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## SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS EFFECT ON ATTITUDES AMONG MILLENNIALS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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# **SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS EFFECT ON ATTITUDES AMONG MILLENNIALS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**Research Paper**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Online interpersonal interaction and communication has become an important aspect of social activities, especially among Millennials (young adults). However, the African continent has the lowest Internet access across the globe, but the development and rapid adoption of mobile technology has led to a major increase in the usage of Internet and new online Information and Communications Technology (ICT) channels, which are collectively referred to as social media. Social media platforms have become an integral part of everyday life and marketing communications via these digital channels has become one of the latest trends in South Africa (SA). The most commonly used social medium in the world is Facebook, whereas Mxit is the largest locally established online ICT conduit. However, not much is known about Millennials' attitudes towards social media as an advertising medium. Therefore, several surveys were used to investigate the effect of social media (Facebook and Mxit) marketing communications have on each of the hierarchy response model attitude stages among Millennials in SA. The results confirm that social media marketing communications have a significant influence on all of the hierarchy response model attitude stages, but on a declining degree as South African Millennials progress to the higher stages. Furthermore, the findings also reveal that several online usage and demographic characteristics have a significant influence on attitudes towards these new interactive ICT conduits.

## **Keywords**

Social media marketing communications, Facebook, Mxit, Millennials, Hierarchy response model attitudes, South Africa

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade a number of innovative Information and Communications Technology (ICT) platforms have emerged, providing people with an array of novel communication possibilities. A new category of interactive ICT has been characterized as social media, which allows users from across the world to communicate via text, instant messaging and social network site (SNS) pages, thereby establishing a global community (Kleinhans et al., 2013). Social media is primarily used as a personal online ICT channel for private communications among friends, family members and affiliates; however, companies have taken advantage of these innovative digital ICT channels to reach billions of potential consumers with their marketing communications. Hence, it is important to both academia and marketers to establish what consumer's attitudes are towards commercial communications on this new online ICT platform which has invaded their personal communication circles.

Attitudes towards marketing communications have been broadly researched over the past century, since it was posited that consumers pass through a series of hierarchical attitudinal stages in response to advertising, namely awareness and knowledge (cognitive phase), liking and preference (affective phase), and intention-to-purchase and purchase (behavioral phase) (Belch & Belch, 2015). These attitude stages were found to closely reflect marketing communication effectiveness and, therefore, each stage of the hierarchy response model may serve as a marketing communication objective. The hierarchy response model attitude stages have been equated to a sales or purchase funnel (also known as the communications effects pyramid), since it becomes progressively more difficult to accomplish the higher level objectives. Therefore, the number of potential consumers decline as they move up the pyramid. The sales funnel is, however, yet to be tested in terms of social media marketing communications, since this model was developed via traditional advertising (Belch & Belch, 2015; Safko, 2010; Yoo et al., 2010).

A number of empirical studies have established that online marketing communications have a significant influence on the various levels of consumer attitudes (Bianchi & Andrews, 2012:253-275; Blasco-Arcas et al., 2014; Campbell et al., 2011; Davidavičienė & Tolvaišas, 2011; Lu et al., 2013:27–68; Punj, 2011), where companies may seek differing responses from consumers, depending on the sought-after marketing communication objective. Several studies (Hansson et al., 2013; Hautz et al., 2014; He & Zha, 2014; Logan, 2014; Lukka & James, 2014; Murphy, 2014), mainly in first-world countries, have also investigated different aspects of the hierarchical attitudinal effect of social media marketing communications, but few have considered developing economies such as South Africa (SA). Global digital marketing communications' spending was \$137.5 billion in 2014, and is predicted to grow to \$154 billion by the end of 2015, with social network advertising (SNA) accounting for 27% and mobile advertising 30% of this total (eMarketer, 2014a; eMarketer, 2014b; eMarketer, 2014d). Global business-to-consumer (B2C) ecommerce revenue was estimated to be \$1 500 trillion in 2014 and forecasted to surpass \$1 770 trillion by the end of 2015, with a majority of the growth coming from mobile and online users in emerging markets in Africa and Asia (eMarketer, 2014c).

Two out of three South Africans are aged 30 years or younger, with nearly a quarter of the population deemed to be a member of the Millennial cohort (Statistics SA, 2012).

