

DETERMINE SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISE SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES: A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT IN THE TSHWANE COMMUNITY

Louise van Scheers, Jacques van Scheers***

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to determine small and medium enterprise (SME) social media activities and promote CE scholarship engagement. It is a community engagement project conducted in the Tshwane community. Community engagement (CE) as a planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people in the community to address issues affecting their well-being. The CE project SME skills transfer workshops are aimed at expanding involvement with the community. The benefits of social media seem to be ignored by most SMEs however; challenges prevent SME owners from using the tool effectively. A survey study method of research design has been selected for the research. The sample for the study comprised 200 SME owners who currently manage small businesses in the Tshwane area.

The conducted research recommends that social media can be cost effective if the SMEs make use of their social networks and use best practises that enable them to get their adverts or posts shared across social networks. The conducted research also recommends that SMEs with limited resources start with social media and YouTube as a marketing tool, as the learning curve is low and cost involved is almost nil.

Key Words: SME; Social Media Activities; Internet Marketing; Tshwane Area; Benefits Of Social Media

* *Marketing & Retail Department, University of South Africa, South Africa*

** *Milpark Business School, South Africa*

1. Introduction

Community engagement (CE), as defined by CE scholars Fawcett, Paine-Andrews, Francisco, Schultz, Richter, Lewis, and Williams (2011); Harris, Berkley, Fisher, Lopez (2011); Foxall, Goldsmith and Brown (2008) and Handley, Pasick, Potter, Oliva, Goldstein and Nguyen (2010) is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioural changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilise resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programmes and practices. Cavaye (2001) explains CE as a planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people with special interests or identities in order to address issues affecting their well-being. The linking of the term “community” to “engagement” serves to broaden the scope, shifting the focus from the individual to the collective. Associated with this

linking are implications for inclusiveness so as to ensure that consideration is made of the diversity that exists within any community, as the study by Handley, Pasick, Potter, Oliva, Goldstein, and Nguyen (2010) established. The University of South Africa considers community engagement to be one of the three interconnected pillars of academic endeavour, these being tuition, research and community engagement (CE). The implementation of academic community engagement requires it to be professional, knowledgeable and well organised. Community engagement involves two main players: the community and academic lecturers. Professor Louise van Scheers as formed an academic partnership with SME owners in the Tshwane community. As academic partner she can enhance SME managerial skill transfer and determine SME social media activities in the Tshwane area. In the next section the importance of SMEs will be stressed.

Since beginning of time, SMEs have contributed to the economic growth of nations. They formed 92% of all companies in Africa and are considered to be the engine for society’s development. SMEs are closely connected with their communities and have significant influence on the community’s development. Van Scheers (2011) observes that

SMEs comprise over 90% of South African business operations and contribute to over 50% of South African employment and gross domestic product (GDP). Van Scheers (2011) states that SMEs constitute to 55% of all jobs in South Africa. However, despite the significance and importance of SMEs and their contribution to the economic growth of South Africa, SMEs are still faced with numerous challenges that inhibit growth (Hussain, et al. 2010). Apart from SME funding and limited access to finance, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Reports (GEM, 2012) note that South Africa's SMEs also suffer from poor management and marketing skills. Ceglie and Dini (2005) emphasise that marketing decisions are essential to succeed as small business in the market sector and that successful marketing will generate crucial sales for sustainable SMEs. Unfortunately, marketing is only afforded a small percentage of the SMEs' investment budget due to the high costs of sustaining a business. The costs of the market investment to the return on market investment are crucial to SMEs with very limited marketing budgets. Although they have limited marketing budgets, SMEs still need to use marketing tools to advertise their products. Tan et al (2010) observe that it seems although most SMEs have access to Internet, they still experience challenges in using it. There are five main issues that the previous studies (UN, 2012) noticed with traditional Internet advertising using search engine and display networks:

- The cost and the difficulty in targeting specific groups according to your sales funnel.
- Understanding and applying keyword search methodology and SEO (Search Engine Optimization)
- most SMEs do not have the knowledge or the time to gain this knowledge to apply keyword and SEO successfully.
- Most sites set up by SMEs do not provide adequate customer or consumer experience to ensure high conversion.
- Most SME owners do not understand how to approach Internet marketing and Internet customer interaction technologies.
- Even SMEs that do have budgets to outsource the building of a website, they usually do not get the service and technology to enable them to fully service both the desktop, tablet and mobile market.

Secondary research conducted (Ceglie & Dini, 2005; Tan et al 2010; UN, 2012) indicates that social media marketing may offer a solution to this problem. However, it seems that the small business sector has been slow to enter the social media world. Kshetri (2011) mentions that social media platforms can provide SMEs with an opportunity to communicate with customers, directly. It seems that the use of social media will enable SMEs to understand customers' needs. Research conducted by World Wide Worx (2012) indicates that 410 000 SMEs in South Africa have a website. This research (World

Wide Worx, 2012) shows that SMEs with a website are more likely to be highly profitable. However, limited research was conducted concerning usage of social media of SMEs in South Africa. It seems that there is a gap in the literature and therefore this research aims to determine the usage of social media of the Tshwane SMEs. The motivation to use the Tshwane area is because it is the largest metropolitan municipality in South Africa, the third-largest city in the world after New York and Tokyo (Tshwane, 2013). This area contributes 34% to the South African economy although it occupies only 1,4% of the land surface of the country, and is home to 22% of the South African population. Further motivation to choose this area is that it is an economical hub in South Africa. The researchers also believe that by determining social media usage of the Tshwane SMEs, it is a positive intervention in arresting failure and equally to ensure sustenance of the SME industry through the process of identifying the areas of social media needs. Following this introduction, section two of the paper considered the review of literature, section three discussed the methodology of the paper, and section four presented the analysis, results and discussion while the last section dwelled on the conclusion and recommendations.

