



## The Impact of Using Social Media for Advertising Appliances on Consumer Behaviour

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### Abstract

The small appliance industry in South Africa offers consumers a wide range of appliances, models and brands. Understanding the consumer and shopper trends is still in its infancy stage within this segment of the market. This study focuses on investigating the use of effective online engagement and the ability to understand how online interaction changes consumers' behaviour among an appliance brand's customers which constitute the sample of the study. How the group can understand the full route to market and best make use of segments for engagement was also investigated. A survey was conducted where questionnaire was administrated via the group's page on Facebook and consisted of opinion-based questions on the perception of Facebook as a medium to influence consumer behaviour. The results of the survey revealed that potential consumers who use Facebook do engage with appliance brands and manufactures, and they admit that engaging with them on Facebook influences their behaviour around appliances.

**Key words:** small appliance industry, online engagement behaviour, consumer behaviour

### 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Postman (2009:2), social media is top of the agenda for many executives today. Many organisations are trying to find profitable ways to take advantage of social media platforms. Social media came into existence because of the internet. The internet is relatively new to the globe and has brought a technological arena with it. Postman (2009:7) claims that social media is becoming a large medium used to communicate to potential consumers, shoppers and users of products. It is becoming a preferred medium in the marketing communication mix for many organisations, purely because it reaches a wide audience at a cost-effective rate. Postman (2009:09) states that with social media being so broad, it is very difficult to segment the market for traditional brand managers of today. This study aims to find out if advertising on Facebook influences consumer behaviour. According to Kotler and Keller (2009:190), consumer behaviour is the study of how consumers, groups and organisations behave when they purchase, use or dispose of goods. Consumer behaviour can be described as the behaviour shown by consumers when starting to engage with brands and advertising to which they may be exposed. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:2) state that social media comprises internet-

based tools or platforms that people use to socialise and keep in touch with each other. Few of the social media sites that can be mentioned are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Noyes (2015:1) states that social media sites such as Facebook registered 1.49 billion active users in 2015. To put this number into perspective, this equates to 28.6 times South Africa's population. Beekman (2008:464) says that e-commerce is transforming business. E-commerce is simply internet-based electronic commerce. Beekman (2008:464) states that e-commerce will account for more than 8 per cent of the world's sales of goods and services. This research aims to indicate the scale of social media and the possible opportunities that await organisations to take advantage of communicating to customers via this viral medium. The aim of the study is to determine if net surfers on a social media site such as Facebook actually take note of commercial advertising, and what their attention span is to such adverts. The study aims to determine whether the net surfer will ultimately be engaged to take action to investigate the product or surf further, and whether it will ultimately lead to a change in consumer behaviour. Furthermore, it seeks to determine whether the potential customer will still follow the traditional steps of engagement. The study was narrowed down to understand whether advertising appliances on Facebook influences consumer behaviour to create awareness, interest and desire, thereby translating into a medium for advertising that drives more sales. The research could potentially be of value to organisations or brand managers, as it will indicate how to fine-tune their marketing communication methods to ensure that the best return is achieved for their investment.

### **1.1 The research problem**

Brand managers of today have had to adapt their communications mix when communicating with shoppers. Brands now enjoy global exposure at very affordable prices. Social media platforms are becoming a popular way for people to stay in touch with friends and to follow people on mediums such as Twitter and Instagram. Many organisations, such as the appliance group, use Facebook as a platform to advertise and interact with consumers. It is not yet clear whether spending a large amount of money and time on this medium of consumer interaction actually influences consumer behaviour, and if there is a conversion into sales. Facebook is a platform that has 1.4 billion active users. It may seem to be a relevantly low-cost medium to reach many consumers; however, organisations such as this appliance group, do not yet know how to reach all the active users, whether there is real value in this advertising medium, whether there is value in creating a Facebook page for brands and company websites with links, and whether it is worthwhile to invest in a resource to manage this communication platform. The key question is whether advertising on Facebook really delivers a return on the investment. The study aims to find answers to this question.

### **1.2 Research questions**

- Does the advertising of appliances on Facebook effect consumer behaviour?
- Do consumers use the Facebook platform to purchase appliances?
- What are the benefits of Facebook in adapting communication mixes for social media to influence consumer behaviour?
- What recommendations can be made to brand managers of the appliance group as to the impact of advertising on social media platforms?

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

This study will bring a new understanding to the appliance market within South Africa. It aims to provide an understanding of just how in touch the South African consumer is with social media, and if this medium is in use by potential shoppers to search for appliances. The most significant finding will be to see if advertising on social media sites

influences consumers or shoppers and ultimately translate into additional sales for the appliance group. This study provides a great deal of insight to appliance manufacturers around how to engage with potential customers on social media, help marketers to develop social media strategies and campaigns that work, and to understand how to incorporate social media advertising into the communication mix.

#### **1.4 Limitations of the study**

This study is limited to a South African appliance group and the ability to advertise on Facebook, which is a narrow segment of the total Facebook community. It is possible that an investigation into advertising on Facebook and the influence on consumer buying behaviour may reveal different findings if exposed to the Facebook community at large. The potential impact would be to understand whether advertising on Facebook influences consumer behaviour.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Hawkins, Best and Coney (1995:03) state that consumer behaviour is the study of how consumers behave, which is what marketing managers should consider when developing a marketing strategy. Consumer behaviour is a complex and multi-dimensional process. Many organisations spend numerous hours and money trying to understand why consumers behave the way they do towards specific brands (Hawkins et al., 1995:8). Marketing managers need to change their marketing mix and marketing strategies when using social media. This simply means that consumers behave differently when organisations use different mediums of advertising. Consumers behave differently and are all unique. Organisations naturally want to target as many consumers as possible. When marketers look at engaging with consumers via social media, they need to understand that consumers behave differently and would need to target their approach in such a manner that the desired outcome is achieved. Consumers are driven by different promotional elements; some consumers are price-driven, while others are driven by brand equity, promotional information and product satisfaction. One may ask what influences consumer behaviour. Etzel (1997:116) states that there are cultural, social and personal factors that influence consumer behaviour. Culture is a fundamental determinant of a person's wants and behaviours. Family and other institutions also influence consumer behaviour. Etzel (1997:117) states that each culture consists of sub-cultures that provide more specific identification and socialisation for their members. Sub-cultures are determined by different nationalities, religions, racial groups and geographic regions. When sub-cultures grow large and affluent enough, companies often design specialised marketing programmes to serve them.