Millennials are an important consumer group as they provide an indication of future purchase tendencies towards brands and, hence, their perceptions of social media marketing communications are significant to companies (Barenblatt, 2015; Jordaan et al., 2011). Millennials are experienced in a broad range of ICT channels, especially in terms of computers, the Internet and mobile devices (cell phones, smartphones and tablets), which they have grown up with and, which they also use widely for interaction via social media such as Facebook, Mxit, YouTube, Google+ and Twitter.

Bolton et al. (2013) reveal that a majority of social media research has been conducted in developed nations, predominantly in Europe and the United States (US), whereas little inquiry has taken place in developing economies (especially in Africa). Wang et al. (2012) concur that more social media research should be conducted in other countries, since consumer sentiments from dissimilar cultural backgrounds would differ. Therefore, this investigation is significantly important to both local and international researchers, since little research has been conducted on attitudes towards social media marketing communications in SA, and will make a noteworthy addition to attitudinal theory development regarding this new category of online ICT platforms (Yadav et al., 2013).

Consequently, this empirical investigation aims to provide further insight into the following research questions:

- what influence do social media marketing communications have on each of the hierarchy response model attitude stages among Millennials in SA?
- do South African Millennials' online usage characteristics have an effect on the hierarchy response model attitude stages regarding social media marketing communications?
- do South African Millennials' demographical characteristics have an impact on the hierarchy response model attitude stages concerning social media marketing communications?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Social media context

Modern digital technology is continuously and rapidly changing in this present era. The Internet was initially a virtual information sharing space, but has developed into an online ICT platform that facilitates an online social environment, which promotes face-to-face interaction and relationships via social media (Kruger & Painter, 2011). Social media is only a little more than a decade old, but the rate of adoption has been faster than any other interactive ICT conduit in history, and is taking a larger proportion of people's time, especially among digital savvy Millennials (Matthee, 2011). Social media can take many different forms such as SNS (Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+), blogs and micro-blogs (Twitter), collaborative projects (Wikipedia), video-sharing communities (YouTube), virtual game worlds (World of Warcraft), virtual social worlds (Second Life) and instant messaging (Mxit), although most of these social media categories are often collectively referred to as SNS (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Brands use social media to initiate and participate in dialogues with consumers, foster relationships, deliver customer support, create brand communities, and connect with consumers by using interactive applications (apps) such as posting videos and photos, responding to comments, and marketing communications (Lipsman et al., 2012; Park et al., 2011).

The development of social media has also prompted change in marketing communications and the consumer decision-making process (Kozinets et al., 2010; Shankar & Malthouse, 2007). Marketing communications enables social media to generate revenue in order to survive, but too much commercial content can reduce the appeal. Therefore, social media should gain consumer acceptance in order to successfully integrate marketing communications into SNS, but sites that do not manage this prudently may result in negative attitudes that will evidently lead to a decline in membership and revenue (Clemons et al., 2010). This new digital ICT operating environment is far more interactive compared to traditional media and provides significant information about target audiences who are no longer only spectators, but also participants in the marketing communication process. Both negative and positive information is communicated by consumers who take ownership over the content that they share (Kalampokis et al., 2013; Orpana & Tera, 2011; Uitz, 2012). Social media provides a platform that gives consumers an opportunity to voice their opinions, as well as to access an infinite amount of brand information, which affects several aspects of consumer behavior such as awareness, purchase decisions and post-purchase evaluation.

Traditionally, ICT infrastructure and services have been good in SA, but have seen a steady decline over the past two decades. However, the exponential growth and use of mobile devices has ensured the prolific growth of social media in SA (Lesame, 2013). This study collectively investigated the leading locally established SNS in SA, Mxit, and the foremost SNS in the world, Facebook.

As mentioned above, SA's largest local established SNS is known as Mxit, which principally provides a private instant messaging service to its users at a fraction of the cost of an SMS. This predominantly mobile ICT conduit also created public chat rooms that permit users to meet and engage with other anonymous users online, while it also provides companies with a direct marketing communications in real-time (Kahn, 2013; Mxit 2015). At its peak in 2010, Mxit was transmitting 250 million messages per day and claimed to have 50 million users across the world (in 120 countries, but mainly in Africa), with 17 million users in SA. However, Mxit numbers have decreased significantly to 4.9 million active users largely due to WhatsApp and the advent of smartphone usage, but still remains one of the largest SNS in SA (Thomas, 2015). Over 8 000 mobile devices can be used to access Mxit (Mxit, 2015), but a majority of Mxit users still use feature phones that mainly encompasses lower to middle income consumers, which provides a unique platform for marketers to reach this target market in a social space. This mobile ICT channel also provides a number of free community support mechanisms in the form of education, health care, and agricultural applications, which are largely used by various South African government departments and non-profit organizations (Kahn, 2013).