2. Literature Review

SMEs defined

Globally, the SME sector is regarded as the main driving force in economic growth and job creation but unfortunately, these SME owners suffer from a lack of Internet marketing activities such as social media activities (Lunsche & Barron, 2010). Dockel and Lighthelm, (2012) show that SMEs are confronted with several issues, sales and marketing being the most pressing. SMEs must constantly innovate around their existing business processes to survive, especially in their social media marketing activities (Harrigan, 2011). In the next section, social media as a tool of Internet marketing will be defined and its different facets described.

Social media marketing as Internet marketing tool

Social media marketing use Internet marketing tools to facilitate social networking with blogs, podcasts, message boards, video blogging, wikis and Twitter (Witzig, et al. 2012:113). Lacho & Marinello (2010:128) point out that social networking is a meeting of mostly like-minded individuals on a social media site to discuss a matter of interest amongst the group That is the reason why the business community has taken note of the customisation of individual pages by adopting and incorporating the customisation into their own social networking pages where an organisation is able to share information,

pictures, videos, and advertising (Lacho & Marinello, 2010:128). By customising social media pages, thereby attracting customers and engaging with them, customer loyalty can be fostered. It should also be noted that social media is also a means of fostering and preserving customer loyalty, and improving the engagement and contact between the customer and the business. According to Witzig, *et al.* (2012:114) this increases loyalty with customers and ensures a long-term relationship is built and conserved. Additionally, research by Lacho & Marinello (2010:129) and Witzig, *et al.* (2012:114) highlights that social media marketing can serve a number of functions within the business community and functions of social media include:

- Managing information that is publicly available about your professional profile
- Locate and become acquainted with potential customers, service providers and recommended experts in your field
 - Create and collaborate on organisational projects, gather data, share files and provide solutions
 - Be visible and indicate availability of potential business opportunities and partnerships
 - Gain valuable insights into an interested field in discussions with like-minded professionals
 - Make beneficial connections that may enable business deals
 - Advertise job opportunities to find excellent human capital for the organisation

It is obvious from previous research that social media marketing can serve a number of functions within the business community therefore when the researchers conducted the research for this article they decided that the objective of this study is to

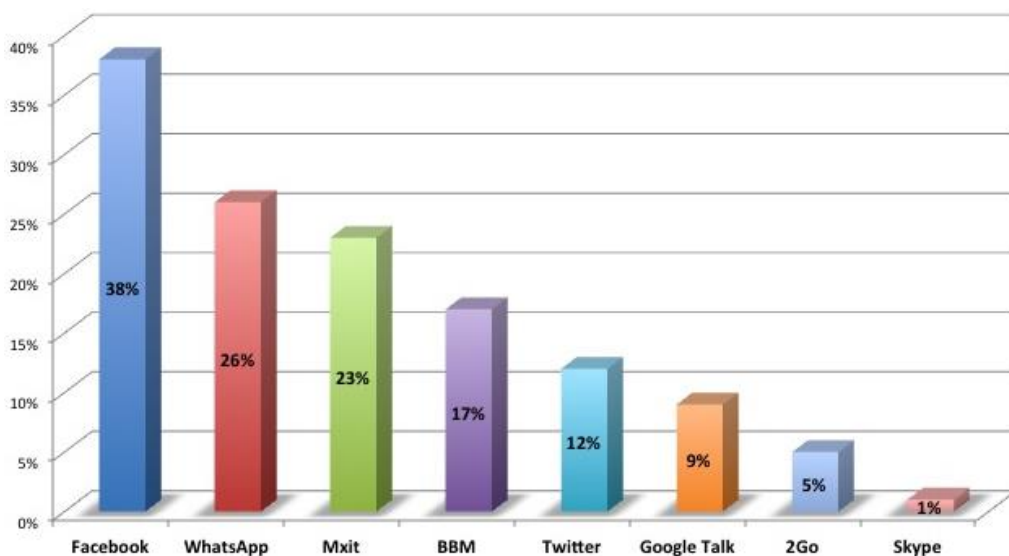
show SME usage of social media marketing. The next section, social media marketing will be discussed in detail and its overall importance to SMEs operating domestically and globally.

SME Social Media Marketing Usage

Social media marketing is ideal for SMEs, more so than for larger organisations, because SMEs focus on drawing the attention of their customers with limited resources. Thus, social media enables SMEs to draw customers towards a deeper audience engagement (Theunissen, 2012:20). In the rest of the world it seems SMEs have been slower to adopt social media as a marketing tool (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012:106). Theunissen (2012) suggests that SMEs should implement a basic yet effective social media marketing strategy. Social media marketing strategies can be used to create brand awareness, provide information, promote offers, provide interaction opportunities with consumers and improve overall customer satisfaction.

Social media (Accenture, 2013) can be seen as the collective of all online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Social media enable social networking by means of media tools such as blogs, podcasts, message boards, video blogging, wikis and Twitter (Witzig, *et al.* 2012:113). Social networking is thus a convergence of individuals on a social media site to discuss a matter of interest amongst the group (Lacho & Marinello, 2010:128). Figure 1 shows social Networking tools used on mobile Internet phones in South Africa.