### **2.1 Consumer buying behaviour**

According to Kotler and Keller (2009:194), opinion leaders are highly influential as to how consumers may behave. When a well-known chef like Gordon Ramsey is seen on a small appliance advert, it may influence consumers to purchase the product. Etzel (1997:119) states that family is the most important consumer buying behaviour organisation. Family members are often the most influential primary reference group. The family of orientation consists of parents and siblings. Parents impart orientation towards religion, politics, economics and a sense of personal ambition, self-worth and love. According to Kotler and Keller (2009:197), a more direct influence on everyday buying behaviour is the family procreation, namely one's spouse and children. Kotler and Keller (2009:198) contends that roles and status influence consumer behaviour. Groups are often an important source of information in forming and defining norms for behaviour. One can define a person's position in each group through their status. A role consists of the activities a person is expected to perform, and each role carries a status. Silbiger (1999:12) states that consumer behaviour is affected by personal factors or personal characteristics. These include the buyer's age, stage in their life cycle, occupation, economic

circumstances, personality and lifestyle. Regarding age and stage in a person's life cycle, Kotler and Keller (2009:197) states that food, clothes, appliances and furniture are often related to age. Consumer behaviour changes as people age; not only do people potentially move into different income brackets, but their preferences and behaviour change as they age. Blyth (2006:154) discusses the major role that occupation and economic circumstances play in consumption and buying patterns. A working class consumer will buy work clothes, work shoes and lunchboxes. A company president will spend on dress suits, air travel and country club memberships. Marketers try to identify occupational groups to help segment the market and create a strategy that targets the correct shopper. Economic circumstances greatly affect the product of choice because disposable income and work stability play a major role in a shoppers' buying behaviour. Personality and self-concept also influence consumer behaviour. Kotler and Keller (2009:197) posits that each person has their own personality characteristics that influence consumer behaviour. This would mean that a distinguishing set of human psychological traits leads to relatively consistent and enduring responses to environmental stimuli, including buying behaviour. We often describe this in terms of traits such as self-confidence, autonomy, deference, sociability, defensiveness and adaptability. Kotler and Keller (2009:198) states that personality is a major decisive factor in brand choices. According to Kotler and Keller (2009:198), brand personalities are identified by the traits of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Consumer behaviour is furthermore influenced by one's lifestyle and values. Kotler and Keller (2009:199) states that people from the same sub-culture, social class and occupation may lead quite different lifestyles. Lifestyle is shaped partly by whether a consumer is money-constrained or time-constrained. Companies aiming to serve money-constrained consumers will create low-cost products and services. Due to lower pricing, there is reduced shopper risk and shopper decisions are therefore made easier. When it comes to appliances in South Africa, pricing plays a major role in shopper behaviour; the more expensive the product, the higher the risk and the more thought consumers put into their purchasing decisions.

## **2.2 Key psychological process**

According to Kotler and Keller (2009:200), the starting point for understanding consumer behaviour is the stimulus-response model. The job of a marketer is to understand what happens in the consumer's consciousness between arrival of outside marketing stimuli, and the ultimate purchase decision. Kotler and Keller (2009:201) states that there are key psychological processes that influence the consumer's response. These are perception, learning and memory.

**Perception:** According to Etzel (1997:121), a motivated person is ready to act; how they act is influenced by the situation. Perception is the process by which consumers select, organise and interpret information inputs to create a meaningful picture of the world. The key point is that it depends not only on the physical stimuli, but also on the stimuli's relationship to the surrounding field and on conditions within each consumer. A consumer or shopper may perceive a fast-talking salesperson as aggressive and insincere, and other shoppers may perceive the salesperson as intelligent and efficient. Each shopper may behave and perceive the salesperson differently.

**Learning:** According to Etzel (1997:123), when consumers act they learn, and learning induces a change in behaviour. Theorists believe that learning is produced through interplay of drives, stimuli, cues, responses and reinforcement. Two popular approaches to learning are classical conditioning and instrumental conditioning. A drive is a strong stimulus-impelling action, and cues are minor stimuli that determine when, where and how a person responds.

**Memory:** Kotler and Keller (2009:205) states that all the information and experiences consumers encounter as they go through life can end up in their long-term memory. Memory plays an important part in consumer behaviour; consumers

remember information about brands and how they perceive the brands. Brand associations consist of all brand-related thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences, beliefs and attitudes.

## **2.3 Buying process**

The buying process is a very important process to understand, as social media and the internet make many of the buying processes more relevant and easier to complete. Kotler and Keller (2009:207) states that the buying process plays an important role in understanding how consumers actually make their buying decisions. Kotler and Keller (2009:208) states that the consumer goes through a specific five-stage buying process.

### **2.3.1 Purchase decision**

According to Etzel (1997:113), in the evaluation phase, the consumer forms a preference among the brands in the choice set. The consumer may also form an intention to buy the most preferred brand. Kotler and Keller (2009:212) states that there is a non-compensatory model, and an intervening factor that should be considered with the purchase decision. Kotler and Keller (2009:212) claims that the expectancy model is a compensatory model. It is the perception that good things of a product can overcome bad things. Kotler and Keller (2009:212) asserts that there are intervening factors that can intervene between the purchase intention and purchase decision. The attitudes of other people entail the extent to which the buying or purchase decision is influenced. The purchase decision is influenced by the intensity of the other person's negativity, or the motive to comply with the other person's wishes. Kotler and Keller (2009:213) makes an important point by stating that the level of risk plays a large role in the purchase decision. This is normally based on the amount of money linked to the product and the level of risk attached. High expenditures often drive uncertainty, as it may result in negative consequences. It is essential for small appliance organisations to help consumers overcome their uncertainty by providing a good explanation of product features and benefits. Organisations also need to provide assistance via a money back guarantee if the consumer is unhappy with the product. This will help overcome uncertainty and risk.

