

The Impact of Digital Marketing on Consumer Behaviour: A Case Study of Millennials in South Africa

Flip Schutte

*Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, Email, schuttef@gibs.co.za,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6031-9206>*

Tshikani Chauke

Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, Email, 16359446@mygibs.co.za

**Corresponding Author*

How to cite this article: Schutte, F. & Chauke, T. (2022). The Impact of Digital Marketing on Consumer Behaviour: A Case Study of Millennials in South Africa. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 11(2):875-886. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.263>

Abstract

Study objective: Digital marketing has become the most common method employed by marketers to communicate products or services to consumers since the evolution of digital technology. This necessitated the need to understand the impact of digital marketing on consumers in order to maximise value creation. This paper was aimed at gaining more insight in the effect of digital marketing by focusing on the millennial consumer in the retail industry. An exploratory study was conducted with 14 millennial consumers in the Gauteng region and unstructured interviews were used to explore qualitatively the impact of digital marketing on millennial consumers. The findings of the study revealed that millennial consumers found digital marketing useful for their intentions, namely to get better deals on the products and services they had intended to acquire. The study identified possible issues which could hamper the adoption of this form of marketing such as privacy issues. Millennials find advertisements that are visually appealing favourable, and they tend to react to advertisements like that.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour; millennials; digital marketing; pop-up advertising; mobile marketing.

Introduction

New developments in technology have brought both challenges and opportunities for existing businesses and created fertile ground for new ventures to emerge. Technology controls everything we do. This is supported by the gradual increase of global internet connectivity (West, 2015). Businesses all over the world have been adopting technology related strategies to enable them to maximise customer networks. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic brought the reality that one needs to be adaptable to technology. During the pandemic, it was evident that businesses that had digitally migrated were less impacted by the lockdown when compared to businesses that had not fully digitally integrated (Chetty et al., 2020). One field impacted immensely by technology development is marketing. Marketing has seen a paradigm shift from advertising through print media and billboards to embracing all digital platforms (Levy & Gvili, 2015) to market products such as vehicles, clothing and electronics through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter in real-time, allowing retailers to connect to a wider consumer base and maximise value creation.

The advancement in technology has seen the transformation of marketing from the more traditional forms, to digital marketing where communication of the marketing content is delivered through digital mediums. Since the beginning of the 21st century, businesses have transformed the way of engaging its customers to enable them to get closer to what the customers need. In marketing, the transformation to digital marketing has enabled business to deliver products or services quickly to the customer and get customer feedback immediately.

In South Africa, digital marketing is developing at a rapid pace. By 2018, it was estimated that digital marketing was 35% of all marketing activities while the global average was 10% (Statista, 2019). The growth in digital marketing is supported by the increase in the number of people gaining access to the internet. By 2019, South Africa had 31.18 million internet users which represented about 68% of the population. Of this population, 28.99 million were mobile internet users (Statista, 2019). This growth is expected to continue in the coming years and estimated at around 80% of the total population by the year 2023 (Statista, 2019).

Digital marketing has been embraced globally by business as an effective way to advertise content to customers rapidly and effectively. To date, it was estimated that each individual encounter between 6 000 to 10 000 advertisements per day and in comparison, popular social media platforms such as Facebook has seen a rapid rise in the online advertisement market whereby by 2017 their revenue on advertisement revenue rose to 39,9 billion dollars compared to 2010 where it was 1,9 billion dollars (Statistics SA, 2020). In addition, Google's advertising revenue rose to 134,81 billion (Statistics SA, 2020) in comparison to 28,24 billion dollars in 2010. The growth in digital advertisements indicate a strong push for businesses to get their content through to consumers and to embrace the new way of effectively communicating to the consumer.

The problem to be investigated in this article is the need to understand whether the volume of digital advertisements that is being pushed to the consumer, is having the intended outcome that business envisage. Are these advertisements which are distributed through digital platforms pleasing to the consumers or are they just annoying? The research problem is therefore to find out whether digital marketing adds value to the consumer experience. By exploring the millennial consumer, this article will ascertain whether millennials feel they get value from the digital content they receive through the variety of platforms.