Figure 1. Social Networking tools used on mobile Internet phones in South Africa



Source: Lacho & Marinello, 2010:128

As indicated in Figure 1, the findings show that Facebook is the largest social media and networking application used in South Africa. Note that most of the users currently use their Internet mobile phones to reach websites and services. In South Africa, the total spent on online retail goods passed the R2-billion mark in 2010, growing from year to year by 30% ending with a staggering R2,028 billion. In 2011 the total spent on retail products online increased again by another 30 percent to bring it to a total of R2,636 billion at the end of the 2011 year. Recent studies (Ching & Ellis, 2009) have shown that SMEs have been adopting the internet at a feverish pace and that up to 85% of SMEs in industrialised countries have websites; yet, less than half are utilising these websites to securely transact with their customers. According to an SME survey (World Wide Worx, 2012) 410 000 South African SMEs have a website. It seems that SMEs with a website are more likely to be highly profitable than those SMEs without a website. Recent research has shown:

- 27% of those SMEs with a website are strongly profitable, while only 11% of those without a website are profitable.
- SMEs with a website that are running at a loss are set around 5%, while 16% of those without a website are in the red.

Limited research was conducted on this topic in this area, which creates a gap for this research, that is why the aim of this paper is to determine SME social media activities and promote CE scholarship engagement.

Examples of social media activities (Accenture, 2003) are the following:

- According to the Nielsen Group statistics, Internet users within the United States spend more time on Facebook than any other website. Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues and post pictures, videos and messages to them.
- Twitter is a micro-blogging service that allows registered members to freely broadcast short posts. These short informational posts are called tweets. Twitter members can follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices.
- Google's social networking project, Google+ (pronounced Google plus), is designed to replicate interaction people demonstrate offline more closely than is the case in other main-stream social networking services.
- Wikipedia is an open-content, online encyclopaedia created through the collaborative effort of a community of users known as Wikipedians. It free to the public. Any registered individual on the site can create an article for publication. Registration is not required to edit articles, but any editorials made are reviewed before publishing. Wikipedia was founded in January 2001 and is a non-profit organisation dependant on donations from the public.

- The social networking site designed specifically for the business community is LinkedIn. This site allows registered members across the globe to establish and document networks of people they trust professionally. The site also allows members to set up groups to discuss professional work-related issues or approaches.

- Reddit is a social news website and forum where news items are socially circulated and promoted by site members. The site is composed of hundreds of sub-communities, each with a specific topic such as technology, politics or music. Reddit site members can submit content which is then voted upon by other members with the goal to send well-regarded news stories to the top of the site's main page.

- Pinterest is a social website where registered members can add and share and categorise images. It is mainly a visual discovery tool that enables users to find images regarding their interests. Each visual is accompanied by a brief description, and clicking on an image will take you to the original source of information. Next the importance of social media for SMEs will be outline.

Importance of Social Media Marketing (SMM) For SMEs

More and smaller businesses around the world are expanding their presence on social media (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012:107). SMEs, the drivers of the economy, are using social media platforms to power their success. Social media is becoming an integral part of life online, as observed by Witzig, *et al.* (2012). In business, social media is used to market products, promote brands, connect to current customers and reach new business. A recent study conducted by Rodriguez (2014) indicates that 92% of SME business owners in the US point out that social media is important to their business (up from 86% in 2013). The report also shows budgets are allocated away from traditional methods of advertising towards online marketing, such as social media and other inbound marketing strategies. SMEs have limited resources compared to large organisations to promote themselves with the use of social media. Despite the low cost of using social media networks for marketing, the low learning curve compared with other Internet marketing tools, and investing the time to learn and manage the social media page may still be too high a barrier to overcome. However, SME owners do understand the value of social media in enhancing productivity and competitiveness (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012:107).

SMM takes advantage of social networking to help an SME to broaden customer reach and increase brand exposure within new social circles. The goal is to create content compelling enough that those users within the current social circle will share it with their social networks increasing the reach of the post or

marketing message. The SME community has certainly taken note of the customisation of individual's pages by adopting and incorporating the customisation into their own social networking pages, where an SME is able to share information, pictures, videos, and advertising for free to known members only. (Lacho & Marinello, 2010:128;). By customising social media pages, and thereby attracting customers and engaging with customers, customer loyalty can be fostered. Customer loyalty can also be fostered and maintained by means of social media, due to interactions and engagement with the business in question, profitable customers are accompanied by a requisite to be loyal (Witzig, *et al.* 2012:114).

Additionally, social media have a number of functions that can serve the SME community well, these include as observed by Lacho & Marinello (2010:129); Witzig, *et al.* (2012:114):

- Managing public information about your professional profile
 - Locate and contact relevant service providers, recommended experts in your field and potential customers.
 - Create and collaborate on projects and discuss possible solutions to issues and opportunities within
 - Create visible or potential business opportunities and possible partnerships
 - Gain insights into an interested field in discussions with similar industry professionals
 - Make beneficial connections that may create, facilitate or enable new business ventures or job opportunities
 - Contact excellent human capital or advertise job opportunities to find great human capital for the organisation.

