reliable and the AVE scores (0.84) indicated that the statements related to the construct were valid. The Pearson product-moment-correlation showed a good positive correlation value (0.85 > 0.50) between the two constructs within the model in relation to purchase intention.
**Table 17 Cronbach’s alpha, CR, AVE, Pearson’s correlation in respect of brand attitude and purchase intention**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal consistency reliability</td>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convergent validity</td>
<td>AVE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear correlation with purchase</td>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural path coefficient</td>
<td>$R^2$ values</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The path coefficient between brand attitude (BA) and purchase intention (PI) yielded a substantial relationship of 0.39. The guideline required a value larger than or equal to 0.20 to demonstrate relationship significance. Furthermore, a p-value of 0.00 < 0.05 demonstrated that a path relationship between BA and PI was statistically significant. Therefore the results showed that brand attitude positively influences purchase intention and consequently H5 was accepted.

### 5.7. Chapter summary

Chapter 5 sought out to provide a robust explanation from the primary quantitative data collected. The demographic analysis revealed a skewness toward males, where a dominant participation of 71% was discovered although this was not an intention of the study. PLS SEM was employed as the preferred statistical analysis tool because the qualified sample size amounted to 182 respondents which was considered a small sample size for SEM analysis.

The measurement model was assessed using a reliability and validity test. Reliability test results revealed a strong Cronbach alpha (0.90 to 0.94) and juxtaposed with this measurement, composite reliability tests (0.94 to 0.95) also confirmed that the constructs from the scale were good.

Validity was evaluated by means of a convergent validity test. Each construct yielded a favourable AVE result ranging from 0.83 to 0.86, which was higher than the guideline of 0.5. The Pearson's product-moment-correlation test revealed a positive linear relationship between each variable where the values exceeded the benchmark score of 0.50 per relationship.
The structural model evaluation, considered as the most important evaluation area of this study, discovered that five of the hypotheses generated from chapter two, (H2, H3a, H3b, H4, H5) were found to be statistically significant as per the path coefficient results and hypotheses H1a and H1b results demonstrated weak relationships which were considered not to be statistically significant.
6. CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the results presented in chapter five where they are juxtaposed with the literature reviewed in chapter two. The main findings from the structural model path coefficient test results, as presented in Figure 6, revealed hypotheses H1a and H1b were not statistically significant however the remainder of the hypotheses (H2, H3a, H3b, H4, H5) were found to be statistically significant. The layout of the discussion is presented in accordance with each hypothesis. Table 18 presents the hypotheses that were accepted or rejected:

Table 18 Status of hypotheses post analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 1a (H1a):</strong> Firm-created social media communication positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of brand equity</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 1b (H1b):</strong> User generated social media communication positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of brand equity.</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 2 (H2):</strong> Brand attitude positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of brand equity.</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 3a (H3a):</strong> Firm-created social media communication positively influences the brand attitude of South African Millennial consumers.</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 3b (H3b):</strong> User generated social media communication positively influences the brand attitude of South African Millennial consumers.</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 4 (H4):</strong> Brand equity positively influences South African Millennials’ purchase intentions.</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 5 (H5):</strong> Brand attitude positively influences South African Millennials’purchase intentions.</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2. **Hypothesis 1a (H1a): Firm-created social media communication positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of brand equity.**

The first hypothesis set out to test the relationship between firm created content and brand equity. The firm created social media communication scale (Mägi, 2003; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015; Tsiros et al., 2004) used in the survey yielded excellent internal consistency reliability scores (Cronbach’s alpha 0.93, CR 0.95) and a strong convergent reliability value $\text{AVE} = 0.84$ indicating that these statements were suitable for measuring FCC on OBE.

The Pearson product-moment-correlation yielded a value of $r = 0.63$ which showed a strong positive correlation relationship between FCC and OBE. Bearing in mind that correlations do not indicate causality, the significant positive correlation is in line with the positive path co-efficient in the structural model.

The structural model path coefficient test results revealed a small size of 0.08 ($p$-value of $0.36 > 0.05$). The relationship was not statistically significant and meant that there seemed to be a weak relationship. Therefore, in the context of this research, firm created content does not have a direct positive influence on Millennials’ perceptions of brand equity.

The finding of this hypothesis was consistent with Schivinski & Dabrowski’s , (2014) findings. However when considering the relationship between firm created content and consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), there is an expectation that a well-known and established brand would build a positive perception of brand value in the mind of its consumers. Firm created content, especially in the context of the motor vehicle industry in South Africa where such passionate motor vehicle enthusiasts reside, is specifically crafted, designed and communicated toward specific consumers with the intention that the content arouses and positively stimulates those consumer’s value perceptions though brand awareness, association, perceived quality and loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Brands tend to invest a significant amount of resources dedicated toward collaborative content creation strategies such as brand storytelling where the brand and consumer interact with each other throughout their journey (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012), aesthetic improvement of their content (Hutter et al., 2013) and ensuring that the correct market segments are exposed to the brands communication.
Regarding the Millennial consumer who actively uses Facebook (the sample population for this research study), De Vries & Carlson, (2014) found that co-creation and collaboration through social media enhanced customer engagement (CE) which had a positive influence on a brand’s performance and brand loyalty (these are sub constructs of brand equity). However although firm-created social media content has shown that it does create more positive evaluations on brand equity and brand attitude. There were positive effects with consumer brand page engagement on brand evaluation as well as positive effects on purchase decision making processes (Hutter et al., 2013).

Homburg et al., (2015) points out that consumer perceptions can also be negatively influenced when brands tend to engage too much with their consumers. This is supported by Hutter et al., (2013) who also found that if firms post too much content, it resulted in information overload and content-value saturation. To this end, consumers would draw on negative perceptions about the brand as it created an annoyance which resulted in a weaker desire of a purchase intention. The research found that brands need to be mindful of their frequency of content generation as too much would see diminishing returns on consumer engagement.