Facebook is an online SNS that allows individuals to communicate and share information via the creation of a page and personalized profile. The user's Facebook page includes an individualized feed that permits news updates from "friends", whereas the profile allows the user to display information regarding their daily activities, interests, personal particulars, photographs, videos and groups. Individuals can communicate with one another via a chat function (instant messaging), wall posts and status updates. Facebook is the largest SNS in the world with a reported 1.49 billion users, of which 88% also access this interactive ICT platform via mobile devices (Facebook, 2015). Wronski and Goldstruck (2015) report that there were 11.8 million Facebook users in SA that mainly consisted of Generation Z (teenagers and younger) and

Millennials. This makes Facebook an attractive market for companies to target these particularly indecisive and unpredictable consumers with relevant marketing communications strategies and tactics.

### **Millennials perspective**

Millennials, also referred to as Generation Y, are aged from eighteen years old to early thirties, and represent 2.5 billion people or roughly a third of the world's population. New interactive ICT have provided Millennial consumers with an array of conduits to connect, communicate, and socialize. There are over 10 million Millennials in SA with a majority owning a smartphone or feature phone, and three out of four access the Internet and social media via mobile devices (Barenblatt, 2015).

World Wide Worx and Student Brands (2015) report that communication is the overriding factor for students' use of technology, with 97% of them using Facebook. Over 50% of students felt that they were at least a little addicted to SNS, with a quarter stating that their smartphones and social media were given preference to studying, and 20% were emotionally influenced by what they viewed on social media. Millennials are seduced by any ICT service that makes their lives easier, especially via innovative and efficient apps. They live in a technological context, which necessitates for them to be continuously connected and online, as well as have a preference for engaging with brands on social media, and shopping online (Barenblatt, 2015; Barney, 2011; Tapscott, 2009).

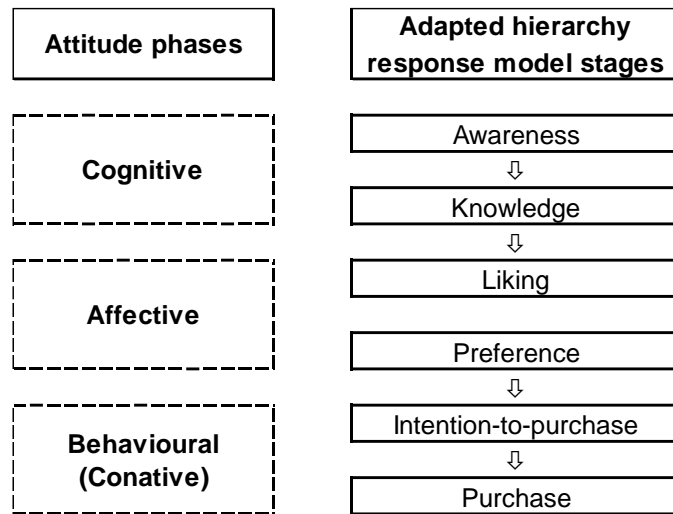
The advent of ICT channels such as social media, smartphones and apps has altered the manner in which Millennial consumers engage with organizations and has led to a broad range of lifestyle decisions. Companies and their brands need to adapt and respond to these substantial changes by learning to use these new digital ICT platforms to effectively target Millennial consumers (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003:95; Bevan-Dye & Dondolo, 2014; Howe & Straus, 2000). The rapid growth of social media in Africa is a lucrative opportunity for marketers, but there is a dearth of attitudinal research on the influence of social media marketing communications on the continent.

### **Attitudes and hierarchy response models**

Over the past century numerous advertising response models for setting marketing communication objectives have been developed to portray the hierarchical stages that consumers may pass through up until the purchase (Barry, 1987). The most renowned models are: AIDA (Strong, 1925), hierarchy-of-effects (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961), innovation adoption (Rodgers, 1962), and association (Preston, 1982).

This research is largely based on the hierarchy-of-effects model, but has been adapted to include and place emphasis on the intention-to-purchase response stage as advocated by Batra and Vanhonacker (1986), Brown and Stayman (1992), Holbrook (1975), Howard and Sheth (1969), Mackenzie et al. (1986), O'Brien (1971); Preston (1982), and Shimp (1981).