### **2.3.2 Post-Purchase behaviour**

According to Etzel (1997:114), after the purchase the consumer may experience dissonance that stems from noticing certain disquieting features or hearing favourable things about other brands. Kotler and Keller (2009:214) states that post-purchase behaviour is divided into three main categories:

**Post-purchase satisfaction:** This is the process where the consumer measures the level of performance versus expectations, leading to either a level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. If the product exceeds the level of expectation, the consumer will be delighted. These feelings will play a major role in the consumer becoming a brand ambassador or not.

**Purchase actions:** If the consumer is satisfied, they are more likely to purchase the product again. A satisfied customer will also say good things about a brand. If the consumer is dissatisfied, they may return the product, not endorse the product to peers, and even take legal action or discuss the product on social media platforms. Organisations should always manufacture products that aim to exceed consumer expectations.

**Post-purchase use and disposal:** Organisations should always try to monitor how consumers use and dispose of their products. A key driver to sales is the rate of consumption; the quicker the rate of consumption, the sooner the consumer may be ready for repurchase. Organisations should provide guidance to consumers on when products should be replaced to try to encourage repurchase.

## **2.4 Commercial social media**

Organisations are increasingly communicating with consumers over social media, and using the internet as a platform to reach potential consumers. Many social media sites are used as a platform for shoppers or consumers to voice their opinions of products and brands. This can be a very useful tool for organisations to understand how consumers feel and react to their products and brands, but can also be damaging to the brand if a product does not perform to consumer expectations.

## **2.5 Social media demographics**

Brennan (2010:17) states that the majority of the social media users are younger people, but its use is growing rapidly among the older generation. Year after year social media usage has grown by age group. Age group 12–17 has the most users, comprising 78 per cent of the social media usage by 2010. Age group 18–24 jumped dramatically from 64 per cent to 75 per cent from 2009 to 2010. A significant amount of users from the age group 25–34 joined social media in 2010, moving from 44 per cent in 2009 to 65 per cent in 2010. Age group 35–44 has seen many newcomers year on year, with 17 per cent in 2008, 32 per cent in 2009 and 51 per cent in 2010. This shows that the more mature generation is also catching on to social media. The age group 45–54 had a 13 per cent increase in social media users from 2009 to 2010, moving from 22 per cent in 2009 to 35 per cent in 2010. The age group 55–64 had a dramatic jump of new users between 2009 and 2010, 21 per cent more users, moving from 10 per cent in 2009 to 31 per cent in 2010. The age group 65+ did not show any movement between 2008 and 2009, remaining at 3 per cent, but jumped to 13 per cent in 2010. This figure really tells organisations a lot about how the older generation is starting to use social media and becoming more computer literate. According to Sherrie (2011:98), Facebook and MySpace are the two social networks that have the most followers. The social websites allow users to connect and share information with other users. Sherrie (2011:99) states that organisations are increasingly using Facebook to connect with their customers and potential new customers.

## **2.6 Facebook**

According to Levinson (2012:83), Facebook users want to interact with people, not companies and organisations. People do business with people they like and who are like them. Levinson (2012:83) says that organisations need to encourage users to visit and like the organisation's page by offering discounts and incentives. When a visitor clicks the 'like' button on the Facebook page, it is as if they are giving the organisation, brand or product their endorsement or stamp of approval. Once the user has liked the page, it will appear on the user's profile for all of their friends to see. If one of their friends is looking for a new appliance, they may see that their friend has endorsed the product, and this will create interest. The friend may then research the product a little further or go to the organisation's Facebook page once they have researched the product, and then also 'like' it. This action may possibly lead to desire and eventually purchasing of the product. Levinson (2012:83) says that the organisation's goal for their Facebook presence is to get people to become aware of the organisation's Facebook page, and then go to the page and interact with it. The user will interact with some of the products and brands. The user will hopefully like the page, and through this their friends may become aware of the organisation's Facebook page, and be interested in visiting the page. Levinson (2012:83) says that if an organisation gets all of this to happen, the organisation may have a credible referral. According to Levinson (2012:84), an organisation always has a better chance of conversion when handed a personal referral with a credible introduction. Marshal (2009:101) claims that Facebook has changed the playing field around advertising on the internet. Facebook has a massive membership basis, and this makes it attractive to organisations to advertise on Facebook because one can target

the right consumer through profile selection, likes and dislikes. This large membership base is a cost-effective tool to reach a large audience. Facebook provides statistics around click rates. This is known as click through rate, abbreviated as CTR. This rate calculates how many times a user needs to see the advert before clicking on the ad.

### **2.6.1 What does Facebook offer?**

Facebook Inc. is a business that operates as a social networking company globally. The organisation builds network capabilities that enable users to connect, share, discover and communicate with each other. Facebook also enables developers to build social applications on Facebook to integrate their websites with Facebook. Facebook offers products that enable advertisers and marketers to engage with its users. Brennan (2010:18) states that engaging in social media is not just about having a Facebook page; engaging with people on Facebook for retailers and manufacturers is a good place to start creating brand awareness. Sherrie (2010:100) states that Facebook can provide small businesses with a cost-effective means of positioning themselves to reach target groups with the potential of a high return. Sherrie (2010:100) states that it is important to remember that a high number of fans do not necessarily mean a high success rate, and that most Facebook pages have just over 500 fans. Brennan (2010:19) states that Facebook is currently the largest and most influential social network, and allows demographic data to be easily segmented for targeted research and promotions. Weber (2009:215) claims that according to the Facebook company statement, "Facebook can help small business owners easily tap into a global network of peers and advisors, amounting to more than 80,000 small businesses already on Facebook." Weber (2009:215) states that Facebook has the facilities to assist small organisations with valuable business tools, and help them efficiently identify and target thousands of prospective customers. Haydon, Dunay and Krueger (2012:145) state that Facebook has a great deal to offer organisations, and provides organisations with some key insights. Haydon et al. (2012:145) states that Facebook insights is a suite of tools that help one make informed decisions about how to adjust one's marketing strategy on Facebook. The insight tool helps organisations to understand how best to get a return from their investment, to get key insights into the organisation's targeted consumer and how to influence their behaviour. Haydon et al. (2012:145) states the most import function around Facebook insights is that it helps organisations measure their marketing efforts and see how these efforts translate into customers.