Social media, according to Redsicker (2014) is ideal for SMEs, as SMEs, more so than larger organisations, focus on drawing the attention of customers and fostering a sustainable audience engagement. Theunissen (2012:6) observes that half of all SMEs in the United Kingdom were using social media websites as a marketing tool. South African SMEs have been slower to adopt social media as a marketing tool (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012:106). Theunissen (2012) suggests that SMEs should implement a basic yet effective social media marketing strategy involving Facebook, Twitter, a blog. The social media strategy variables can be used to create brand awareness, promote offers, provide information, and provide interaction opportunities with consumers and a means to engage with customers.

Redsicker (2014) informs that globally, social and internet usage for 2014 is as follows:

- SME marketers place very high value on social media: A significant 92% of marketers indicate that social media is important for their business and operations, up from 86% in 2013. This is due to

social media as a cost effective tool to reach customers over other Internet marketing tools.

- Marketing tactics and customer engagement methods (think conversion) are the top areas marketers want to master: At least 89% of marketers want to know the most cost-effective social tactics and the best ways to engage their audience with social media.

- Blogging holds the top spot for future plans: A significant 68% of marketers plan on increasing their use of blogging as another great way of involving customer interaction, creating trust between the business and its potential clients. This ensures blogging is at the top of marketers list for investment in 2014.

- Google+: 54% of marketers are using Google+ currently, while 65% want to learn how to use it effectively in customer engagement and costing; 61% plan on increasing their Google+ activities in 2014.

- Podcasting on a slow growth trajectory: Just 6% of marketers are involved with podcasting; 21% of marketers plan on increasing their podcasting activities in 2014. At least 28% of marketers want to learn more about it.

- Marketers agree that Facebook and LinkedIn are the two most important social networks for cost-effective marketing. When forced to only select one platform, 54% of marketers selected Facebook, followed by LinkedIn at 17%.

- Original written content is most important for social media marketing: A significant 58% of marketers stated that original written content that adds value to the visitor's experience is the single most important form of content to achieve a high posting, high audience engagement and lower advertisement costs, followed by original visual content (19%).

A significant 64% of SME marketers use social media for at least 6 hours or more and 37% for 11 or more hours weekly, as indicated in the report. This is a slight increase over 2013 when 62% reported 6 or more hours a week. Nearly 19% of marketers spend more than 20 hours each week on social media; this is a significant amount of effort. The top two benefits of social media marketing are increasing exposure and increasing traffic at lower marketing investment cost if compared to other Internet marketing tools. A significant 92% of all marketers indicated that their social media efforts have generated more exposure for their businesses. Increasing traffic to their business was the second major benefit, with a significant 80% reporting positive results in sales. From the report it seems most marketers are using social media to develop loyal fans (72%) and secondly to gain marketplace intelligence (71%) on their customer-base behaviour.

In South Africa, however, limited research was conducted on SME social and Internet marketing usage in South Africa. Pillay (2012) shows that only

20% of new South African SMEs are using some type of social media. Nolan (2013) refers to research by digital marketing agency AddPeople, in which it is shown that a large proportion of South African SMEs have yet to join the social media revolution and reap the benefits for their business. Before 2013, according to the research, up to 80% of new South African SMEs were not active on social media platforms. Of the remaining 20% of SMEs who did have social media presence, 69% did not have links to their websites, therefore missing out on major sales opportunities.

Social Media Marketing SME Challenges

Several studies (Tan, Chong, Lin & Eze, 2010; MacGregor & Vrazalic 2005; Cavaye & van Akkeren, 2009) show that SMEs are not aware of the financial benefits that could result from using the social media for marketing and sales-related activities. Challenges SMEs reported were that the start-up investment costs for Internet adoption were high, and that the return on investment was not clear. A second challenge mentioned is that SME owners did not believe that Internet adoption could result in lower operational costs. Singh, Garg and Deshmukh (2010) identified further challenges constraining SMEs' Internet usage for marketing and sales:

- Inadequate access and understanding of Internet technologies pertaining to web presence, marketing and sales channels,
- ineffective Internet-related selling techniques, and
- limited Internet market research.

Research studies (Cavaye & van Akkeren, 2009; Dholakia & Kshetri, 2004; MacGregor & Vrazalic, 2005; Stansfield & Grant, 2003; Tan & Teo, 2000; Tan, *et al.* 2010) emphasised that barriers to Internet adoption for most SMEs was related to concerns about unauthorised access to sensitive or proprietary information. These fears and concerns are related to SMEs not skilled to formulate an Internet and marketing strategy that will limit the risks aforementioned.

Dholakia and Kshetri (2004); Johnson, Levine, Smith and Stone (2010:405–413); Poon and Swatman (2009), and Tan, *et al.* (2010) observe that a lack of managements' long-term vision on Internet marketing and sales opportunities results in inadequate support and encouragement to adopt Internet strategies. Resistance to facing a new learning curve (change) is another challenge to adoption of Internet and social media platforms, tools and strategies (Cavaye & van Akkeren, 1999; Johnson, *et al.* 2010; MacGregor & Vrazalic, 2005). Despite the high affordability of social media networks, the low time-to-market factor and the low learning-curve in comparison to other Internet tools, it seems some SMEs are still not convinced of the value of the social media component. However, there is strong indication that

more SME owners are starting to understand the value of social media in enhancing productivity and competitiveness (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012:107).