The adapted hierarchy response model proposes that consumer experience a series of attitudinal stages from cognitive (awareness and knowledge) to affective (liking and preference), and finally behavioral (intention-to-purchase and purchase) in response to marketing communications (refer to Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Adapted hierarchy response model**

(Batra & Vanhoner, 1986; Holbrook, 1975; Howard & Sheth, 1969; Lavidge & Steiner, 1961; O’Brien, 1971; Preston, 1982)

The attitude toward advertising can be described as the inclination to react in a positive or negative way to specific marketing communications. Prior research has revealed that attitudes towards advertising are efficient measures of marketing communications effectiveness (Mackenzie et al., 1986).

Social media marketing communications enables consumers to engage with online ICT platforms in different ways, but consumers have greater control over whether they decide to become aware, engage and build affinity with advertised brands. The hierarchy response model is still applicable to SNA in terms of the attitudinal stages, but should allow consumers to progress through all of the stages from awareness to purchase. Therefore, once consumers have become aware and interested in the brands as a result of the information provided by SNA, the SNS should then provide extra incentive to connect with them and lead the consumer through the final stages of the hierarchy to enable a direct purchase (Mabry, 2010).

A number of studies have investigated various aspects of attitudes towards social media marketing communications, but as mentioned in prior text, this was done mainly in developed countries. Barreto (2013) found low levels of attention (cognitive) towards Facebook advertising amid 20 US students. Logan et al. (2013) disclosed that 259 US students believed that Facebook advertising provided sufficient information (cognitive), but was most effective when it was found to be entertaining (affective). Hassan et al. (2013) concluded that Facebook advertising was informative (cognitive) and entertaining (affective) amid 310 Pakistani respondents when they had favorable attitudes towards the value of advertising. Tan et al. (2013) found that there was a favorable connection between social media advertising effectiveness and attitudes, which also includes intention-to-purchase (behavioral), among 149 Malaysian students. Leung et al. (2013) determined that Facebook and Twitter influenced attitudes towards the hotel industry, which resulted in intention-to-purchase (behavioral), but cognition had no influence among 408 US respondents. Haigh et al. (2013) reported that Facebook pages had a favorable effect on

attitudes and purchase intention (behavioral) amid 275 US respondents. Hardwick et al. (2014) also determined both negative and positive attitudes towards Facebook advertising among 25 United Kingdom (UK) participants when considering the purchase of mobile phones.

It is clear that the abovementioned inquiries exhibit divergent results, since several utilized small sample sizes; some used qualitative data; and/or a majority made use of students as respondents. Furthermore, a number of these investigations only examined one social medium and/or one attitude level, and few considered usage and/or demographic factors. Attitudes towards social media marketing communications have not been suitably measured in SA in terms of the hierarchy response models stages. Additionally, little is known about whether social media usage and demographic characteristics influence the attitudes of Millennials. Consequently, the research objectives of this study aim to ascertain if social media marketing communications has an influence on the hierarchy model attitude stages among South African Millennials, and also to consider the effect of specific usage and demographic variables towards social media marketing communications in terms of the aforementioned model.

### **Theoretical context**

There is still some deliberation concerning how to gauge social media marketing communication effectiveness. Several researchers have focused on SNS click-through rates (CTR) or other online metric measurement tools (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013:237-241; Liu-Thompkins & Rogerson, 2012:71-82; Peters et al., 2013:284; Tucker, 2012:12) instead of attitudinal studies. The researcher also considered CTR (or metrics) for this investigation since it plays an important role, but it is also important to understand what transpires following the click. The effectiveness of interactive ICT platforms should also be examined by means of a more comprehensive viewpoint, since online marketing communication have a major influence on attitudes that cannot be reflected only via CTR. Factors that are inherent to users such as their personal inclinations, attitudes, perceptions and motivation, therefore, also have a significant impact on online advertising effectiveness (Davidavičienė, 2012; Jimmy, 2015).

The hierarchy-of-effects model was also the first to take into account the three attitude components namely cognitive, affective and behavioral responses (Barry, 1987:263); therefore, that model provided a rational approach for data collection data in terms of each of the three attitudinal responses by means of three separate concise questionnaires for the social media that was investigated. Furthermore, every phase may be utilized as an advertising objective by organizations and their brands (Belch & Belch, 2015). As mentioned above, the response model suggests that the effects of advertising may take place over an extended time period, with several academics hypothesizing that the instantaneous impact of advertising on purchases is relatively small (Aaker & Carman, 1982:57-70; Tellis, 1998:134-144).