The aim of the research was to establish whether digital advertisements were useful for consumers when making online purchases. By focusing on the millennial consumer, the research was aimed to add to the growing body of knowledge of understanding millennium consumer purchasing preferences and how it is influenced by digital marketing. Most academic research in digital marketing have been focused on marketers (Duffett & Wakeham, 2016), evaluating if their marketing strategies are having the necessary impact. Very little research has been conducted in order to understand digital marketing from the customers' viewpoint. In South Africa, the growing population of millennial consumers presents an opportunity for marketers to increase their customer base. While there are signs of positive responses by millennials on social media marketing communications towards digital marketing, there seems to be a decline in the manner in which millennials embrace these channels (Duffett & Wakeham, 2016). This indicates that marketers need to do more to understand the thinking process of the millennial customer and be able to deliver the content that would be favourable to them. There is also a need to understand customers who are digitally connected better to know what factors influence the purchasing decisions (Hall & Towers, 2017) as this could determine the marketing strategies for businesses.

In addition, competition for the same customer is high and requires marketers to innovate their offering by either enhancing the experience towards a product or service which would be aimed at enticing the customer towards the product. So, there is a need to understand what would make millennial customers choose a particular product over the other and how they react under various circumstances.

Literature review

Marketing can be described as a management process between a firm and the consumer. There are many definitions of marketing, but all revolve around activities that are conducted in order

to enhance customer relationships. Borden (1964) described marketing as a philosophy or management orientation that is meant to build long term relationships with the customer. Development in the theory of marketing have seen the conceptualization of the “marketing mix”. This theory can be strategically used by marketers to tailor a product to a specific market based on the characteristics of that market (Gilaninia et al., 2013). While the marketing mix is still widely employed by many organisations to drive their strategy, the development of relationship marketing (Stauss, 2000) brought another dimension to marketing which created another paradigm shift in the manner in which firms sell their products and services. In relationship marketing, the emphasis is on providing value to the chosen market by involving key stakeholders (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2015).

As technology continued to change the way businesses operate globally, marketing was not exempted from the technology shift and driven by more consumers embracing digital technology. From the late 1990s marketing entered a paradigm shift from the traditional methods of marketing products and services through printed media and billboards to digital technology. This then led to the development of digital marketing. What attracts a consumer towards a brand is no longer only the product or service that is offered, but rather a combination of factors. While digital marketing activities are gradually increasing globally, millennials were identified to be embracing the phenomenon more as they were seen to prefer more online shopping than the other groups (Smith, 2011). Millennials are defined as the group of individuals who were born in or after the year 1980 (Kuhns & Saksena, 2016) and are also referred to as Generation X millennials are known to be open minded, social, innovative, energetic, ambitious, confident, motivated and smart and have different financial goals compared to the other groups (Ordun, 2015).

The group are believed to be carrying bigger purchasing power when compared to other generations (Kuhns & Saksena, 2016). Millennials are also believed to be having a higher level of education compared to their peers as they are a generation that came when there was better access to education (Kuhns & Saksena, 2016). In South Africa, millennials account for about 36% of the population of the country (Statistics SA, 2020) which translates into 20.8 million of the total population. The majority of millennials in South Africa consume media through digital channels with the use of smartphones, tablets, and computers. Furthermore, more than half of the millennials (56,2%) (Statistics SA, 2020) are under the age of 30 years.

Digital marketing

As a form of marketing, digital marketing harnesses the existence of technology by delivering content online through digital channels to connect to the consumer. The beginning of digital marketing started around the late 1990s, then, in 2014, it became the mainstream form of marketing for business (Davenport et al., 2020). The biggest advantage that digital marketing provide over traditional marketing is the ability to reach the targeted consumer using social media and search engines (Sinha & Singh, 2018). In addition, the cost of going digital is fairly lower, compared to the traditional means of marketing (Erevelles et al., 2016).