From this perspective, it may offer a significant explanation for the result of hypothesis H1a where supporting literature explains how certain ways of disseminating firm-created content may end up diluting brand equity in the eyes of the consumer.

Even though research confirms that Millennials are heavily influenced by peer-to-peer online reviews (Mangold et al., 2012) when making a purchase, marketers still need to make sure that their customer-brand relationship communication with Millennials remains effective so that they remain top of mind. Millennials are described as tech-savvy, self-absorbed personalities and often associate themselves with brands that are aligned closely to their values. Millennials also tend to display sensitive behaviours of brand loyalty where the brands they appreciate have a narrow margin for error. Furthermore, Millennials are sceptical of firm created content (Gurau, 2012). This does not mean that brands shouldn’t create content to build their brand and maintain their positioning, they do need to remember that their own content is not the strongest tactic for building brand equity as Millennial consumers are sceptical and may find more value in their experience with the brand as well as comments or reviews from other consumers (Moore, 2012).
6.3. Hypothesis 1b (H1b): User generated social media communication positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of brand equity.

The second hypothesis set out to test the relationship between user generated content and brand equity. The user generated social media communication scale in relation to brand equity used in the survey (Mägi, 2003; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015; Tsiros et al., 2004) returned strong reliability scores (Cronbach’s alpha 0.92, CR 0.95) and a robust convergent validity value AVE = 0.83 indicating that the survey statements were adequate for measuring UGC on OBE.

The Pearson product-moment-correlation yielded a value of $r = 0.59$ which showed a strong positive correlation relationship between UGC and OBE. The significant positive correlation is in line with the positive path coefficient in the structural model.

The structural model path coefficient test results revealed a small size of 0.10 (p-value of 0.17 $>$ 0.05). The relationship was not statistically significant and meant that there was a seemingly weak relationship between these two constructs. Therefore, in the context of this research, user generated content does not have a direct positive influence on brand equity. The conceptual model, as developed by Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014), revealed the opposite result where user generated social media communication showed a direct positive influence on brand equity. The results from this research study, in relation to user generated social media communication and its ability to have a direct positive influence on brand equity, raises an interesting point and finds itself incongruent with the literature theory base discussed in chapter one and two.

In terms of the context for identifying brand value perceptions of other user’s social media content generation, respondents were asked about their level of satisfaction of the user content generated by others, whether the amount of content generated by fellow peers met their expectations; whether the content that was generated was attractive; and lastly, the respondents’ level of agreeableness was measured where they were asked to compare whether they felt the content generated by users added more value for them instead of content generated by users on another brand’s Facebook page.

Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014) assert that information conveyed through UGC about products and services must be particularly useful for other consumers for it to have a positive impact on brand equity. Having a regard for the constructs that are associated with brand equity, Schivinski & Dabrowski (2015) found that brand awareness and
associations, brand loyalty and perceived quality were useful measurements. The authors go on to argue that consumers value the opinions of their friends, family and those who are associated within the relevant virtual brand community. However Severi et al., (2014) revealed that there is an indirect inter-relationship between user generated content and the dimension of brand equity, mediated by the respective various brand equity constructs. When comparing the credibility of content, consumers tend to display a higher level of trust in line with the content created by their peers as opposed to the content created by the brand (Wang et al., 2012). This allows the perceptions and views of those who also have an interest with the brands to be influenced by the type of valence that is portrayed by the content generated (Labrecque et al., 2013) which tends to shape their attitudes towards the brand.

With respect for the findings as illustrated in Figure 6, UGC did not show a strong direct relationship with OBE, however the path analysis demonstrates that UGC plays a direct strong positive influence on BA and, in turn, BA demonstrates a strong positive relationship on OBE. Even though the UGC still showed a weak relationship on OBE, it was still stronger than the relationship of FCC on OBE (0.08) which shows consistency with Millennials’ behaviour in terms of being sceptical about FCC (Moore, 2012).

6.4. **Hypothesis 2 (H2): Brand attitude positively influences South African Millennials perceptions of brand equity.**

The third hypothesis set out to test the relationship between brand attitude and brand equity. With respect to the brand attitude scale (Low & Lamb, 2000; Villarejo-ramos, 2005) used in the survey, the results yielded excellent internal reliability scores (Cronbach’s alpha 0.90, CR 0.94) and a strong convergent reliability value AVE = 0.84 indicating that these statements were suitable for measuring BA on OBE. The Pearson product-moment-correlation yielded a value of $r = 0.78$ which showed a strong positive correlation relationship between BA and OBE. The significant positive correlation is in line with the positive path co-efficient in the structural model.

The structural model path coefficient test results revealed a large relationship size of 0.66 (p-value of 0.00 < 0.05). The relationship was statistically significant and meant that there was a strong relationship between these two constructs. Therefore, in the context of this research, brand attitude positively influences brand equity. This finding yielded the strongest relationship as illustrated by the structural model and was consistent with the findings of Schivinski & Dabrowski, (2014).
The findings from this hypothesis support the notion that Millennial consumers are sensitive toward the values that the brand demonstrates juxtaposed with the values of their own belief system. This means that the more the brand is able to align its characteristics and attributes through associations, the more positive a Millennial consumer’s attitude develops towards the brand. Jin (2012) supports this notion suggesting that consumers’ attitudes toward a brand are derived from two functions: self-expression attitude which confirms that consumers are motivated through a form of self-expression to demonstrate that a brand resonates with their core values and beliefs. Secondly, self-presentation attitude which suggests that consumers are motivated to consume a brand in order to demonstrate to others that this brand reflects a certain social status symbol with the objective of being accepted in certain social circles.