The generalist nature of managers and employees within SMEs results in limited knowledge about how various computer technologies could contribute to an overall e-marketing strategy. Previous studies (Dlodlo & Dhurup, 2010) confirm that SMEs perceive the following as challenges to using social media marketing:

- Start-up investment costs for Internet is high due to the necessary tools and expertise required
- Inadequate access to technologies, ineffective selling techniques, and limited market research
- Security of information
- Unauthorised access to sensitive or proprietary information, and limited verification of authorship of messages
- Lack of management support and encouragement
- Resistance to change
- Lack of resources

Perhaps the most important statistic to come out of the SME survey is that 63% of formal SMEs in South Africa have a website, which leaves more than a third of SMEs without an online presence (World Wide Worx, 2012). Next the methodology will be discussed.

2. Methodology

To determine SME social media marketing usage in the Tshwane area, a survey research was designed. Primary data were collected from SMEs in the city of Tshwane of all small business sectors. The population of study was 200 SMEs in the city of Tshwane. In selecting the sample, simple random sampling techniques were adopted by using a list of registered SMEs from the Tshwane municipality. The questionnaire was developed based on existing literature and pretested with five small businesses to ensure clarity and comprehension, as well as to gauge average completion time. Minor revisions were made in question wording and order as a result of the pretest. Because of careful monitoring, the total of 200 questionnaires were returned representing 100% response rate. To assess the internal consistency of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha was run and a reliability coefficient of 0.836 resulted. The instrument was validated through content validity. The instrument was structured and multi-chotomous in design covering demographic and research variable questions. Descriptive statistical analysis was employed to determine the SME Internet marketing usage in the Tshwane area. The outcome of the determination was used to make decision.

3. Results, Analysis and Discussion

3.1 Characteristics of Respondents

Age of the Tshwane SME respondents

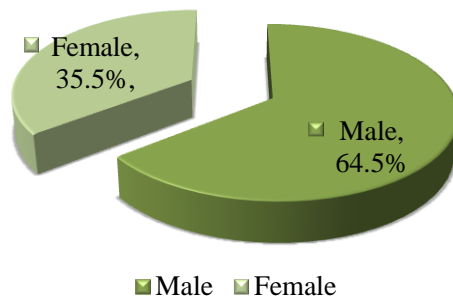
None of the respondents were under 18 years of age. The largest proportion of the respondents was older than 50 years while the rest of the respondents were

relatively equally distributed among the other age groups.

Gender of the Tshwane SME

Women are increasingly joining the work force, but because of child-rearing duties lack formal education and work experience. They are also too busy with family duties, therefore most SMEs are owned by males. The results are revealed in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Gender of the Tshwane SMEs



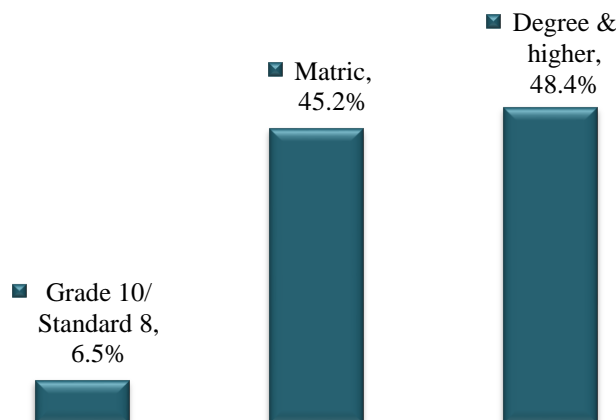
Source: Field report

As Figure 1 confirms, almost two-thirds (64,5%) of the respondents were male. Only 35,5% of the respondents were women, which validates the secondary research conducted.

Education of the Tshwane SMEs

Education plays an important role in the success of an SME, as highlighted in the introduction. The results of the research are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Education of Tshwane SME respondents



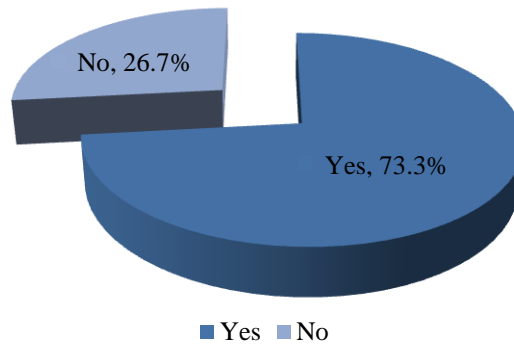
Source: Field report

Figure 2 substantiates that most SME owners in Tshwane received good education as only 6,5% of the respondents had an educational level of less than grade 12. The proportion of respondents with a graduate education and higher (48,4%, n=15) was only slightly larger than those with grade 12 (45,2%, n=14).

3.2 SME social media usage

In question 21, the question was asked: Do you use social media for marketing your business? The results are reflected in Figure 3.