Channels of digital marketing

Digital marketing channels, also referred to as e-WOM (electronic word of mouth) (Levy & Gvili, 2015) are a variety of channels which marketers use to interact with customers. These channels are strategically employed by marketers (Corniani, 2006) to enhance communication with the consumer which in turn enhance customer relationships, support sales and create awareness to customers (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015). To understand the consumer, big data analytics is employed to analyse customer buying patterns. Big data consumer analytics are crucial in the evolution of digital marketing as it enables marketers to profile the consumers

based on preferences and buying patterns (Donnelly et al., 2015) and allow firms to create products tailored towards the needs of the specific markets. With big data, marketers have an opportunity to adapt a product or service to always suit the needs of the market in real-time. Big data also enables marketers to create a community of consumers in a digital environment who share similar interest to interact and share ideas by matching their interests based on the data collected. It is clear that big data consumer analytics is important for digital marketing and can be seen as an enabler of organisations to understand what customers prefer and how to strategize, based on the insights coming from consumer patterns.

Consumer behaviour

Consumer behaviour can be defined as the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behaviour, and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). There are a variety of factors that determine how consumers react to a specific marketing or advertising campaign. In the digital environment these factors increase, which contribute to the complexity of using this medium. Some of the factors affecting consumer behaviour are customer perceived value (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016), ethics (Järvinen & Karjaluo, 2015), customer engagement (Dovaliene et al., 2015), and behavioural economics (Dowling et al., 2019).

Millennial purchasing decisions

Millennials are influenced by many factors that inform their decision-making process (Kuhns & Saksena, 2016) such as health consciousness, sustainability, social validations, psychological pointers, price consciousness and a sense of value for money, therefore they compare different retailers online (Hall & Towers, 2017). Social media has become the most common platform which marketers use to advertise products and services to millennials as the majority of younger consumers are interacting across these platforms. Social media marketing has been employed to drive millennial attitudes towards brands and positively influence consumer attitudes (Oni et al., 2014; Duffett & Wakeham, 2016; Stephen, 2016). That was achieved by incorporating aspects such as entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth (Godey et al., 2016) to the marketing content. While social media marketing has been widely accepted as positively influencing consumer behaviour, there are indications to suggest the contrary. Some studies have revealed that not all digital marketing activities are favourable to millennials (Smith, 2011; Tiago & Verissimo, 2014), therefore the advent of ad-blocking (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Wielki & Grabara, 2018) which presents a big challenge for marketers (Vratonjic et al., 2013). There is thus an urgent need to understand the drivers behind this type of behaviour towards digital advertisements (Brinson et al., 2018).

Content marketing

Content marketing involves identifying, analysing, and satisfying customer demands (Baltes, 2015). Elements of content marketing involves localization of messages for specific audiences, personalization of content, creating emotions, and diversification (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015). This form of marketing requires marketers not only to promote high quality content, but to understand the target audience in order to adapt the content to their specific needs as a way to improve customer engagement (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Poldma, 2017) encompass the applicable human behavioural elements necessary to understand better millennials behaviour towards digital marketing and to influence the creation of content. According to Maslow's theory humans are motivated sequentially according to five levels of needs. These needs, applied to millennial marketing are: self-actualisation – This

dimension would be used to probe whether there are derived benefits which millennials get from digital marketing which achieve their needs? Esteem needs – whether digital marketing makes millennials feels a sense of accomplishment? Belongingness – the dimension would test whether digital marketing assist millennials to feel loved? Safety needs – the dimension would test whether the advertisements make the millennials feel safe? And, physiological needs – the dimension would test whether digital advertisements fulfil their physiological needs?

Methodology

An exploratory study was conducted as the research was aimed at discovering information on the impact of digital marketing on the behaviour of millennials. An interpretivism research philosophy was proposed as the most suitable. A qualitative cross-sectional research design (Kumar, 2011) was conducted. The research necessitated a careful study and understanding of millennial consumers as well as analysing their views on digital marketing. Constructs which were used to analyse the behaviour of millennial consumers were not quantifiable as it was based on the participants’ feelings and experiences. It was for this reason that qualitative research was deemed suitable. The population for this study consisted of millennials who have formal employment and purchase products online through a smart phone, tablets, or a computer. In Gauteng, millennials are estimated to be around 60% of the total population which translate to 8 million people. Purposive sampling was used. The researcher planned to interview 20 participants, but after 14 data saturation was reached.