Considering the constructs of brand equity and the constructs of brand attitude, there is a permeable relationship demonstrated between the two variables. Gensler et al., (2013) confirm from their findings that building brand equity in the context of social media requires an intricate understanding of how to manage a brand’s personality so that it may align itself with its existing and potential customers. There is adequate evidence supported in the literature and empirical findings from this research study to justify the notion that brand attitude is a significant contributor of brand equity.

This finding further demonstrates that in order to gain the trust as indicated in the research by Moore (2012), Millennial characteristics display a deep sense that brands need to resonate with their value systems first which lends itself toward the notion that an attitude forms a part of this value system. Although UGC had a weaker relationship with BA, it still showed a stronger relationship with OBE than FCC which is consistent with Millennial behaviour in terms of being sceptical about FCC.

6.5. **Hypothesis 3a (H3a): Firm-created social media communication positively influences the brand attitude of South African Millennial consumers.**

The fourth hypothesis set out to test the relationship between firm-created content and brand attitude. The FCC scale (Mägi, 2003; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015; Tsiros et al., 2004) used in the survey yielded excellent internal consistency reliability scores (Cronbach’s alpha 0.93, CR 0.95) and a strong convergent reliability value AVE = 0.84 indicating that these statements were suitable for measuring FCC on BA.
The Pearson product-moment-correlation yielded a value of \( r = 0.71 \) which showed a strong positive correlation relationship between FCC and BA. The significant positive correlation is in line with the positive path co-efficient in the structural model.

The structural model path coefficient test results revealed a 0.55 (p-value of 0.00 < 0.05). The relationship was statistically significant and meant that there was a strong relationship between these two constructs. This hypothesis focused on the respondents views as to their satisfaction levels of the brands social media communication; whether the brands social media communication met the consumer’s expectations; whether the consumer found the brands social media communication to be attractive; and finally to gain their view as to whether the social media communication of this brand was seen to perform better than another brand’s social media communication. Therefore, in the context of this research, firm created content positively influences brand attitude. This finding was consistent with that of Schivinski & Dabrowski, (2014).

The empirical findings from this research further support the concept that firms have moved away from one-way marketing messages into a consumer-centric two-way marketing messaging where brand communication sits on the premise that it is intended to create a positive image and positive awareness about the brand. Key elements of brand image and brand awareness relates very closely with brand attitude. Hence, marketers and brand managers who pursue high levels of consumer engagement with a collaborative approach are predisposed to increasing their brand’s evaluation to a higher level of acceptance by the consumer.

Millennials display characteristics of a virtual interactive lifestyle where they are living in a world that is “always on and connected”. This means that their ability to seek out information about a product and service is instantaneous. This ability for instant availability of information means that they can seek out many different brands for similar products. The difference lies within the firm’s attributes and whether these attributes are attractive for this Millennial consumer or not. Hence, this hypothesis confirmed that brand or firm social media communication that supports a collaborative approach positively influences Millennials attitudes and purchase intentions toward the brand (Gensler et al., 2013).

6.6. Hypothesis 3b (H3b): User generated social media communication positively influences the brand attitude of South African Millennial consumers.
The fifth hypothesis set out to test the relationship between user generated content and brand attitude. The UGC scale used in relation to brand equity used in the survey (Mägi, 2003; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015; Tsiros et al., 2004), returned strong reliability scores (Cronbach’s alpha 0.92, CR 0.95) and a robust convergent validity value AVE = 0.83 indicating the survey statements were adequate for measuring UGC on BA.

The Pearson product-moment-correlation yielded a value of $r = 0.64$ which showed a strong positive correlation relationship between UGC and BA. The significant positive correlation is in line with the positive path co-efficient in the structural model.

The structural model path coefficient test results revealed a value 0.20 (p-value of 0.02 < 0.05). The relationship was statistically significant and meant that there was a mediocre relationship between these two constructs. Therefore, in the context of this research, user generated content positively influences brand attitude. This finding was fairly consistent with that of Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014) where their lambda value result showed 0.29.

Due to the vast amount of research that has confirmed the significant influence that electronic word of mouth and user generated content have on brands on online shopping (Demangeot & Broderick, 2010), virtual communities, and luxury branded goods (Jin, 2012), there was an expectation for this hypothesis to generate the strongest relationship in this research study. However, the results demonstrated a relatively mediocre relationship. The rationale for this hypothesis measured whether the content generated by fellow peers within the brands’ Facebook page would positively influence other users’ attitudes towards the brand by means of content being useful, attractive, informative, and whether the content met the expectations of these users (Mägi, 2003; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015; Tsiros et al., 2004).

Due to the openness of social media content interactions, consumers play a crucial role in influencing other existing and potential consumers’ perceptions and purchase intention of brands based on their experiences with these brands (Gensler et al., 2013). The influencer holds huge control over the impression of brands and organizations and the fast extension of online networking channels enables engagement to take place (Booth, Norman, Matic, 2011). Consumers turn to social media because of its rich content and real time communication, interaction functionality amongst peer communities, which in turn helps them in making informed purchase decisions.

Considering the transparent interaction that Facebook allows between the brand and the user, this has also shown to have some negative influence over fellow peers’ perceptions.
and purchase intentions because of the likelihood of customers posting genuine poor brand experiences or the possibility of unscrupulous users that post negative reviews with malicious intent.

However even though user generated content did not yield the expected high result, it does not mean that it should be viewed in a dim light as it opens up an argument to suggest that there is an opportunity to improve the type of user generated content in this virtual community which in turn will improve this side of the brand attitude spectrum. It was already noted that brand attitude was interpreted in a favourable light from the respondents confirming that they had a pleasant idea of the brand and that the brand had a good reputation as well as that positive characteristics were associated with the brand.