Figure 4. Awareness to use social media

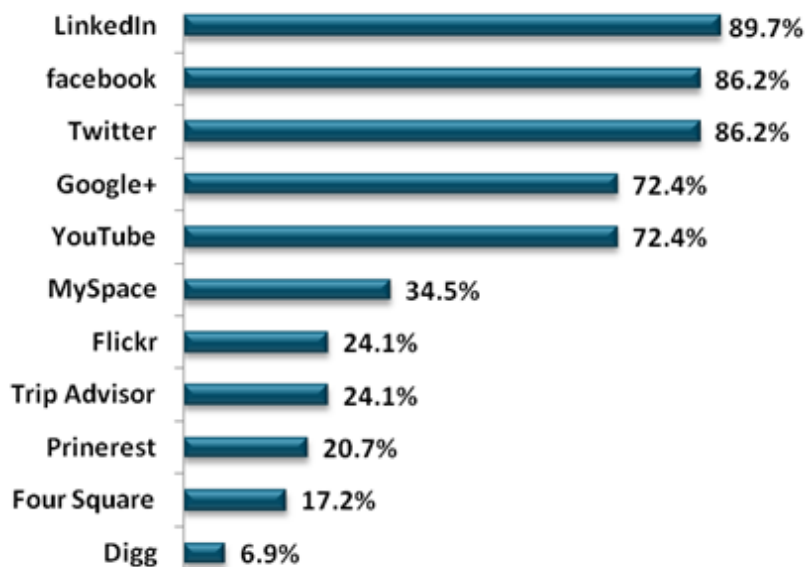


Source: Question 21 of filed report

Figure 4 shows that the majority (73,3%) of the respondents reported that they do use social media for marketing their businesses. On the question which

social media websites the respondents are aware of, the results were the following (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Awareness to social media websites



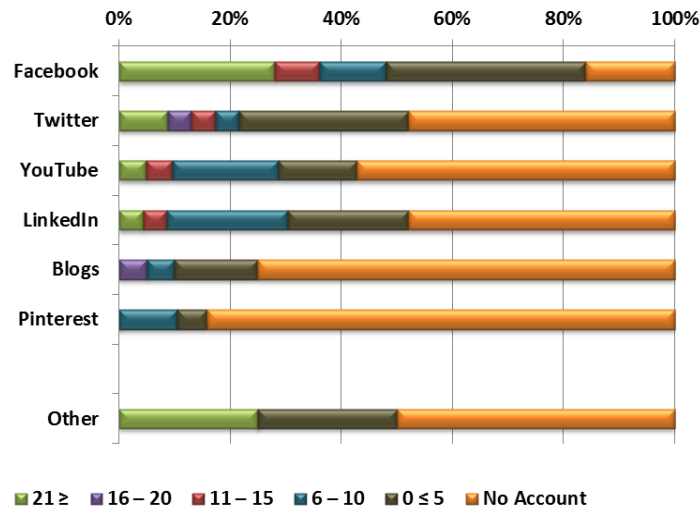
Source: Question 22 of filed report

Figure 4 reflects that LinkedIn is the website known to the largest proportion (89,7%) of respondents, followed by Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube, with all of them known to more than 70% of the respondents. Digg is the social website that is known by the least number (6,9%) of respondents.

4.3 Social media usage as marketing tool

Question 23 and Figure 6 (below) refer. The respondents were consulted about social media platforms usage for the marketing of the SME business, as well as the weekly time spent on each on the platforms.

Figure 6. Social media usage for marketing



Source: Question 23 of field report

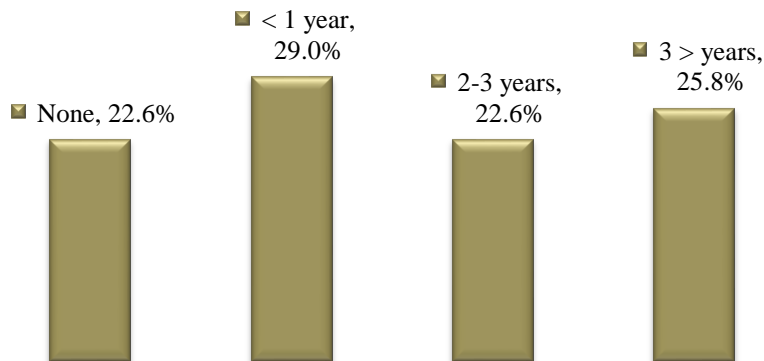
Figure 6 confirms that Facebook is the social media platform on which the largest proportion (28%) of respondents spends more than 21 hours per week, followed by other unnamed social media platforms (25%). In the case of each of these social media platforms, there are respondents that do not have an account for it, with Pinterest being the platform for which the largest proportion of respondents does not have an account. WhatsApp and Google was also

mentioned by the respondents but no indication of how many hours per week is spent on them, was provided.

4.4 How long have you been using social media as marketing tool?

The results are as follows in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Years of social media usage for marketing



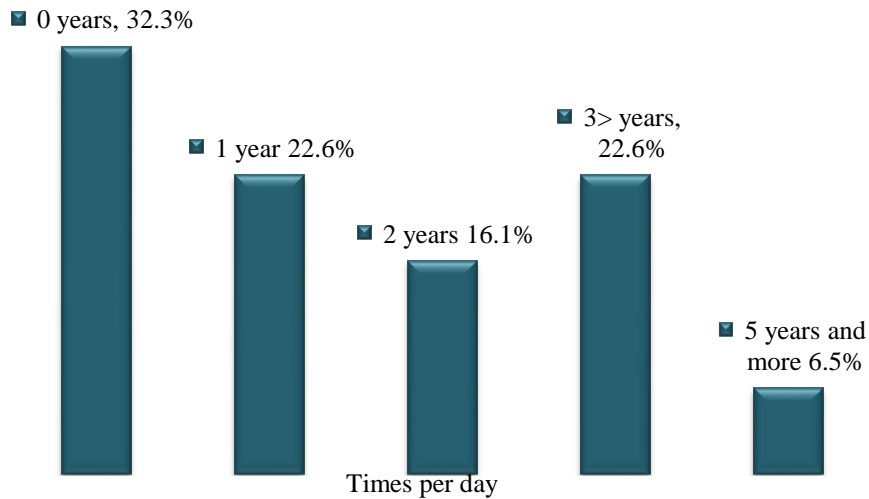
Source: Question 24 of field report

Figure 6 reveals that the largest proportion of respondents are new to using social media as marketing tool, with 29,0% of them having used it for less than one year while one-quarter (25,8%) have been using it for more than 3 years. Twenty-two (22,6%) do not use social media for marketing at all.