Hence, marketing communication might not result in immediate sales, but the progression of effects must transpire in order for the consumer to move through the complete hierarchy, thereby justifying selection of the response model which was used in the study.



## METHODOLOGY

### Research design

A positivist paradigm has been adopted with the aim to objectively evaluate the social world and predict human behavior (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). This research seeks to establish attitudes towards social media marketing communications as a measure to predict future consumer behavior. The research plan or framework of the inquiry, which is a guide to collect and analyze the data, is viewed as the blueprint to complete the research. The research design ensures that the study will answer the applicable research questions and/or objectives in an economical, valid and reliable manner (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Hence, this study is descriptive in nature and used a cross-sectional survey design to collect data.

Descriptive research, as implied by its name, describes characteristics of groups and people (Zikmund & Babin, 2007). It typically takes a cross-section of a population (Millennials in SA) and reveals their predisposition at a given point in time (attitudes toward social media advertising) on which the research can be built. Cross-sectional survey designs are typically related to descriptive research and used for the collection of data from a large research population (Hair et al., 2009; Wiid & Diggins, 2009), in this case Millennials in SA, which will allow for clearer distinctions from more traditional approaches that are used to effectively reach this group, as well as elaborate on previous research on this topic. Other reasons for the selection of this research design are that surveys, which are conducted on a face-to-face basis, also have high response rates and large research populations can be reached by a comparatively small number of fieldworkers over a short time period.

### Sampling

The research population comprised of 18 - 30 years olds (Millennials) who used and have been exposed to marketing communication on prescribed social media (Facebook and Mxit), which equates to approximately 7.5 million Millennials in SA (Barenblatt, 2015). This study surveyed a mix of employed and unemployed individuals, as well as students in different communities in both rural and urban, and high income and low income areas in order to obtain a representative sample of the research population in SA. A multi-stage sampling method was used. First, the Western Cape was chosen out of the nine provinces in SA, since nearly one million of the research population resides in this province.

Second, cluster sampling was employed to divide the Western Cape into geographic areas by means of census data to include a representative range of society (Statistics SA, 2012).

Third, a variety of organizations (community and commercial) was then chosen randomly via a telephone directory. In the final stage, once telephonic approval was obtained, systematic sampling was used, whereby every third Millennial respondent was invited to participate voluntarily in the survey within the aforementioned organizations.

### Research instrument and data collection

A total of three questionnaires were used to collect the data, one for each of three attitudinal responses (cognitive, affective and behavioral). The questionnaires were used to collect the data

on a face-to-face basis. The purpose of the research could be quickly explained to respondents by administering the questionnaires face-to-face, while obtaining the necessary consent.

The questionnaires were also self-administered, since they allowed for the questions to be completed without the aid of the researcher, and all of the questions were standardized. This administration method allows for more accurate answers, since respondents were able to request assistance if they did not understand any of the questions, as well as completeness, since the fieldworker was able to immediately scan the questionnaire once it was returned (Birn, 2004; De Vos et al., 2011).

Participants were first screened by means of filter questions to ascertain their eligibility to participate in the study. Double dichotomous filter questions determined if the respondent had utilized Facebook and/or Mxit, and if they had observed any marketing communications on these social mediums, after it was established that the participant formed part of the Millennial cohort. The respondent was then voluntarily invited to participate in the study if their answer was affirmative to both of these questions.

A majority of the questions comprised of multiple-choice questions on five social media usage characteristics and three demographic factors, as well as Likert scales that assessed on different levels of the adapted hierarchy response model (a total of six constructs). The questionnaires did not request respondents to list any specific products or brands, but simply focused on their attitudes towards social media marketing communications, which increased the response rate owing to the brevity of the questionnaires (one page in length). Each construct included nine items, which were comprised of five-point symmetric Likert scale statements ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). Lower mean scores signified low attitudinal responses, whereas the opposite was true.

The awareness and knowledge constructs, which assess cognitive attitudinal responses, were principally developed from Ducoffe (1996), and Duncan and Nelson (1985) constructs. The liking and preference constructs, which evaluate affective attitudinal responses, were adapted from Ducoffe (1996), Duncan and Nelson (1985) and Lin et al. (2008), Martin et al. (2002) and Wang and Sun (2010), respectively. The intention-to-purchase and purchase constructs, which assess behavioral attitudinal responses, were largely adapted from Martinez-Lopez (2005), Putrevu and Lord (1994), Taylor and Hunter (2002) and Wu et al. (2008), and Hamidizadeh et al. (2012) and Patwardhan and Ramaprasad (2005), respectively. Several pre-tests and pilot studies were conducted, as recommended by Burns and Bush (2000) and Zikmund (2000), in order to fine-tune the Likert scale constructs, as well as to refine the research process.