The sixth hypothesis set out to test the relationship between brand equity and purchase intention. This hypothesis focused on a multidimensional consumer-based brand equity scale adapted from Boonghee Yoo & Donthu (2001) where the constructs were drawn from Aaker’s (1991) conceptualised model related to CBBE. The measurement of this construct brought forth a psychological aspect where purchase intent associated with a brand’s features, awareness, loyalty, knowledge and consumption experience formed an antecedent of CBBE. The scale returned a strong reliability Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.94 and CR value of 0.95. The validity score also performed well in the test and yielded a value of 0.85.

The Pearson product-moment-correlation yielded a value of $r = 0.89$ which showed a strong positive correlation relationship between OBE and PI. The significant positive correlation is in line with the positive path co-efficient in the structural model.

The structural model path coefficient test results revealed a value 0.58. (p-value of 0.00 < 0.05). The relationship was statistically significant and meant that there seemed to be a strong relationship between these two constructs. Therefore, in the context of this research, brand equity positively influences purchase intention. This finding yielded the second strongest relationship whereas the findings from Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014) showed this relationship to be the second weakest relationship with a beta value of 0.32. Considering the comparison of industries, this research took place within the new mainstream brand motor vehicle sector whereas Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014)
conducted their research within the clothing, non-alcoholic and mobile phone industry. The difference where high ticket items such as motor vehicles could offer support for the differences that brand equity influences play with varying product offerings.

Furthermore, the combination of the strong positive influence that brand attitude has on brand equity, as evidence revealed from Hypothesis 2, demonstrates that Millennial consumers have high levels of purchase intention. Since OBE showed a very strong relationship to PI (0.58), it is important for brands to build their brand equity as this relationship shows that this will increase their sales. As the influence of FCC on OBE showed a weak relationship (0.08) and FCC showed a stronger relationship to brand attitude (0.55), this indicates that firms should focus their FCC on BA to impact OBE indirectly and also find other ways to build their O as this has a strong influence on these consumers’ purchase intention.


The final hypothesis set out to test the relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention. Identifying pertinent questions as a good fit to correlate the respondents purchase intention, questions adapted from Shukla (2011) and Yoo et al., (2000) were set in place. The first article by Yoo et al., (2000) examined selected marketing mix elements and brand equity where high intent to purchase was found if there was a high level of brand loyalty. Secondly, the article by Shukla (2011) found that a customer’s attitude toward consumption of a brand, and the willingness to pay a premium price for the brand, was highly influenced by the pre-eminence associated with that brand’s image in the mind of the consumer.

The Pearson product-moment-correlation yielded a value of $r = 0.85$ which showed a strong positive correlation relationship between BA and PI. The significant positive correlation is in line with the positive path co-efficient in the structural model.

The structural model path coefficient test results revealed a value 0.39 (p-value of 0.00 < 0.05). The relationship was statistically significant and meant that there was a strong relationship between these two constructs. Therefore, in the context of this research, brand attitude positively influences purchase intention. This finding was consistent with findings from Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014). However, their research found this relationship to be the second strongest relationship whereas this research revealed this
relationship to be the third strongest relationship, as illustrated by the structural model in Figure 6.

Regarding other supporting literature surrounding brand attitude, this research revealed empirical results showing that firm-created content stimulates conversation and collaboration amongst South African Millennial users within the virtual community (Mangold & Smith, 2012). This type of two-way engagement serves the purpose of creating content considered useful, interesting, valuable and attractive. This open-design element of content, with a consumer-centric approach, stimulates the consumers brand awareness, brand association, perception of quality. This leads to the intent to purchase (Dhar & Jha, 2014). According to Mangold & Smith (2012) these attributes build a positive image of the brand for the Millennial consumer therefore inducing high levels of brand attitude and purchase intention.

Research by Beukeboom et al., (2015); Gensler et al., (2013); Kim & Johnson, (2016); and Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014) confirmed that “Liking” a brand’s page on Facebook increased a consumers’ intent to purchase. All of these studies revealed that consumers who were exposed to brands on Facebook increased their brand evaluation, brand awareness, brand loyalty and purchase intention positively. Gurau( 2012) asserts that strong motivational factors, such as self-expression, drive Millennials to purchase brands which they see as a personal identification of themselves. Therefore the discussion surrounding results from the research suggest that there is adequate evidence supporting the notion that brand attitude positively influences purchase intention for South African Millennial consumers. This hypothesis finding supports the fact that firms should build positive brand attitude and their own content-creation may be one way, but since this relationship was not particularly strong (FCC to BA) they need to generate content but also find other ways to build brand attitude that they are able to control (unlike UGC).

6.9. Chapter summary

This chapter provided a discussion surrounding the results derived from chapter four. Each hypothesis result was explained with reference to the beta output and the p-value output in order to signify the strength of the relationships and the statistical significance thereof. Furthermore, the rationale of each hypothesis was discussed in relation to the questionnaire scales and the results in the context of South African Millennial consumers were juxtaposed with the literature theory base from chapter one and chapter two where insights from the results were provided.
7. CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the principal findings for this research with reference to the research problem identified in chapter one, the hypotheses from chapter two together with supporting analysis results as presented in chapter five and the discussion of the results from chapter six are summarised. The chapter then discusses theoretical and management implications followed by limitations of this research and concludes with suggestions for future research.

In order to gain credible findings, data was analysed by with partial-least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) as a technique through LISREL8.80 software. This technique was seen to be the most appropriate due to its ability to be flexible and to produce a robust set of results based on a sample size of less than 200. This study had a sample size of 182 respondents.