The measurement instrument which was used for the data gathering process was an interview schedule with open-ended questions to encouraged the millennials to express their views and opinions. Pre-testing was conducted with one of the participants to ascertain whether the questions asked were clear enough to be understood. Participants were contacted individually to set-up the date and time convenient to them where the interviews will take place. Data was voice recorded and notes were taken. ATLAS.ti software was used to generate codes from the transcribed data so that themes and patterns could be generated which would be used to interpret the findings from the data collected. Validity and trustworthiness were assured by having the interviews recorded. In order to protect the participants, develop trust with them as well as to promote the integrity of this research the research was conducted in line with the guidelines of the University of Pretoria’s code of ethical conduct.

Findings

At the beginning of each interview, general questions were asked to the participants related to ascertain their purchasing preferences and to try to establish what products and services they prefer purchasing online. In addition, participants were also asked about the types of platforms they prefer purchasing from. The table below summarizes their responses. The table shows that most of the participants prefer purchasing products like electronic equipment and clothing online. Although the frequency of the purchasing of these products varies, the results showed that the participants make a purchase at least once a month. In terms of the preferences for purchasing these products, it was clear that the majority of them preferred to purchase from “online-Malls” and stores such as Takealot and E-bay.

Table 1: Participants

	Products	Frequency	Preferences
Participant 1	Electronic	Monthly	Takealot
Participant 2	Clothing, grocery	Monthly	Takealot,
Participant 3	Electronic	Monthly	E-bay, Takealot
Participant 4	Clothing	Monthly	Various
Participant 5	Clothing	Monthly	Takealot

Participant 6	Electronics	2 Monthly	Takealot
Participant 7	Electronics	Monthly	Takealot
Participant 8	Electronics	Monthly	Takealot
Participant 9	Electronics	Monthly	Takealot
Participant 10	Electronics	Monthly	Takealot
Participant 11	Electronics	Monthly	Takealot
Participant 12	Electronics	Monthly	Takealot
Participant 13	Electronics	Monthly	Takealot
Participant 14	Electronics	Monthly	Takealot

The benefits of digital marketing for the consumer

The first theme identified was the benefit digital marketing has for the millennial consumer. The participants indicated that it was convenient, because they could shop from the comfort of their homes and the products get delivered. Participant 1 stated: “The major benefit is convenience. I am able to do shopping from the comfort of my home without having to go out to the shops and having it delivered at no extra cost.” Participant 5 added: “Shopping online makes it easier for me to get the products I want as I don’t have to move from store to store looking for a particular product.” To this, Participant 7 added: “It is a smooth process where I am able to shop for whatever product I intent to buy and get it delivered securely to my home.”

The next identified sub-theme, related to the first theme, was the way in which pop-up advertisements affect the shopping experience. Varied responses were recorded of which the majority of the respondents were positive about pop-up advertisements and felt that digital adverts simplified their shopping experience. Participant 1 stated: “These advertisements make it easier for me to get the products that I want to purchase as they normally send through specials which save me time. I do not have to go through the internet or magazine to try finding the best deals.”

Participant 2 commented: “With the pop-up advertisements, they mostly advertise products which I like to have and when I have the money, I find it easy to go get them and normally all the products are readily available online.” To this, Participant 8 added: “They provide information on the products that I sometimes like and they are mostly at a cheaper price than what you will normally find in the big retail shops.”

On the other hand, some respondents felt that the pop-up advertisements were not necessarily beneficial to their shopping experience citing that they disturb them when they are busy on their smartphones. Participant 7 complained: “I wish you could choose to de-activate them. They are not what you want at a particular time.” Participant 5 added: “...to me they come up at a time when I would be busy with something and I find it annoying as at that time I am not in a mood to do any shopping.” While there were some participants who did not like the pop-up advertisements the majority of the respondents were in favour of these advertisements.