4.5 Access to SME’s social media pages

Question 25 wanted to establish whether the respondents have daily access to their SME’s social media pages and the result is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Years of social media usage



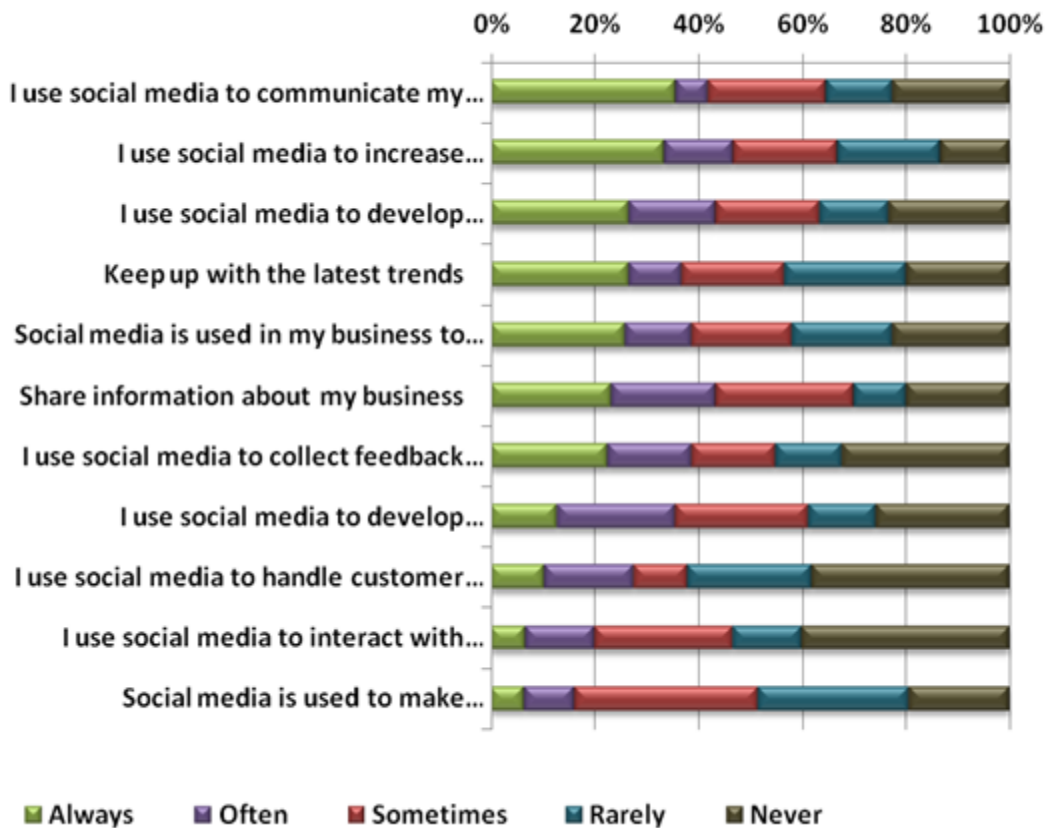
Source: Question 25 of field report

Figure 8 shows that only 6,5% of the respondents have been using social media pages to promote their businesses for longer than 5 years, while 32,3% of the respondents do not use social media pages for their businesses.

4.6 Social media usage – frequency

The next question wanted to establish the frequency of social media usage. The results are depicted in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Social media usage frequency



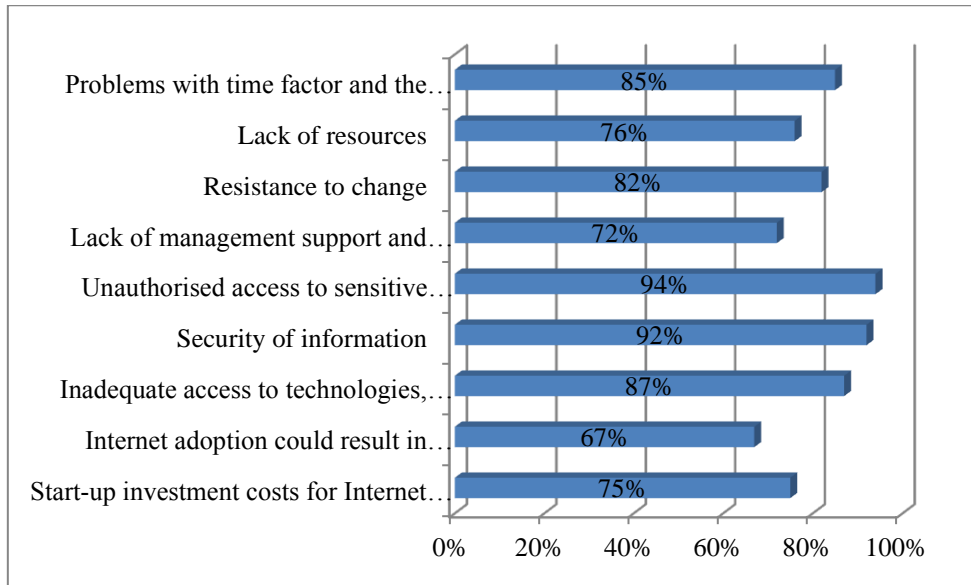
Source: Question 26 of field report

Figure 9 reflects that the largest proportion of respondents who always use social media do so to communicate their brand online, followed by those who use social media to increase awareness of their business.