### **2.6.2 Facebook and consumer behaviour**

Geoffrey (2011:295) states that social media can influence consumer behaviour through interpersonal influence. Interpersonal influence occurs when a consumer's attitude or behaviour changes as a consequence of interpersonal communication. Geoffrey (2011:296) claims that the internet has allowed consumers to voice their opinion regarding products and services with much more ease. This could potentially influence other consumers when they read posts about products, such as appliances, on sites. According to Geoffrey (2011:296), opinion websites, blogs and sites that have been designed for consumer complaints are all social mediums that can influence consumer behaviour. Close (2012:01) states that consumer behaviour can be influenced by online social sites, such as Facebook, by encouraging consumers to interact with brands and promotions. Consumers who engage with promotions and brands in a positive manner would often like the supplier's Facebook page. According to Close (2012:05), social media sites such as Facebook are changing how consumers behave, especially the younger generation. Close (2012:154) states that Facebook allows users to create unique profiles, and now even allows users to create brand avatars through their interactions with other Facebook users. This is starting to influence consumer behaviour and how consumers identify with brands. Wrench (2013:88) states that no matter how organisations look and try to influence consumer behaviour, it is the network and users that ultimately influence the behaviours of other users by discussing and 'liking' Facebook pages. Wrench (2013:89) states that

Facebook users or consumers would go through the following processes, namely opinion information giving, opinion information passing or opinion information seeking:

**Opinion information giving:** This is Facebook users providing information, sharing with networks and communities. Some Facebook users post their thoughts and experiences. It could be as simple as a dining experience at a restaurant.

**Opinion information passing:** This would be part of the traditional word-of-mouth marketing experience, whereby a consumer would pass on someone else's thoughts or experience to their network of enquiring social users.

**Opinion information seeking:** The most common on Facebook networking pages is someone posting a question. This will then get the network of Facebook users to comment and share information, or even pass on information from someone else. Wrench (2013:92) states that this is how Facebook users interact with each other, and essentially influence each other's behaviour towards an organisation's brands and products. If an organisation wants to try influence consumer behaviour on Facebook, they need to do the following (Wrench, 2013:95):

**Go where there are customers:** Organisations need to focus their energy on understand who the target market is, and where they are on Facebook.

**Connect with influencers:** In any social media network such as Facebook, there are people who are influential, people who share information and experiences and, in a large network of users, people who are influenced by other's posts. Wrench (2013:98) states that organisations need to try to identify who the influential influencers in networks are, and try communicate directly with them or even send them samples of products. This will hopefully spur on the influencer to discuss the product and their experience with their network.

**Provide assistance:** Wrench (2013:98) states that one of the smartest ways that an organisation can influence consumer behaviour on Facebook is through customer service. Organisations need to try and provide assistance to Facebook users when they post questions about their category of products, thus becoming an influencer. Customers who experience good customer service often talk about their experiences with the organisation and their service. Good customer service will encourage users to talk positively about the organisation to other users, subsequently influencing consumer behaviour. Wrench (2013:98) also states that interacting with potential shoppers and current users will give the organisation a competitive advantage, as the organisation gains insight into consumer needs.

**Promote exclusive offers through Facebook:** Wrench (2013:99) states that organisations can influence consumer behaviour by offering great deals on Facebook. This encourages users to talk to others about the great offer, and will get more users to visit the organisation's Facebook page.

**Promote products and services:** Wrench (2013:98) posits that organisations can influence consumers by advertising and promoting on Facebook. Organisations can even make use of other social sites, such as YouTube via a commercial, and linking up to the Facebook page.

**Connecting with Facebook users:** Wrench (2013:99) states that for organisation to really influence consumer behaviour, organisations need to do more than just promote their products. Organisations need to remember that Facebook is a social site, and therefore need to connect with users and interact with the existing and potential customers.

**Do not just market:** Wrench (2013:101) states that the organisation must not treat Facebook as a medium to only market to consumers, as they will lose touch with the user. Organisations need to design campaigns that get users interested and encourage them to engage with the organisation.



**Monitor the competitors:** Wrench (2013:101) states that organisations need to monitor their competitors. Organisations need to understand and look at what their competitors are doing. Organisations need to understand how their competitors are spending their marketing funds, and how they are engaging with their customers. This will help the organisation understand how they should create a point of difference and be consumers' organisation of choice.

**Stay ahead and on top of your brand:** According to Wrench (2013:102), it is vital that organisations understand how consumers feel about their brand. Organisations' brands are being discussed all the time on Facebook. Organisations need to have insight as to what good or bad things are being said.

### **3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007:08) point out that methodology refers to the overall approach evident in the research process, from the theoretical foundation to the strategies used in the collection and analysis of the data. Methods, in contrast, refer to the specific means by which data are collected and analysed. The paradigm the researcher adopts has a direct relationship with the research methodology that is available. In this research, quantitative research approach is used to understand the relationship between consumer behaviour and advertising appliances on social media such as Facebook. The quantitative research aims to gather an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and reasons that may govern such behaviour. Research design is a type of inquiry within quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods to provide specific direction for procedures within research design. Research design and strategy are done to obtain answers to research questions (Creswell, 2014:12). During this study, an online questionnaire was used in the research design. Prior to administration, a pilot study was conducted to establish any potential problems and improve the questionnaire.

#### **3.1 Research philosophy**

Research philosophy is a belief of the way that data should be gathered, analysed and used. The term 'epistemology' means known to be true, while 'doxology' means what is believed to be true. The purpose of science then helps to ascertain what is believed to be true into what is known to be true (Singh, 2007:211). Positivists believe that data are stable and known to be true. Positivism is a predominant way of knowing that the view of social sciences procedures should emulate natural sciences as far as possible, through the use of research instruments such as questionnaires (Singh, 2007:215). This study is descriptive; the researcher chose a positivist philosophy and used a quantitative research method in the form of a survey questionnaire.