Consequently, over fifteen thousand Millennial respondents participated in the study, and each completed one of the questionnaires. The completed questionnaires were edited, coded, captured and analyzed via the SPSS statistical software (version 22).

## RESULTS

Ultimately, 15,027 Millennials social media users were surveyed in SA. As anticipated, social media was most commonly accessed via mobile device and PC and/or mobile device only, collectively accounting for 88.1% of responses. This high mobile access usage trend is confirmed by both international (Barker et al., 2013; Hardwick et al., 2014; Pescher et al., 2014)

and local (Andrews, 2014; Bevan-Dye & Dondolo, 2014; Swanepoel, 2015) researchs among Millennials. Table 1 offers a comprehensive overview of the usage and demographic characteristics of Millennial respondents who use social media in SA.

	Overall		Cognitive		Affective		Behavioural	
Usage Characteristics	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Access</b>								
Mobile Device	5 674	37.8	2 197	40.0	1 844	38.5	1 633	34.4
PC	1 793	11.9	608	11.1	622	13.0	563	11.9
Mobile Device & PC	7 560	50.3	2 687	48.9	2 320	48.5	2 553	53.8
<b>Length of usage</b>								
≤ 1 year	1 923	12.8	695	12.7	605	12.6	623	13.1
2 years	3 304	22.0	1 181	21.5	1 097	22.9	1 026	21.6
3 years	3 697	24.6	1 347	24.5	1 226	25.6	1 124	23.7
4 years	2 947	19.6	1 047	19.1	962	20.1	938	19.8
≥ 5 years	3 156	21.0	1 222	22.3	896	18.7	1 038	21.9
<b>Log-on frequency</b>								
Daily	9 159	61.0	3 446	62.7	2 810	58.7	2 903	61.1
2 - 4 a week	3 297	21.9	1 165	21.2	1 038	21.7	1 094	23.0
Once a week	1 612	10.7	548	10.0	558	11.7	506	10.7
2 - 4 a month	562	3.7	175	3.2	243	5.1	144	3.0
Once a month	397	2.6	158	2.9	137	2.9	102	2.1
<b>Log-on duration</b>								
≤ 1 hour	6 473	43.1	2 310	42.1	1 749	36.5	2 414	50.8
2 hours	3 919	26.1	1 458	26.5	1 307	27.3	1 154	24.3
3 hours	2 219	14.8	768	14.0	861	18.0	590	12.4
4 hours	1 125	7.5	411	7.5	444	9.3	270	5.7
≥ 5 hours	1 291	8.6	545	9.9	425	8.9	321	6.8
<b>Profile update incidence</b>								
Daily	4 495	29.9	1 593	29.0	1 498	31.3	1 404	29.6
2 - 4 a week	3 526	23.5	1 317	24.0	1 144	23.9	1 065	22.4
Once a week	2 860	19.0	1 082	19.7	889	18.6	889	18.7
2 - 4 a month	1 608	10.7	594	10.8	497	10.4	517	10.9
Once a month	2 538	16.9	906	16.5	758	15.8	874	18.4
<b>Demographics</b>								
<b>Gender</b>								
Male	6 668	44.4	2 486	45.3	2 065	43.1	2 117	44.6
Female	8 359	55.6	3 006	54.7	2 721	56.9	2 632	55.4
<b>Age</b>								
18 - 20	7 306	48.6	2 820	51.3	2 509	52.4	1 977	41.6
21 - 24	5 544	36.9	1 905	34.7	1 733	36.2	1 906	40.1
25 - 30	2 177	14.5	767	14.0	544	11.4	866	18.2
<b>Population group</b>								
White	2 039	13.6	639	11.6	503	10.5	897	18.9
Black	7 492	49.9	2 960	53.9	2 611	54.6	1 921	40.5
Colored	4 782	31.8	1 637	29.8	1 450	30.3	1 695	35.7
Indian/Asian	714	4.8	256	4.7	222	4.6	236	5.0

**Table 1: Social media usage and demographic characteristics of Millennials in SA**

The length of usage was relatively evenly spread from one or less to five or more years of social media usage. One would have expected that a majority of Millennials would have been using social media for a greater number of years; however, this result is not unexpected in SA, where a large portion of the population are termed as previously disadvantaged individuals (PDIs) (Black and Colored), principally as a result of Apartheid. A number of Millennials only have the economic means to acquire a mobile device (and the accompanying airtime and data costs) later in life in comparison to their international counterparts, and some only gain access to a computer for the first time when they embark on tertiary education studies or when they become employed (De Lanerolle, 2012; Lesame, 2013; Petzer & Meyer, 2013).