The third sub-theme identified was regarding the influence of digital advertisements (pop-up advertisements) on decisions to purchase products online. The majority of the respondents indicate that because they saw products advertised at an acceptable price, they purchased the products. The advertisement was thus the main driving factor for their decision to buy. To illustrate, Participant 1 said: “Mostly when I have searched a particular product online, the next time I open my smartphone and searching for a certain product, an advert comes up related to what I would have been searching for.” To this, Participant 9 added: “If the product that was being advertised, is something which I was intending to purchase, these advertisements come in especially useful in making that decision easier.”

The fourth identified sub-theme related to theme one was the way in which digital advertisements assist in getting the best possible deals. Millennials emphasised the

convenience of money back guarantees or product exchange if the product is defective. They had an opportunity to make an informed decision on what is the best product to purchase even if it was not based solely on price, quality, or delivery terms. Participant 13 confirmed: “When you see an advertisement, the price is normally cheaper than what you would buy it for at the stores; and the other good thing about the deals is their quality guarantee promise which they give. If you are not happy with the product they will come and collect it from you, Takealot is one of them.”

The next related sub-theme was the manner in which digital adverts are delivered to the consumer. The opinions from the millennials were mixed. Most felt that they had observed a trend whereby they felt that they were being watched as the content they received was somehow linked to the previous searches they had done. On the other hand, other respondents felt that the advertisements go overboard where they would get an advert of something which they would not necessarily would like to purchase and thus find the manner in which the content was delivered to be annoying. Participant 5 explained: “The only worry I have with these pop-up advertisements is that they come up even at a time when you don’t need them. It is like someone is watching what you have been browsing the previous time which makes me feel uncomfortable.” All the themes and responses related to the first main identified theme indicated that the content was widely accepted, but concerns were raised about the manner in which these advertisements were send out.

The physical or psychological effects of digital advertisements enhancing the millennial experience

Opinions related to this theme were mixed with most respondents expressing their concerns as a psychological effect about the content they received as they were mostly related to what they were searching for on the different platforms. This then raised a concern for the participants as they felt that they are being watched while browsing the net. A sub-theme related to the physical effect was also identified related to their experience regarding the quality of products purchased through digital advertisements. Millennials confirmed that they were fairly satisfied with the level of quality promised by the advertisements. Participant 5, as an example answered: “I recently followed an advertisement which was promising a saving on the insurance if I switched to them, I contacted them and to my surprise I made a saving. So yes, I would say the experience was good”. To this, Participant 12 added: “The advertisement has so far lived up to the promise as I remember purchasing speakers through following an advertisement that came through a pop-up and the supplier of the speaker promised a money back guarantee if I was not satisfied with the product. So far, I am happy with my purchase.”

Sub-theme two identified was about the relevance of the products advertised through digital marketing to their specific needs. Most respondents stated that it was relevant. Participant 6 confirmed: “I found the pop-up advertisements to be relevant most of the time. What sometimes concerns me is that it feels like someone is watching what I am searching for on the internet. That sometimes makes me worry. It is as if someone is hacking my phone.” Some responses were not that positive to this question. Participant 7 as an example stated: “I found the content irrelevant to what I want. I think the advertisements are distributed randomly as I receive many different adverts and it annoys me sometimes.” Participant 3 added: “Most of the time they will send you advertisements for products that you do not need to purchase. So, for me, the content of these advertisements mostly is not relevant to what I need.”

A sub-theme three was identified with the focus on the influence these digital advertisements had on the respondent to purchase the advertised products online. Opinions were mostly related to the way the advert looks and how it is delivered. The summarising response was as Participant 12 stated: “If there is something that I really like, I will try push

myself to get it but I don't just buy anything I see on the advertisements." Participant 10 opined: "Not really, yet they attract my attention. I would normally buy the product when it is advertised at a cheaper price."

The next sub-theme identified was about the difference between advertisements digitally delivered versus printed ones. All preferred digital advertisements, as stated by participant 2: "It is better if advertisements are sent through digital via smartphone as we mostly don't look at newspapers or flyers. I don't normally give attention to advertisements that are printed." Participant 14 summarised the general feeling by stating: "I prefer online advertisements that are creative and delivering a good message but it not necessarily means that I would purchase the product. So, for me timing is a particularly important element as I would purchase, depending on whether or not I have a need for the product." The second main theme thus highlighted the fact that millennials are fairly happy with the products that they purchase online and the adverts they receive digitally.