#### **3.2 Target sample**

The research objectives are crucial in defining the target population. They are relevant because they possess the information the research is designed to collect. According to the appliance group, in December 2015 they had over 30 000 fans/followers on their Facebook page, which constitutes the target population of which a sample of 150 was chosen.

#### **3.3 Sampling strategy**

To answer this research question and objectives, data needed to be collected. Saunders et al. (2007:205), claims that it is not always possible to collect all the data available due to time, money and access restrictions. Saunders et al. (2007:207) identify two techniques used for sampling, namely probability and non-probability sampling. With probability sampling, researcher bias and subjectivity are reduced or eliminated through the random selection of elements. This results in relatively high levels of confidence that the sample is representative of the population from which it is drawn. Due to the greater scope, non-probability sampling could possibly allow the researcher the opportunity to be biased, thereby

distorting the findings of the study. For this research, non-probability sampling was used as it utilises some form of random selection. In order to have a random selection method, there must be a process or procedure set up that ensures that different units of the population have equal probability of being chosen. The sample size was 150; which is an appropriate sample size and large enough for the creation of statistically sufficient numbers in each sub-sample.

### **3.4 Data collection instruments**

A detailed and comprehensive online questionnaire was created and used to measure each of the research objectives. The questionnaire contained closed-ended questions. The reason why a questionnaire was chosen is so that a wide audience could be reached online. This measured the target market of online users. The questionnaire was loaded onto the group's website with a number of links referencing the questionnaire on Google. This link automatically directed the user to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was also loaded on their Facebook page; this was hugely beneficial as the dissertation specifically tested consumer behaviour on Facebook.

### **3.5 Validity and reliability**

According to Briggs (2012:81), reliability along with validity is one the key tests in judging adequacy in research. Validity and reliability within research and data collection would refer to the accuracy of the data. Reliable data refers to when a similar conclusion would be drawn if someone else drew the data. Briggs (2012:81) and Saunders et al. (2009:151) state that reliability refers to data collection techniques and analysis procedures that should deliver consistent findings. For this research, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to calculate Cronbach's Alpha results to reveal the reliability score of the data collected. Validity is used to judge whether the research accurately describes what it intends to describe (Briggs, 2012:81). This study's validity was achieved through a pilot study; a questionnaire was published on the group's Facebook page.

### **3.6 Elimination of bias**

Bias is a major concern whenever research is done, as it can threaten the study's legitimacy and reliability. Preece (2005:166) states that bias can influence outcomes and produce error in an estimate or an inference. There are a number of different factors that bias can result from, including a respondent's lack of candour or desire to please the researcher's preconceptions, or incorrect method of data collection. Therefore, quantitative research with the use of statistical analysis will help reduce bias by design is design (Courtney and McCoutcheon, 2010:27).

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

Ethical issues will be at risk during the data collection stage (Saunders et al., 2009:193). When collecting data, there are a number of ethical principles that a researcher needs to adhere to.

**Ensuring participants have given informed consent:** According to Diener and Crandall, (1978:29) participants that participate in a research study should do so on a basis of informed consent. Informed consent can be summed up as "the procedures in which individuals choose whether or not to participate in an investigation once being informed of the facts that would be likely to influence their decisions". Respondents should therefore understand the objective of the research. The questionnaire was administered on the group's Facebook page. It included an introduction to the nature of the details of the research being conducted and that participation is voluntary.

**Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity:** Researchers have the responsibility to protect and ensure participants' privacy. In this study, participants were not required to provide any of their personal details.

**Ensuring that permission is obtained:** When conducting a study, it is important that it is cleared/approved by all official channels and that permission is formally/officially requested to conduct this study. Permission to conduct the study was formally requested and granted by the Managing Director of the group.

### 3.8 Pilot study

Saunders (2007:381) states that a pilot study should be conducted before a questionnaire is published. The main purpose of a pilot study is to perfect the questionnaire so that any potential problems are found before the questionnaire is published and respondents may find ease in answering the questionnaire. During this research, a pilot study was conducted, with a sample of ten respondents. It was established that the questionnaire was easy to answer and simple enough to understand.

## 4. RESULTS

**Demographics:** 2.3% of the respondents were between the ages of 16–20; 9% between 21–25; 27.1% between 26–30; 37.6% between 31–40; 15% between 41–50; and 9% over the age of 51 years (n = 133), resulting in a median of between 31–40. This study implies that most of the respondents are between the age of 31 and 40, with the second largest age group being between the age of 26 and 30. This indicates that when an organisation wants to advertise appliances, they should target age groups between 26 and 40. This data is valuable to organisations such as the group, as this data clearly indicates their target market

**Facebook usage:** 81.8% of respondents had their own Facebook page, and 18.2% did not (n = 132) indicating that organisations who advertise appliances have the ability to engage directly with potential consumers. The group will be able to connect directly with their fans and shoppers; this is important so that they do not rely on other users to convey any promotions or new products. 3.6% of respondents have been using Facebook for 6 months or less; 4.5% between 6–12 months; 9.8% between 1–2 years; 12.5% between 2–3 years; 19.6% between 3–4 years; 17% between 4–5 years; 16.1% between 5–6 years; and 17% for longer than 6 years (n = 132). This study implies that the majority of the respondents have been using Facebook for two to three years. This data will give organisations such as the group more peace of mind around investing into social media, as their respondents and potential shoppers have been using the platform for many years. 82.7% purchase household appliances and 17.3% do not (n = 133). This indicates that 82.7% of Facebook users are potential consumers for a household appliance manufacturer. This will provide a large enough scope for an organisation to look at using Facebook as a medium for advertising. The data clearly show that 87.2% of the recipients in the target group of the study purchase appliances, making the study valuable for organisations such as the group. 38% of respondents follow/like appliance Facebook pages, and 62% do not (n = 129). The median is between “no”, with standard deviation at 0.465. This would indicate that 38% of Facebook users do in fact follow and like household appliances. For manufactures, this is a major opportunity to engage and encourage consumers to shift or become loyal to their brands.