7.2. Principle findings

This research used Facebook as the social media platform and Millennial consumers in the context of the South African motor vehicle industry. The research focused on two different types of communication which were identified as the independent (exogenous) variables: Firm-created content and user-generated content. The dependent (endogenous) variables were identified as brand attitude, brand equity and purchase intention. Facebook was used as the social media platform to conduct the research where data collection, analysis and discussion of the hypotheses test results took place.

PLS-SEM provided key insights to establish which relationships between the exogenous and endogenous variables were positively influenced as well as providing insights regarding the influential relationships observed among the endogenous variables. The results were compared to other research findings in the literature reviewed in chapter two.

The structural path model demonstrated an interesting snapshot of all of the various relationships and these highlights are discussed below.

UGC (0.10) and FCC (0.08) did not yield a direct positive relationship on OBE. However it was interesting to note that FCC (0.55) had a stronger direct positive influence on BA
than that of UGC (0.20) although both relationships are still regarded as being important as BA plays a crucial role in shaping new and existing Millennial consumers perceptions of brands. The constructs of BA (0.39) and OBE (0.58) demonstrated that these were significant contributors in influencing Millennial consumer purchase intentions. This remains consistent with Millennial characteristics and behaviour which demonstrates that brands which display key values with the Millennial consumer in mind are in a position to win over these new era consumers as customers.

Recalling the relationship between UGC and OBE, this finding was not consistent with the findings from Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014) where their results demonstrated that UGC had a strong relationship that positively influenced OBE. This is a particularly interesting result as most of the theory produced and published support the notion that UGC is far more credible and trustworthy than FCC and hence has been shown to positively influence brand equity (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014, 2015). Theory suggests that marketers have to leverage off and collaborate with peer-to-peer engagement so that positive conversations surrounding the brand concerned are generated (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014). However Barreto (2014) and Severi et al., (2014) suggest that negative user conversations among consumers tend to dilute a brand’s equity. Hutter et al., (2013) assert that users who express negative word of mouth, or display high levels of content generation, tend to negatively influence the engagement levels within the brand’s Facebook page resulting in diminishing levels of consumer engagement which in turn negatively affects brand equity. However, the results from this research suggest that the respondents had a very positive image of the brands examined and they also agreed that the brands (Hyundai, Renault and Kia) had a good reputation which portrayed positive characteristics in the minds of the Millennials. This observation suggests that South African Millennial consumers of high price items associate a strong sense of brand equity provided that a strong sense of brand attitude is present. This is further supported by the structural model displaying strong positive relationships of BA and OBE influencing Millennials PI.

FCC (0.08) also demonstrated a weak relationship that did not have a direct positive influence on OBE. This result was consistent with Schivinski & Dabrowski’s (2014) study. Although the findings are similar, it is interesting to note the critical role played by brand attitude when marketing strategies are designed, in this instance various types of brand communication content, to positively influence Millennial consumers perceptions to stimulate their purchase intentions. The structural path model in Figure 6 demonstrates
that brand equity is positively influenced by brand attitude. This means that firm-created content is still considered a vital link in creating brand value but through the critical variables that comprised of brand attitude such as brand image associated with self-expression attitudes, social-adjustive attitudes (Jin, 2012), attractiveness, awareness and reputation (De Vries & Carlson, 2014; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014; Severi et al., 2014).

7.3. Theoretical implications

This research presents theoretical implications that contribute towards the field of consumer behaviour which further supports the understanding of how social media communication influences Millennial consumer purchase intentions of motor vehicle brands in South Africa. This research was the extant of a study conducted by Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014) which was performed in the context of non-alcoholic, clothing and mobile phone industries based in Poland. It was considered of particular importance due to the fact that social media has become pervasive in the lifestyle of Millennials where a large amount of their decision-making has been significantly influenced by and is reliant upon social media communication.

Secondly, when contrasting the context of this study to that of Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014), the findings contribute toward understanding how brand communication (FCC) and user generated content (UGC) on social media influences Millennial purchase intentions of high priced items in an emerging market where mixed cultures and varying degrees of individualism and collectivism are displayed.

Finally, contributions from this research are shown by demonstrating the critical and valuable role that brand attitude and brand equity play in the minds of a Millennial consumer during their decision-making process with the intent to purchase a high priced item in an emerging market.

7.4. Implications for management

South African motor vehicle Millennial consumers are perceived to be passionate about the choice of motor vehicle brand they own and they are said to view it as a conspicuous item and as an extension of their personality. Millennials have grown up in a world that has always been "connected" and are seen to be comfortable with new technology suggesting that they are predisposed to utilising Facebook as a means to share content.
with their friends and family and they also have a vested interest with interactions of their interested brands that they follow on Facebook. By understanding this world of virtual interactions that Millennials find themselves in, means that brands have to adapt their marketing strategies in ways which enhance their brand equity and brand attitude for the purposes of stimulating purchasing behaviour. After all, Millennials are now in a position to own the largest share of wallet in the market place and brands will compete for these customers.

7.4.1. Triangulating firm created content, brand attitude and brand equity

The result of FCC showed a weak relationship on directly influencing OBE positively. However FCC showed a strong positive relationship with BA which then saw BA demonstrating the strongest positive relationship on OBE. To triangulate these relationships for managerial implications means that mainstream motor vehicle brands have to appreciate the critical role that BA plays when they are crafting their brand equity architecture strategies in the context of social media communication as OBE showed the strongest relationship on positively influencing PI, noticeably, BA also played a crucial role on influencing PI.

This means that the motor vehicle companies are doing well in the brand content they produce on their Facebook pages as the majority of the Millennial respondents had confirmed this in the survey. To put this into practical terms, marketers or brand managers of high priced products must then continuously create content that stimulates drivers of brand attitude. Recalling earlier in the study, Millennials appreciate and tend to gravitate toward a high-priced product provided the brand resonates with their values as they see the brand as an extension of their personality. To this end, customer-brand collaborative engagement is vital where the brand must continue to enhance the co-creation product development projects as well as enhancing co-creation of advertising content. However, this must be done with a Millennial consumer-centric approach since Millennials are naturally sceptical towards firm-created content and a brand has very little room for error when trying to sustain a Millennial's brand loyalty.