The safety of millennial consumers when interacting on digital marketing platforms

Millennials felt that they were being watched when interacting through various channels:

Participant 4 stated: "The only concern I have related to these pop-up advertisements is that I tend to get a feeling that someone is watching what I am browsing online. I say this because I have noticed a trend whereby the advertisements that I receive on my cellular phone are related to the searches that I was doing previously." The other side of this theme identified, has been experienced positive as almost all participants indicated that they trusted the platforms for securing them and they never had a situation where they experienced fraud or theft. Sub-theme three related to this main theme, is about authentication, biometrics or passwords for making online purchases. The opinions were unanimous that all seemed to trust this method of authentication to ensure that they are secure while interacting online. The fourth sub-theme was about what could be done to make consumers feeling safer on the internet. All have the same opinion:

Participant 10: "I believe the system is sufficient, no concern from my side."

Participant 14: "I feel that the way they protect the data is sufficient."

Participant 8: "I am happy with the way data is secured."

All respondents indicated that they felt they were well protected and that they seem to have no other concerns related to safety with the platforms.

Digital marketing enhancing millennial's brand preferences

The first sub-theme identified stated that digital advertisements did not enhance brand experience. To the millennials, what matter was the cost of the product more than the brand. As, Participant 13 stated: "To me the pop-up advertisements does not enhance brand preference in any way, what matters to me is the cost of the product I get on the advert." Another participant shared a similar sentiment. Participant 10 said: "The pop-up advertisements does not impact the brand in any way, if they come selling at a good price, I will purchase."

Sub-theme two identified was: The usefulness of digital advertisements in strengthening the relations with their favourite brand. Most participants mentioned the importance of using brand influencers which they feel are strengthening the brand. They are of the opinion that an advertisement alone, does not strengthen the brand. Participant 5 noted: "The advertisements could be useful if they use famous people to promote the brands as this could attract the customers towards the brand." Participant 1 also confirmed: "If they can maybe get in celebrities to promote those brands, I think in a way that could create brand relations and awareness."

Discussion

Millennials are of the opinion that digital advertisements are enhancing their shopping experience by providing convenience and savings. It is a useful tool for saving time to browse through specials and look for the products as these are sent to them through digital advertisements. This is in line with what Baird and Raghu (2015) described as the point where perceived value and satisfaction meets. Other benefits identified were that they get in contact with the best deals online. Millennials find thus find digital advertisements helpful to save, which, according to Borden (1964) and Gilaninia et al. (2013), is one of the benefits on a marketing mix strategy.

The majority of the participants were not comfortable with the fact that the advertisements pops-up at any time. Smith (2011) indicated that consumers can get annoyed by some digital marketing campaigns. Millennials found the digital adverts though useful in providing them with reliable advertising information. Reliability according to the research refers to the advertisements which promises something and deliver at that expected level. This relates to the marketing mix theory (Borden, 1964) whereby the service that was provided by the advertisement was of superior quality (Waterschoot & Bulte, 2015). With regard to the themes where millennials indicated that the content was relevant to what they wanted, the theory related to customer perceived value could be applicable as the value that they received through content that is relevant to their needs. The behaviour of these millennials is likely favourable to the advertisement hence they display some level of satisfaction (Dovaliene et al., 2015) regarding the content. Millennials would not necessarily purchase everything that would have been advertised through digital advertisements, only if they need to get it. Literature detailing how millennials make purchasing decisions is still developing, however there are studies that indicate the complexity surrounding their decision-making process. When compared to the previous generations, millennials were found to be influenced by issues like validations (Kuhns & Saksena, 2016), ethics and other social issues. Millennials are also more susceptible to advertisements which stimulates the brain by providing creativity and sending the right message.