**Brand awareness:** Russell Hobbs has the largest brand recognition / brand awareness, with 92.5% of recipients knowing of the Russell Hobbs brand. Kenwood received the second highest brand recognition at 50.4%. Phillips was the third most well-recognised brand at 42.1%. Local brands such as Pineware (39.8%) Salton (25.6%) and Mellerware (22.6%) were the least most recognised brand among the respondents. The group can now measure brand awareness; this data will

help the organisation to understand what brands they strategically may want to drive more awareness of to target their competitors. The data further indicates that recipients identify strongly with Russell Hobbs, that the organisation has a competitive advantage and should use this brand to innovate, expand the range and connect with shoppers to drive market share and sales. 32.5% of the respondents have seen small appliances being advertised on Facebook, and 67.5% have not (n = 126). This proves that there is still a major opportunity for organisations to create awareness among social media users. The group now knows that only 32.5% of recipients have seen appliances being advertised on Facebook. This indicates that recipients identify with appliances being advertised on Facebook either by the group or by competitors. This further indicates that there is still a major opportunity to connect with a further 67.5% of recipients who have not seen appliances being advertised on Facebook. The group can now review their marketing strategy and look at increasing the level of advertising on Facebook. 17.2% of respondents have purchased appliances online, and 82.8% have not (n = 128). The data indicate that 82.8% of respondents have not purchased an appliance online, and most likely still make use of the traditional in-store medium. However, this is still an opportunity for appliance manufactures to connect with Facebook and social media users to create product and brand awareness. The data above indicate that 17.2% of respondents do purchase appliances online; this clearly shows to the group that shoppers do go online to look for appliances and Facebook may be a good medium to advertise on more frequently.

**Adverts effectiveness:** 9% of the respondents strongly agreed that they have viewed an appliance advert on Facebook, which awoke their interest to investigate the product further (n = 100), median is 2.00 with a standard deviation of 0.801. This study implies that 31% of respondents agree that once viewing an appliance advert on Facebook, it stimulates a desire to investigate the product further, and 48% of respondents had no opinion. This data would indicate that there still is an opportunity for the group to change their advertising approach to potential shoppers to stimulate a desire for more respondents and shoppers to want to review and look up new products being advertised on Facebook. 2% of the respondents strongly agreed that they found the appliance supplier adverts on Facebook exciting and grabbing; 22% agreed; 56% had no opinion; 11% disagreed; and 9% strongly disagreed (n = 100). The median is between “agree” with a standard of deviation 0.893. This data provides appliance manufactures useful feedback that only 22% of respondents find appliance adverts on Facebook or social media exciting. This is an opportunity for appliance manufactures to redevelop their advertising to become more appealing to social media users. Potential shoppers’ attention is limited, the group will need to ensure that their adverts are gripping and exciting to stimulate a desire to want to investigate more or translate into a sale. 1.9% of respondents strongly agree that they welcome supplier adverts that pop up on their page; 23.3% agreed; 30.1% had no opinion; 19.4% disagreed; and 25.2% strongly disagreed (n = 103). The median is 2.00 with a standard deviation 0.934. This study indicates that 23.3% of respondents do not mind organisations’ advertising on Facebook. The data above provide a good basis for the group’s managers to understand what features are acceptable as an advertising medium to respondents and potential shoppers.

**LIKE option:** 8.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that they as Facebook users LIKE appliance manufactures’ Facebook pages; 26.9% agreed; 38.5% had no opinion; 11.5% disagreed; and 14.4% strongly disagreed (n = 104). The median is 2.00 and standard deviation 0.934. This study indicates that 26.9% of the respondents do in fact follow appliance brands on Facebook. The data above are very valuable for marketers as the data clearly show that respondents/shoppers welcome and like appliances so much that they follow appliance brands and like their pages. 31.6% of the respondents followed the Russell Hobbs Facebook page; 4.5% of the respondents followed the Salton Facebook page; 2.3% of the respondents followed the Pineware Facebook page; 3.8% of the respondents followed the Mellerware Facebook page; 3.8% of the respondents followed the Kenwood Facebook page; 2.3% of the respondents followed the

Phillips Facebook page; 3.8% of the respondents followed Defy's Facebook page; 9.8% of the respondents followed LG's Facebook page and 18.8% of the respondents followed Samsung's Facebook page. The median is 27.00 and the standard deviation 18.656. The group can clearly see that respondents/shoppers resonate strongly with the Russell Hobbs brand. This allows the marketer to evaluate where the brand is positioned with respondents/shoppers and strategically grow brand awareness. Recognition and brand equity will translate into market share growth.

**Facebook as a medium:** 17.6% of respondents felt that Facebook is the correct medium for organisations to communicate to users and consumers; 40.7% agreed; 18.5% had no opinion; 14.8% disagreed; and 8.3% strongly disagreed (n = 108), the median is "agree" with a standard deviation of 1.055. The data suggest that social media users / respondents do in fact see Facebook as a medium for organisations to communicate with them about their products and brands. 29.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that organisations and brands should own a Facebook page; 43.5% agreed; 15.7% had no opinion; 5.6% disagreed; and 5.6% strongly disagreed (n = 108), median is "agree" with a standard deviation of 1.134. This study indicates that 43.5% of respondents agree that organisations should have a Facebook page. The data above clearly indicate that 73.1% of respondents/shoppers believed brands should have a Facebook page. This helps brand managers understand that respondents/shoppers value brands identities and want to engage with the Facebook pages. The group can now adapt their Facebook pages to align to brands and followers. 57.1% of the respondents knew of no supplier Facebook pages; 23.8% knew of between 1–5 supplier Facebook pages; 7.6% knew of 6–10; 76% know of 11–15; 1.9% knew of 16–20; and 1.9% knew of 21–25 (n = 105). The median is between 0–5 and the standard deviation is 1.311. This data suggests that 23.8% of the respondents like appliance brands so much that they actually follow the manufacture online. This is a powerful tool for manufactures, and should focus on converting more users to followers.