Brands could consider interactive product development projects not necessarily surrounding an entire design of a motor vehicle per se but rather around certain product enhancement features related to environmental friendliness and connected technology which they feel would provide a sense of individualism which would in turn also provide the Millennial customer with a strong sense of self-expression and self-presentation.
within their social circles. In contrast to this, the motor vehicle brands should adopt continuous consumer-brand journey content through storytelling projects so that the firm-created content continues to align itself with Millennial values and beliefs.

In summary, firm created content must continue to enhance brand attitude which in turn amplifies brand equity. Purchase intention considers brand attitude and brand equity as key foundations.

7.4.2. Triangulating user generated content, brand attitude and brand equity

The result of UGC showed a weak relationship on directly influencing OBE positively. However UGC showed a positive relationship with BA. These results were particularly interesting because previous research showed that UGC plays an important and direct role in building brand equity while this study showed the opposite. Furthermore, UGC showed a weaker relationship with its influence on BA than FCC, where previous research also showed that UGC showed stronger influences on BA than FCC.

Holding that the relationship of BA on OBE; BA on PI and OBE on PI remain constant and then regarding the very same constructs of brand equity and brand attitude as discussed earlier, Millennial respondents showed that they were marginally satisfied with the content of other users on the motor vehicle brand’s Facebook page although the majority of respondents showed that they are brand loyal and felt that the brand had a good reputation and they showed high intentions to purchase the brand. This raises an interesting dilemma where marketing managers and brand managers need to understand why UGC did not favour as strongly as FCC on influencing BA since UGC should be seen as a more trustworthy source than FCC especially with Millennial consumers.

The notion that UGC serves as a form of hedonistic communication suggests that either the current UGC is not serving enough hedonism virtues or that UGC starts off with hedonistic content but becomes diminished or saturated due to an over-supply of UGC participation on a brand’s Facebook page. Another perspective suggests that negative UGC may negatively influence other users. However this would then contradict the findings which showed the high strength relationships of BA, OBE and PI.
The implications here should that managers should rather focus on isolating certain UGC that resonates and demonstrates highly with the constructs of brand equity and brand attitude with a Millennial-centric approach as these are vital for stimulating purchase intention. In practical terms, the motor vehicle brands must seek to identify and collaborate with existing Millennial who already own a product of the brand and to also identify potential Millennial customers that produce excellent user generated content for the motor vehicle brand. By default, their Millennial values and beliefs would already exist in the content they generate. Marketers of the motor vehicle brands would need to leverage off of this content and amplify existing and potential customer personas on the brand’s Facebook page in order to break away from the conversation clutter in and among other users. This type of strategy would demonstrate a sense of authenticity where real customers become brand advocates telling their real stories about their experiences with the relevant brand during their daily lives.

It is evident from the empirical results of this study that there is ample opportunity to enhance brand attitude through user-generated content, although customer-firm collaborative approaches are already in existence on Facebook. However, the motor vehicle brands must consider encouraging user-generated content that resonates with Millennial characteristics like tech-savvy content, individualistic content that demonstrates independence and content that shows a certain lifestyle which would invoke deep emotional connections with the Millennial consumer.

It is also evident that user generated campaigns tend to start once the firm introduces a new marketing campaign. Marketers should then craft their campaigns with supporting pillars including providing customers the opportunity to show off their creativity and share this content by making it interesting and useful for other users. The creative campaigns would start to exemplify a certain lifestyle trend which in turn would positively shape the attitudes of other users toward the brand. Recalling that a brand should serve a purpose for the Millennial, the lifestyle content should also be useful in a fun way. Since Millennials demonstrate individualistic characteristics indicates an opportunity to allow some degree of product personalisation. This would in turn encourage users to once again promote their own creativity in conjunction with the brand.

In summary, there is a dire need for marketers to enhance better quality user-generated content to improve brand attitude as this construct sits at the centre of driving brand equity as well as driving purchase intention.
7.4.3. Triangulating brand attitude, brand equity and purchase intention

The managerial implications discussed earlier predominantly focused on ways to enhance brand attitude and brand equity as these constructs demonstrated immense influence on purchase intention.

The majority of respondents from the survey indicated that the motor vehicle brands examined had offered good features and demonstrated positive characteristics which in turn displayed a good reputation in their minds to such an extent that the majority of respondents strongly agreed that the intent to purchase the brand was present. These critical elements relate strongly with brand attitude and brand equity influential relationships on purchase intention.

It was expected that these two constructs would deliver such a significant result. However marketers need to constantly re-evaluate the drivers of brand attitude and brand equity to ensure that relevancy remains constant. Management implications in this regard means that double-loop learning should take place where existing customers should be encouraged to keep sharing their journey experience with the brand after purchase. Although the reality of certain poor experiences are likely to appear, this would, however, give the brand the opportunity to demonstrate its brand promise in front of those who may be undecided about the brand. Furthermore, the authentic brand ambassadors which were discussed earlier would provide compelling evidence to help positively shape the attitudes of other users. Although certain member clubs have already been formed for owners of the brand products, this idea should adapt to innovative ways to promote owners of the products in line with ways that demonstrate brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand association campaigns in the form of experiential projects which can easily be shared on the brand’s Facebook page as well as on the customers personal Facebook page. These drivers of brand equity and brand attitude must be designed with the South African Millennial at the centre since owning a vehicle in South Africa demonstrates a form of conspicuous consumption.