Security concerns were mentioned where their personal information being used without their knowledge. The literature corroborates these concerns as it was seen that customer behaviour is impacted by the fact that their info, such as buying behaviour, is available on the web (Arkhipova & Gurieva, 2018; Iucolano et al., 2018). This then confirms that the findings are consistent with the literature. Millennials engage securely online, interacting on different platforms. Millennials do not perceive digital advertisements are useful in promoting brands. The literature suggests that digital advertisements, especially social media, is the most common tool marketers use to promote their brands (Godey et al., 2016) and by encouraging interaction through the social media platforms, social media enhances consumer behaviour towards the brands (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). In addition, literature also indicated how social media communication positively affects consumer attitudes. Millennials view influencers or celebrities as useful to strengthen customer relations with the brand in the digital environment.

Conclusions and recommendations

The findings from the research indicated that millennials found digital marketing to be beneficial. They also find advertisements that are visually appealing favourable, and they tend to give attention to advertisements like that. They highlighted concerns about the manner through which the advertisements were delivered as they tended to indicate that they were being watched. Maybe they just don't understand how AI, bots and spiders work and how they crawl the web to make links and connections. This can be a recommendation for further research. The findings on brand preferences affirm that there are clear links between the

traditional marketing concepts and digital marketing which strengthen the argument that there should be a way to integrate the traditional marketing concepts with modern concepts. Business needs to continuously adapt its strategies to ensure that they are geared for the needs of the consumers. At the same time, business should not avoid the messages that are sent out by those millennials who seem to dislike the digital advertisements. The research was limited in scope and it covered a fraction of the entire population. This then implicates that the results might not necessarily represent the wider population of millennials. In addition, the issue of geographic location plays a limiting role. Millennials interviewed for this research were all in Gauteng. The results might differ when a group from another province or area, especially rural areas, were interviewed, as the level of education, access to internet and buying behaviour, differs.

References

- Arkhipova, N. & Gurieva, M. (2018). Internet of Things in Digital Marketing and Data Security Concerns. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 225, 262–265.
- Baird, A. & Raghu, T. S. (2015). Associating consumer perceived value with business models for digital services. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 24(1), 4–22.
- Baltes, P. L. (2015). Content marketing - the fundamental tool of digital marketing. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov. Economic Sciences*, 2(8), 111–118.
- Borden, N. H. (1964). The concept of the marketing mix. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 4(2), 2–7.
- Brinson, N. H., Eastin, M. S. & Cicchirillo, V. J. (2018). Reactance to Personalization: Understanding the Drivers Behind the Growth of Ad Blocking. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 18(2), 136–147.
- Chetty, R., Friedman, J. N., Hendren, N. & Stepner, M. (2020). Real-Time Economics: A New Platform to Track the Impacts of COVID-19 on People, Businesses, and Communities Using Private Sector Data. *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling*, 53(9), 1689–1699.
- Corniani, M. (2006). Digital Marketing Communication, Symphonya. *Emerging Issues in Management*, 2, 41–61.
- Davenport, T., Guha, A., Grewal, D. & Bressgott, T. (2020). How artificial intelligence will change the future of marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48(1), 24–42.
- Donnelly, C., Simmons, G., Armstrong, G. & Fearne, A. (2015). Digital loyalty card ‘big data’ and small business marketing: Formal versus informal or complementary? *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, 33(4), 422–442.
- Dovaliene, A., Masiulyte, A. & Piligrimiene, Z. (2015). The Relations between Customer Engagement, Perceived Value and Satisfaction: The Case of Mobile Applications. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 213, 659–664.
- Dowling, K., Guhl, D., Klapper, D., Spann, M., Stich, L. & Yegoryan, N. (2019). Behavioral biases in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 449–477.
- Duffett, R. G. & Wakeham, M. (2016). Article 2 20 Duffett and Wakeham Social media marketing communications effect on attitudes. *The African Journal of Information Systems*, 8(3), 21.
- Erevelles, S., Fukawa, N. & Swayne, L. (2016). Big Data consumer analytics and the transformation of marketing. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(2), 897–904.