4.6 Challenges for SMEs to use social media marketing

Question 30 asked the respondents to indicate the challenges they experience with using social media and Internet marketing. In the literature section, the SME social media challenges were described and the results of the Tshwane SME challenges are illustrated below in Figure 10.

Figure 9. Challenges for SMEs to use Internet marketing and social media



Source: Question 30 of field report

Figure 10 indicates that 94% of the respondents remarked that they consider ‘Unauthorised access to sensitive or proprietary information, and limited verification of authorship of messages’ as the largest challenge to using social media marketing. This confirms that the Tshwane SME also experience the same challenges as indicated in the literature review. Figure 10 also shows that most respondents (92%) have problems with ‘security of information’; 87% of the respondents experienced inadequate access to technologies, ineffective selling techniques, and limited market research whereas 85% of the respondents mentioned that time and cost are challenges to using social media and Internet marketing. Figures for lack of resources (76%) and start-up investment costs (75%) point out that Tshwane SMEs also have challenges with funds. Of the respondents, 67% indicated that they are still not convinced that Internet adoption could result in lower operational costs, while resistance to change as reason not to use Internet marketing was giving by 82% of the respondents. Lack of management support and encouragement were challenges mentioned by 72% of the respondents.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the analysis and the findings thereof, this community engagement paper concludes that Tshwane SMEs should focus social media marketing to promote their businesses because these methods are cost effective. The majority of the respondents of the Tshwane community reported that they do use social media for marketing their businesses. The conducted results reflect that LinkedIn is the website known to the largest proportion (89,7%) of respondents, followed by Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube, with all of them known to more than 70% of the respondents. Digg is the social website that is known by the least number (6,9%) of respondents.

The conducted results confirm that Facebook is the social media platform on which the largest proportion of respondents spends more than 21 hours per week, followed by other unnamed social media platforms. In the case of each of these social media platforms, there are respondents that do not have an account for it, with Pinterest being the platform for which the largest proportion of respondents does not have an account. WhatsApp and Google were also mentioned by the respondents but no indication of

how many hours per week is spent on them, was provided.

The results further reveal that the largest proportion of respondents is new to using social media for marketing. It is also concerning to discover that only 6,5% of the respondents have been using social media pages to promote their businesses for longer than five years, while 32.3% of the respondents do not use social media pages for their businesses. It shows that the largest proportion of respondents who always use social media do so to communicate their brand online, followed by those who use social media to increase the awareness of their business.

It also confirms that the largest proportion (34,38%) of respondents consider the use of social media for marketing to be either successful or very successful in their businesses. The respondents all agree that a large audience can be reached via social media, followed by the ability to create product/service awareness. The conducted research recommends that social media can be cost effective if the SMEs make use of their social networks (professional and personal) and use best practises that enable them to get their adverts or posts shared across social networks.

The conducted research recommends that Tshwane SME owners utilise YouTube channels to educate and train themselves on effective usage of Internet marketing instruments, specifically the marketing use of Facebook and YouTube, especially if they use social media for promoting their services and their products. Social media advertising instruments can be utilised effectively for marketing and customer interaction without spending large amounts of resources. Social media operators do provide paid marketing opportunities, but with the right approach to advertising using social media, an SME could advertise without spending additional marketing costs.

The conducted research also recommends that SMEs rather use unpaid advertising on social media networks that entail posting and sharing of posts by network members, not targeted at a specific SME target market but free exposure to general social networks. The conducted research also recommends the following strategy to utilise social media networks without paid social media advertisement: SMEs operating a wedding, hair and makeup service model in the Tshwane area could utilise the following two social media networks in the following manner: The owners target brides between the ages of 21 and 40 and utilise a Facebook network and YouTube channel to promote business services. The owners create posts with portfolios of their products and services on Facebook, which they then share with their network. Their networks consist of both personal and customer contacts. If liked or shared by their personal or customer contacts, the posts will then be exposed to an even larger network of social contacts. Customers

who add the SMEs to their social network will then automatically see their posts each time on their Facebook news feed. On their YouTube channel they promote their services by weekly adding video footage of new products, services or reviews of the latest hair and makeup products available. Potential customers searching for makeup or hair services for weddings will be able to select and view their videos on YouTube. These potential customers can then like or leave a comment which will help SMEs gain popularity of their channel of videos. The higher the popularity, the higher the position on the list of videos for their services and products entries (videos), which will show up when a potential customer searches on YouTube for hair and makeup services for weddings in the Tshwane area. The approach taken here does not make use of the paid marketing services of the social media network. The approach, though, will result in exposure to a general market. Using paid marketing services, the SME owner can target a specific group of the market segment – which is not possible with all Internet marketing tools. For example, a search display network such as Google cannot specify the gender of the target market, as Google can only estimate the gender, whereas most social media network providers can provide this information and a lot more as they trend the social media users' preferences in detail.

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