**Creating awareness:** 12% of respondents strongly agreed that advertising appliances on Facebook would stimulate a desire to find out more; 45.4% agreed; 22.2% had no opinion; 14.8% disagreed; and 5.6% strongly disagreed (n = 108). The median is "agree" with standard a deviation of 0.917. The data suggest that there is a major opportunity for appliance manufactures to create awareness on Facebook / social media with potential shoppers, which will stimulate a desire to find out more about the product or brand. If the unique selling points and communication is strong enough, it will hopefully convert into sales.

**Purchasing behaviour:** 14.8% of respondents strongly agreed that they would buy small appliances online; 38% agreed; 13% had no opinion; 21.3% disagreed; and 13% strongly disagreed (n = 108). The median is "agree" and the standard deviation is 1.363. The data suggest that the majority of respondents and potential social media users will be prepared to purchase appliances online. This would mean that organisations and manufactures need to gear themselves for online purchases. 2.8% of respondents strongly agreed that small appliance adverts on Facebook influence their behaviour; 28.3% agreed; 33% had no opinion; 23.6% disagreed; and 12.3% strongly disagreed (n = 106). The median is "between opinion" with a standard deviation of 1.209. The data would suggest that Facebook advertising is powerful enough to influence potential users to change their behaviour. This is an opportunity for organisations really looking at their route to market and purchasing decision tree to align online (Facebook or social media) advertising in such a way that it would encourage behaviour change, and translate into sales.

**Google search:** 13.3% of respondents strongly agreed that advertising small appliances on Facebook would make them do a Google search; 48.6% agreed; 19% had no opinion; 11.4% disagreed; and 7.6% strongly disagreed (n = 105). The median is "agree" and the standard deviation is 0.892. This data tested to see if respondents would really take Facebook

advertising seriously enough to do a Google search or if manufactures need to improve their product communication of Facebook so that the manufacturer does not lose the attention of the respondent. The data suggest that 13.3% strongly agreed and 48.6% agreed that they would use Google as a medium to investigate further, suggesting a retention value of 61.9%. 0.8% of respondents strongly agreed that, when searching for more information about small appliances they go to Facebook; 10.2% agreed; 22.2% had no opinion; 44.4% disagreed; and 22.2% strongly disagreed (n = 108). The median is “disagree” with a standard deviation of 1.006. This data suggest that respondents do not view Facebook as a primary medium to search for more detail on appliances.

**Facebook for research:** This section of questions focused on determining the respondents’ use of Facebook as a research tool. As discussed, Facebook has become a popular medium for communication and organisations are using the platform more creatively each day to reach out to potential shoppers to grab their attention and develop a desire to understand more about their products and brands, which then translate into sales. 2.2% of respondents strongly agreed that they liked Facebook as a reference to search and find out more about small appliances; 15.4% agreed; 19.8% had no opinion; 37.4% disagreed; and 25.3% strongly disagreed (n = 91). The median was at “disagree” with a standard deviation of 1.262. The data suggest that respondents do not view Facebook as a primary medium to search for more detail on appliances. The data above are valuable for brand managers as it would indicate that respondents/shoppers may even view Facebook as a search engine to find out more about brands and products such as appliances. 42.9% of respondents strongly agreed that they liked Google as a reference to search and find out more about small appliances; 40.7% agreed; 7.7% had no opinion; 6.6% disagreed; and 2.2% strongly disagreed (n = 91). The median is “strongly agree” with a standard deviation of 0.492. The data suggest that 42.9% strongly agreed and 40.7% agreed. An accumulative 83.6% of respondents preferred to use Google as a medium to search and find out more about appliances. This indicates that manufactures need to use Facebook and social media as a platform to stimulate awareness but should make full detail available online for users to search further on Google. 33% of respondents strongly agreed that they liked to use manufactures or brand websites as a reference to search or find out more about small appliances; 48.4% agreed; 8.8% had no opinion; 7.7% disagreed; and 2.2% strongly disagreed (n = 91). The median is “agree” with a standard deviation of 0.629. The data suggest that 33% of respondents strongly agreed and 48.4% agreed. An accumulative 81.4% of respondents preferred to use manufactures’ websites as a search or reference point. This would indicate that suppliers or manufactures would need to have a good website for potential shoppers to get all the information to make a purchasing decision. The data above indicate that 81.4% of respondents like to use manufacturer websites as a reference to search and find out more information about products and brands. Appliance manufactures should ensure that there is always a link on their Facebook page back to the organisation’s website. 11% of respondents strongly agreed that they liked to use store broadsheet and advertising as a reference to search and find out more about small appliances; 47.3% agree; 22% had no opinion; 15.4% disagreed; and 4.4% strongly disagreed (n = 91). The median is “agree” with a standard deviation of 1.490.

**Retailer adverts and broadsheets:** This data tested the change in consumer behaviour from using a traditional source of advertising retailer adverts and broadsheets. The data suggest that 11% of the respondents strongly agreed; and 47.3% agreed accumulatively; while 58.3% of respondents still liked to use retailer adverts and broadsheets. This is important for appliance manufacturers to understand the change in consumer behaviour and if or how quickly the shift is taking place as a medium to communicate with shoppers. The data indicate that manufactures should currently communicate online but also make use of retailer adverts and broadsheets.

**In-store visits:** 23.1% of respondents strongly agreed that they liked to go in-store to find out more about small appliances; 47.3% agreed, 13.2% had no opinion, 15.4% disagreed, and 1.1% strongly disagreed (n = 91). The median is “agree” with a standard deviation of 1.167. The data suggest that 23.1% of the respondents strongly agreed and 47.3% agreed; 70.4% accumulatively agreed they like to go in-store to find out more about appliances. This is important for manufactures to understand, as their in-store communication needs to be good, and visual cues and salesman knowledge and ability to sell should be imperative. 22% of respondents strongly agreed that they like an in-store salesman to inform them more about small appliances; 46.2% agreed; 8.8% had no opinion; 17.6% disagreed; and 5.5% strongly disagreed (n = 91). The median is “agree” with standard deviation of 1.309. The data tested the importance of still having in-store presence, and the importance of having product knowledge available in-store, not only online. Of the respondents, 22% strongly agreed; 46.2% agreed; accumulatively 68.2% of the respondents agreed that they still liked an in-store salesman to inform them more about appliances, indicating that manufactures should still provide a good deal of focus on in-store sales and product knowledge. Organisations should not lose sight of the importance of still having in-store presence to communicate to shoppers about features and benefits, and about what the point of difference is between different manufactures and brands.