In summary, brand attitude and brand equity are antecedents of purchase intention. While this was expected, marketers and brand managers must continuously re-evaluate the environment in which they operate as context is vital.

7.5. Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study remains vulnerable in a number of limitations discussed below.
7.5.1. Limitations in relation to the methodology

The methodology as discussed in chapter four, made use of a quantitative study by collecting data on Facebook. Although the purpose was to examine social media communication effects on Millennial consumer purchase intentions, the use of Facebook alone meant that those Millennial consumers who prefer using other social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram and Youtube may have been excluded. It would be advantageous for future research to consider these platforms as each may provide different results.

The adoption of self-selection as a sampling technique was viewed as a new and refreshing approach to conducting research on Facebook, especially by disseminating the survey from the brand’s Facebook page as opposed to disseminating the survey from the convenience of the researchers personal Facebook account. However, self-selection has been criticised for its predisposition toward higher than usual brand bias because those who participated in the survey may have skewed tendencies in favour of the brand and the respondents may have felt an overwhelming need to voice their opinions. An alternative for future research could see the use of virtual snowball sampling as this seemed to be the preferred choice in most of the literature reviewed for this study.

Employing this study with a cross sectional approach meant that the time frame was limited and raises a question of results would have emerged from a longitudinal study. Accordingly, future research could consider a longitudinal approach to re-evaluate the respondents’ sentiments.

This study sought to describe the sample size by means of gender and age range although future research may find the need to delve deeper into understanding a demographic composition and therefore income, race and education levels may be useful.

7.5.2. General limitations

This study limited itself to examining the effects that FCC and UGC induced on BA, OBE and PI. It would be interesting to examine the effects of social media communication in relation to the sub-constructs of BA and/or the sub-constructs of OBE. Alternatively, it would also be interesting to examine FCC and UGC influences on brand attitude as opposed to brand experience to further understand the distinct differences.

As discussed in the literature review, the definition of a Millennial is debatable where arguments surrounding birth years determine a Millennial and there are also arguments
that state cohorts are formed due to historical events. This research adopted two different arguments in order to capture a large enough birth year range. However future research could adopt a study purely based on historical events, for example, South Africa refers to a cohort born at the start of new democracy known as the “Born-frees”.

Finally, the South African motor vehicle industry is quite diverse. The brands for this study: Hyundai, Renault and Kia are considered mainstream brands and quite well established. Future research could explore other segments like luxury brands, emerging brands and the second-hand vehicle segment.

7.6. Summary

The final chapter sought out to provide a sense of critical findings of the entire study by means of providing a discussion which highlighted the principal findings in relation to the hypotheses. Thereafter, contribution toward theoretical and managerial implications was discussed to which end, the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research provided an exciting opportunity to further extant the realm of research in relation to social media communication, branding and Millennials. A brief conclusion of the study is presented below.

7.7. Study conclusion

The objective of this study set out to examine the influence of social media communication on South African Millennial consumers purchase intentions of motor vehicle brands. Although the study adopted an existing study, it still made a theoretical and practical contribution toward the field of consumer behaviour and marketing as it allowed the researcher to test the model of social media communication, brand attitude, brand equity and purchase intention in the context of high priced items, being motor vehicles, in an emerging market environment with a specific generation” the Millennial consumer. The study yielded different results from those of existing research. This could be seen as a valuable contribution for both theoretical and managerial implications because it provides marketers and brand managers of motor vehicle brands, who are either existing professionals in social media management or for those who are exploring social media management, practical insights into how and how not to manage user-generated and firm-created content to improve brand attitude and brand equity to increase purchase intention.
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9. APPENDICES

9.1. Appendix A: Survey questionnaire

The researcher has intentionally inserted a questionnaire relevant to the Hyundai SA brand only. The researcher designed replications of the questionnaire that are specific to Kia SA and Renault SA. The submission of one brands questionnaire was seen as sufficient to help the ethics committee to better understand the type of questionnaire that was disseminated for this research project. The reviewer should be mindful that wherever the word Hyundai is read on this questionnaire can be substituted by the word Kia or Renault.
HOW DOES SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION AFFECT CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS ON MOTOR VEHICLE BRANDS.

1. Introduction

Hello,

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this exciting research.

I am completing a M.B.A. degree through the Gordon Institute of Business Science and I am conducting research on what type of social media communication may influence people to make a purchase decision. To that end, you are asked to consider this motor vehicle brand’s page in order to complete a survey about their Facebook page.

This will help us better understand consumer perceptions about brands and the intent to purchase, and should take no more than 10 minutes of your time. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. All data and personal details will be kept strictly confidential. By completing the survey, you indicate that you voluntarily participate in this research. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below:

Researcher name: Michael Scarth  
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Phone: 079 579 8111

Research supervisor name: Dr Mignon Reyneke  
Email: mignon.reyneke@gmail.com  
Phone: 082 474 0330
# Social Media Brand Attitude, Brand Equity and Purchase Intent survey

## 1. Qualifying Questions

* 1. Do you receive posts from Hyundai SA on Facebook?
   - Yes
   - No

* 2. How old are you?
   - 18-24
   - 25-29
   - 30-34
   - 35-39

* 3. How often do you receive posts from Hyundai SA?
   - Every day.
   - Not every day but at least every week.
   - Not every week but at least every month.
   - Never

* 4. Do you read the posts from Hyundai SA?
   - Yes
   - No

* 5. Do you check what other people post about Hyundai SA?
   - Yes
   - No

* 6. What is your gender?
   - Female
   - Male
# Social Media Brand Attitude, Brand Equity and Purchase Intent survey