A majority of Millennials logged on to social media on a daily basis (61%), which is also comparable to other global (Logan, 2014; Lukka & James, 2014; Murphy, 2014) and South African studies (De Lanerolle, 2012; Dlodlo & Dhurup, 2013; Wronski & Goldstruck, 2013).

South African Millennials were commonly found to spend one (43.1%) or two (26.1%) hours per log on period. However, many were found to log on multiple times a day in other studies, especially via mobile devices (Azzie, 2014; Hardwick et al., 2014, Mitek & Zogby, 2014), thereby increasing the duration of usage (Dlodlo & Dhurup, 2013), but this factor was not measured in this inquiry.

Over 72% of Millennial respondents in SA were found to update their profile 2 to 4 times daily, or once a week. This usage factor has not been measured in many other studies and consequently, delivered novel results in the cross-analysis with the different hierarchy response model attitude stages that are discussed in later text.

The respondents' gender showed a slight bias in terms of female respondents (55.6%), which is in line with the demographical composition of South Africa's population (Statistics SA, 2012).

The 18 – 20 and 21 – 24 year olds collectively comprised of a little over 85% of the sample. Again, there is a dearth of attitudinal research in terms of whether there are significant differences towards social media marketing communications between age groups within a cohort, especially in terms of the Millennial cohort.

The population groups basically replicated the ethnicity of those who reside in the Western Cape in SA, hence Black (49.9%) and Colored (31.8%) respondents comprised of a majority of the sample (Statistics SA, 2012).

### **Social media marketing communications effect on attitudes**

As mentioned above, the respondents' attitudes (for each hierarchy response model stage) towards social media marketing communications was measured via constructs that each comprised of nine items. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  is a popular index of reliability that is used to establish the correlation between the construct variables. Reliability is the extent to which a research instrument is consistent in terms of the construct that it measures, and the results are repeatable. Any value, which is greater than 0.7 is acceptable, whereas a value of 0.8 or more is considered to be good (Maree, 2007:215-216). Table 2 reflects acceptable values for the liking, preference and purchase constructs, and good values for the awareness, knowledge and intention-to-purchase constructs.

	Mean	SD	Cronbach $\alpha$	$p$
Awareness construct	3.41	0.835	0.851	0.000*
Knowledge construct	3.35	0.804	0.830	0.000*
Liking construct	3.20	0.704	0.753	0.000*
Preference construct	3.16	0.683	0.743	0.000*
Intention-to-purchase construct	2.99	0.807	0.841	0.000*
Purchase construct	2.96	0.673	0.753	0.000*

\* Wald's Chi-square test showed a significant difference at  $p < 0.001$

**Table 2: Social media marketing communications effect on hierarchy response model attitude stages (Mean, SD, Cronbach  $\alpha$  and  $p$ )**

Wald's Chi-square distribution statistic was utilized to assess if there were significant differences for each of the hierarchy response model attitude stages (Field, 2009). Table 2 reveals that there was a significant difference for each of the hierarchy attitude stages in terms of social media marketing communications among South African Millennials at  $p < 0.001$ .

### Usage characteristics effect on attitudes

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted via a Generalized Linear Model (GLM) to investigate the relationships between dependent (hierarchy response model attitudes) and independent (usage and demographic factors) variables. Wald's Chi-square statistic was used to ascertain if there were significant differences for the independent variables of each hierarchy response model attitude stage. Post hoc tests, in the form of Bonferroni correction pairwise comparisons, were executed since the sizes of the groups were different. The post hoc tests located where the significant differences were in terms of the pairwise comparison between the dependent and independent variables (Field, 2009).

Table 3 displays the effect of usage characteristics on social media hierarchy response model attitude stages *vis-à-vis* Wald's Chi-Square tests, and Bonferroni correction pairwise comparisons post hoc tests, among Millennials in SA.

**Access:** social media marketing communications was found to be most effective when accessed by mobile devices (smartphones, feature phones and tablets) for awareness, knowledge and intention-to-purchase, and also displayed the highest mean values for two other hierarchy response attitude stages (liking and purchase).