- Gilaninia, S., Taleghani, M. & Azizi, N. (2013). Marketing Mix And Consumer Behavior. *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 2(12), 53–58.
- Godey, B., Manthiou, A., Pederzoli, D., Rokka, J., Aiello, G., Donvito, R. & Singh, R. (2016). Social media marketing efforts of luxury brands: Influence on brand equity and consumer behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(12), 5833–5841.
- Hall, A. & Towers, N. (2017). Understanding how Millennial shoppers decide what to buy: Digitally connected unseen journeys. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 45(5), 498–517.
- Hollebeek, L. D. & Macky, K. (2019). Digital Content Marketing's Role in Fostering Consumer Engagement, Trust, and Value: Framework, Fundamental Propositions, and Implications. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 45, 27–41.
- Iucolano, D. M., Western, C., Lyytinen, K. & Western, C. (2018). Personal Data Sharing and Collection : Consumer Acceptance and Fairness of Exchanges in Digital Environments. *AMA Summer Academic Conference Papers*, 39–44.
- Järvinen, J. & Karjaluo, H. (2015). The use of Web analytics for digital marketing performance measurement. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 50, 117–127.
- Kee, A. W. A. & Yazdanifard, R. (2015). The Review of Content Marketing as a New Trend in Marketing Practices. *International Journal of Management, Accounting and Economics*, 2(9), 1055–1064.
- Kuhns, A. & Saksena, M. (2016). How Millennial Food Purchase Decisions Compare to Previous Generations. *Agricultural and Applied Economics Association*.
- Kumar, R., (2011). *Research Methodology A Step By Step Guide*. 3rd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp.25-40
- Levy, S. & Gvili, Y. (2015). How credible is e-word of mouth across digital-marketing channels? The roles of social capital, information richness, and interactivity. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 55(1).
- Oni, O. A., Shumba, P. M. & Matiza, T. (2014). The impact of social media-based marketing on the turnover of retailers based in Polokwane, South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(9), 307–316.
- Ordun, G. (2015). Millennial (Gen Y) Consumer Behavior Their Shopping Preferences and Perceptual Maps Associated With Brand Loyalty. *Canadian Social Science*, 11(4), 1–16.
- Poldma, T. (2017). Hierarchy of Needs. *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Design*.
- Schivinski, B. & Dabrowski, D. (2016). The effect of social media communication on consumer perceptions of brands. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 22(2), 189–214.
- Sheth, J. N. & Parvatiyar, A. (2015). *The Evolution of Relationship Marketing Orientations*. IGI Global.
- Sinha, S. & Singh, T. (2018). Travel from Traditional Marketing to Digital Marketing. *International Journal of Emerging Research in Management and Technology*, 6(11), 173.
- Smith, K. T. (2011). Digital marketing strategies that Millennials find appealing, motivating, or just annoying. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 19(6), 489–499.
- Statistics South Africa. (2020). *Education Series Volume VI : Education and Labour Market Outcomes in South Africa, 2018*. Available at statssa.gov.za/publications/92-01-06/92-01-062018.pdf [Retrieved 6 June 2022].
- Statista (Clement, J). (2019, December 2). Internet user Penetration in South Africa from 2017-2023.



- Stauss, B. (2000). Using New Media for Customer Interaction: A Challenge for Relationship Marketing. *Relationship Marketing*.
- Stephen, A. T. (2016). The role of digital and social media marketing in consumer behavior. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 10, 17–21.
- Tiago, M. T. P. M. B. & Veríssimo, J. M. C. (2014). Digital marketing and social media: Why bother? *Business Horizons*, 57(6), 703–708.
- Vratonjic, N., Manshaei, M. H., Grossklags, J. & Hubaux, J. P. (2013). Ad-Blocking games: Monetizing online content under the threat of ad avoidance. *The Economics of Information Security and Privacy*, 49–73.
- Waterschoot, W. & Bulte, C. (2015). The Classification of the Revisited Marketing Mix. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(4), 83–93.
- West, D. M. (2015). *Digital Divide: Improving Internet Access In The Developing World Through Affordable Services and Diverse Content Executive Summary*. Center for Technology Innovation at Brookings, February, 1–30.
- Wielki, J. & Grabara, J. (2018). The impact of Ad-blocking on the sustainable development of the digital advertising ecosystem. *Sustainability*, 10(11), 1–14.