## 2. Hyundai SA Content

7. I am satisfied with the Facebook communication I receive from Hyundai SA.

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. The level of Facebook communication from Hyundai SA meet my expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>3 Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>4 Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>5 Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>6 Mostly Agree</th>
<th>7 Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Hyundai SA's Facebook communications are very attractive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>3 Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>4 Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>5 Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>6 Mostly Agree</th>
<th>7 Strongly Agree</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Hyundai SA's Facebook communication performs well, when compared with the Facebook communications of other companies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>3 Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>4 Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>5 Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>6 Mostly Agree</th>
<th>7 Strongly Agree</th>
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</thead>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Social Media Brand Attitude, Brand Equity and Purchase Intent survey

#### 3. Facebook user generated content.

11. I am satisfied with the content generated on Facebook by other users about Hyundai SA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>3 Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>4 Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>5 Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>6 Mostly Agree</th>
<th>7 Strongly Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. The level of the content generated on Facebook by other users about Hyundai SA meets my expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>3 Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>4 Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>5 Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>6 Mostly Agree</th>
<th>7 Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. The content generated by other users about Hyundai SA is very attractive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>3 Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>4 Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>5 Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>6 Mostly Agree</th>
<th>7 Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. The content generated on Facebook by other users about Hyundai SA performs well, when compared with other brands.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>3 Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>4 Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>5 Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>6 Mostly Agree</th>
<th>7 Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Media Brand Attitude, Brand Equity and Purchase Intent survey


15. It makes sense to buy Hyundai instead of any other brand, even if they are the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Even if another brand has the same feature as Hyundai, I would prefer to buy Hyundai.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. If there is another brand as good as Hyundai, I prefer to buy Hyundai.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. If another brand is not different from Hyundai in any way, it seems smarter to purchase Hyundai.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 5. Brand Attitude

19. I have a pleasant idea of Hyundai.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. Hyundai has a good reputation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. I associate positive characteristics with Hyundai.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mostly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Mostly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Social Media Brand Attitude, Brand Equity and Purchase Intent survey

#### 6. Brand Purchase Intention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>22. I would buy Hyundai rather than any other brands available.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Disagree nor Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mostly Agree</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>23. I am willing to recommend that others buy Hyundai.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Disagree nor Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Agree</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>24. I intend to purchase a Hyundai in the future.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Disagree nor Agree</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mostly Agree</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## 9.2. Appendix B: New passenger vehicle sales by brand and market share, South Africa, total 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Make</th>
<th>2015 New Passenger Vehicle Sales Volume</th>
<th>Market Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>VOLKSWAGEN</td>
<td>75707</td>
<td>18.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>TOYOTA</td>
<td>66102</td>
<td>16.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>FORD</td>
<td>43063</td>
<td>10.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>HYUNDAI</td>
<td>34789</td>
<td>8.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MERCEDES</td>
<td>25228</td>
<td>6.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>BMW</td>
<td>21580</td>
<td>5.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>RENAULT</td>
<td>19952</td>
<td>4.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>KIA</td>
<td>15657</td>
<td>3.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>AUDI</td>
<td>14950</td>
<td>3.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>CHEVROLET</td>
<td>14387</td>
<td>3.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>HONDA</td>
<td>11064</td>
<td>2.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>NISSAN</td>
<td>10105</td>
<td>2.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>MAZDA</td>
<td>7729</td>
<td>1.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>OPEL</td>
<td>6483</td>
<td>1.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>SUZUKI</td>
<td>6354</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>JEEP</td>
<td>6308</td>
<td>1.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>DATSUN</td>
<td>5645</td>
<td>1.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>LAND ROVER</td>
<td>5375</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>MITSUBISHI</td>
<td>3130</td>
<td>0.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>VOLVO</td>
<td>2710</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>MINI</td>
<td>2078</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>PORSCHE</td>
<td>1468</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>FIAT</td>
<td>1317</td>
<td>0.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>PEUGEOT</td>
<td>1313</td>
<td>0.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>GWM</td>
<td>1106</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>SUBARU</td>
<td>1101</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>LEXUS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>MAHINDRA</td>
<td>917</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>DODGE</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>0.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>CITROEN</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>0.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>CHERY</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>0.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>JAGUAR</td>
<td>758</td>
<td>0.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>FAW</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>0.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>TATA CARS</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>INFINITI</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>0.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>CHRYSLER</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>ALFA ROMEO</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>SSANGYONG</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>FERRARI</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>SMART</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>MASERATI</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>DAIHATSU</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>ABARTH</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>LANDWIND</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>PROTON</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>ZOTYE</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>412702</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.3. Appendix C: Social media survey post

We need your help!
Do our social media efforts impact your perceptions of the KIA brand? Help us improve by completing the following survey: svy.mk/29UNMEB

© University of Pretoria
Your feedback fuels our passion.
Complete this survey and let us know what you think of our Facebook page:
https://goo.gl/47ADLt.
Hyundai South Africa
July 21 at 9:00am

Your opinion is important to us. We want to know what you think about Hyundai to help us give you the best possible experience. Click on the link below to participate in the Hyundai survey.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Hyundai_SA24
9.4. Appendix D: GIBS ethical clearance consent

Dear Mr Michael James Scarth

Protocol Number: Temp2016-01212

Title: How does social media communication affect millennial consumer perceptions of motor vehicle brands.

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been APPROVED.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Kind Regards,

Adèle Bekker
9.5. **Appendix E: Key Facebook Engagement Metrics**

![Facebook Engagement Metrics](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Hyundai_SA24)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>On post</th>
<th>On shares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Reactions</td>
<td>1,716</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes</td>
<td>1,657</td>
<td>1,489</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wow</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Angry</td>
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<td>101</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Photo views</td>
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<td>333</td>
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</tr>
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**NEGATIVE FEEDBACK**

- 0 Hide Post
- 0 Report as Spam
- 2 Hide All Posts
- 0 Unlike Page