SPAM mail: 1.1% of respondents strongly agree that SPAM mail from manufactures stimulates a desire for them to go buy an appliance; 4.4% agreed, 16.5% had no opinion; 34.1% disagreed; and 44% strongly disagreed (n = 91). The median is “strongly disagree” with standard deviation at 1.055. The data tested if the respondents would respond positively to SPAM mail or adverts. This is important for manufacturers and retailers to understand what medium of advertising is preferred by consumers. The data above suggest that the respondents do not prefer SPAM mail, as 34.1% disagreed and 44% strongly disagreed; accumulatively 78.1% disagreed that SPAM mail would stimulate a desire to go purchase an appliance.

#### **4.1 Conclusion**

It is clear from the data that more females between the ages of 26 and 40 purchase appliances. This allows appliance brand managers to narrow their marketing approach. Respondents purchase appliances online and respond well to social media stimuli from appliance manufactures. The data show that appliance manufactures should take marketing on Facebook very seriously but not forget about the organisational website and, most importantly, the in-store presence and broadsheet activity.

### **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Section A has shown that Facebook can be a good commercial tool to communicate with respondents and potential shoppers for organisations such as the group to connect with consumers. The study confirmed that 81.6 per cent of respondents do make use of Facebook, providing a platform for organisations to connect with millions of consumers. Section B indicated that consumers have good knowledge of household appliances, and that it is important enough in their lives that they do follow the brands on Facebook. Organisations such as the group would be able to take advantage of the opportunity to connect with a large audience of consumers who find appliances significant enough to want to engage and be associated with. Section C indicated that Facebook is a viable medium or platform for appliance manufactures to connect and advertise on, and that respondents and consumers find social media platforms such as Facebook an acceptable way to engage with appliance brands. It is clear that Facebook is a strong medium to engage with consumers, and that it would change their behaviour to purchase appliances. Section D indicated that engaging with

consumers on Facebook will change their behaviour, but that the majority of consumers still find the traditional way of engagement and in-store purchases as a preferred way of engaging with appliance brands. The appliance industry in South Africa is a very competitive environment, with many competitors. To ensure that organisations are able to engage with consumers and generate the best return on their marketing budget, it is essential that organisations such as the group understand their consumer and the impact that social media and Facebook have on them. Is the competitor environment changing with an additional route to market (online traders such as Amazon and Takealot), and what impact would this have on the organisation? The data clearly showed that consumers are influenced and that behaviour changes do take place when appliance organisations advertise on Facebook. It is essential that the organisation develop Facebook profiles that are modern and accentuate the features and benefits of each brand and product. There is a need for a full route to market strategy that understands strategic growth areas, such as the online environment, how the organisation plans to engage with consumers online, and which retailers and distributors support to gain critical mass in this growing arena. Kotler (2009:238) discusses the five steps of purchasing, namely problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour. Organisations such as the group should focus on trying to fulfil a need. The twentieth century has made information easily and quickly available to shoppers. The group should try to initiate a desire to solve a need, stimulating potential shoppers to move to the information search on their own brands. The information search needs to be easy to locate and navigate, and provide all information that may be required for potential shoppers. This should translate into desire or a purchase decision. This will provide the organisation a true competitor advantage.

## **5.1 Recommendations**

It is recommended that the group review the business route to market strategy, and develop a strategy that services all segments. The organisation will also need to understand what segments to support more aggressively, as these areas could deliver long-term benefits. The group should look at developing a full market plan to drive optimum value from their marketing budget.

**Facebook:** The organisation should look at engaging with consumers to drive as many consumers to like and follow their brands. This will allow the organisation to create awareness and stimulate interest around their brands and products. The organisation also needs to add quick links from Facebook to the group's website.

**Google:** The organisation needs to ensure that when key words are typed into Google Search Engine, the group's website always comes up on the list of related criteria. This can be achieved by adding a variety of key words in the website's metadata.

**Manufacturer website:** The manufacturer website is a crucial area for the organisation, as once a consumer's interest has been peaked, and they visit the organisation website, the consumer needs to be overwhelmingly impressed. The consumer should not only be interested but should start to desire the product.

**In-store communication:** This is as an area where the organisation needs to apply most of its focus, as the research data suggest that the majority of the respondents/consumers still enjoy shopping in-store. The organisation needs to ensure that its net weighted distribution is good because when a consumer's interest is peaked and they now desire the product, the consumer needs to be able to find the product in the selected store where the consumer normally shops. In-store easy-to-find visual cues would be an area that the organisation should seriously consider, so that consumers see the group and products before seeing opposition products. Training the in-store salesperson is critical, as consumers often like to find



out a little more about the product, and have the reassurance that they are making the right decision. Training the in-store salesperson will help the consumer to understand the organisation's product that is on offer, as well as the features, benefits and warranty.

**Consumer purchase:** If all of the above areas are executed well, it should translate into a sale. It is key for the organisation to focus on executional excellence in the organisation. Executing all of the above with excellence, the organisation should find that sales and market share improve.

**Listen:** It is advisable for organisations to listen to consumers on Facebook, and respond to their queries to ensure that the brand's image is maintained, and good customer service is delivered.

**Future research:** As social media and Facebook evolve, the organisation could do research and allocate 5% of its advertising and promotion budget to understand if the organisation should invest more in social media to stimulate more consumer interest, and influence consumer behaviour.

## 5.2 Conclusion

This research clearly shows the value that Facebook can create and provide to appliance manufacturers. It describes the extent to how advertising on Facebook influences consumer behaviour to be interested in organisational brands and products. The literature reviewed clearly showed the benefits the organisation would be taking advantage of if the organisation had a clear and decisive online strategy. Recommendations have been made for the organisation to close potential gaps; by doing this, the organisation should benefit additional sales and increased market share. This is a long-term strategy, and as the internet and social media evolve, the organisation will be in a good position to engage with consumers and thereby increase brand loyalty and brand equity.

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