**Length of usage:** Millennials who had used social media for 5 years or more displayed more favorable cognitive attitudes (awareness and knowledge), whereas respondents who had utilized social media for less than 5 years exhibited significantly positive affective attitudes (liking and preference) to marketing communications on these online ICT platforms.

**Log-on frequency:** this usage characteristic displayed little influence on hierarchy response attitudinal stages, except in terms of preference, where South African Millennials showed positive sentiment when logging on to social media 2 - 4 times a month versus those who logged on a daily basis. The high standard error value in this study indicates that there were a low number of Millennial respondents who accessed social media several times a month.

**Log-on duration:** the Millennial users who spent two or more hours logged on social media showed greater favorable attitudes across all hierarchy response stages in comparison to those who had used these interactive conduits for one hour or less.

**Profile update incidence:** South African Millennials who updated their social media profiles more frequently presented the most positive attitudes to marketing communications across all hierarchy response stages versus those who updated on a less frequent basis.

### Demographic characteristics effect on attitudes

Table 3 also shows the impact of demographic characteristics on social media hierarchy response model attitude stages in terms of Wald's Chi-Square tests, and Bonferroni correction pairwise comparisons post hoc tests, among South African Millennials.

**Gender:** this demographic characteristic demonstrated minimal impact on hierarchy response attitudes stages, with the exception of liking and preference, where female respondents exhibited a more favorable predisposition to marketing communications on these online ICT platforms than male respondents.

**Age:** this demographic characteristic also proved to have little effect on hierarchy response attitudes stages, except in terms of liking, where younger Millennials demonstrated more positive attitudes towards social media marketing communications.

**Population group:** Black and Colored Millennials in SA exhibited significantly more favorable attitudes for four of the hierarchy response stages (awareness, knowledge, liking and intention-to-purchase) in comparison to their White counterparts. Furthermore, these PDIs also demonstrated higher mean values than the White respondents for the remaining two hierarchy response attitude stages (preference and purchase).

## DISCUSSION

The results show that the lower hierarchy levels have higher construct means, which steadily decline for each successive hierarchy response attitude stage, until the ultimate purchase. This clearly replicates the purchase funnel, which was discussed in prior text, since Millennials' attitudes decline as they move up the pyramid. Consequently, this posits that social media marketing communications creates similar predispositions when compared to the purchase funnel model that was developed via traditional marketing communications (Belch & Belch, 2015; Safko, 2010; Yoo et al., 2010).

Several investigations have also explored one or more attitudinal stages of hierarchy response models in terms of SNA. Hadija et al. (2012) found low cognition (cognitive) and neutral affective attitudes towards SNA among 20 US college students. Ruane and Wallace (2013) established that Facebook and Twitter generated awareness and provided information (cognitive), and positively influenced the purchase (behavioral) of fashion brands among 14 Irish participants. Hamidizadeh et al. (2012) ascertained that social media advertising resulted in positive cognitive, affective and behavioral attitudinal responses from 267 Tehran Refah chain stores customers in Iran. Van Noort (2012) found that higher levels of interactivity online caused favorable cognitive, affective and behavioral attitudinal responses among 169 Dutch students. Lukka and James (2014) found negative, neutral and positive attitudes towards Facebook advertising among 465 Bangkok university students.

	Awareness			Knowledge			Liking			Preference			Intention-to-purchase			Purchase							
	M	SE	p	M	SE	p	M	SE	p	M	SE	p	M	SE	p	M	SE	p					
<b>Access</b>																							
Mobile Device (1)	3.37	0.029	0.000*	3.30	0.028	0.008**	3.20	0.026	0.076	3.18	0.025	0.487	3.01	0.032	0.002**	3.01	0.027	0.063					
PC (2)	3.21	0.039		3.19	0.037		3.14	0.033		3.16	0.032		2.88	0.040		2.94	0.034						
Mobile Device & PC (3)	3.32	0.028		(1 & 3) - (2) <sup>A</sup>	3.27		0.027	(1) - (2) <sup>B</sup>		3.15	0.025		3.19	0.024		2.93	0.030		(1) - (2 & 3) <sup>B</sup>	2.97	0.025		
<b>Length of usage</b>																							
≤ 1 year (1)	3.22	0.039	0.000*	3.23	0.037	0.001*	3.21	0.036	0.000*	3.17	0.035	0.000*	2.90	0.041	0.157	2.94	0.034	0.164					
2 years (2)	3.26	0.034		3.23	0.032		3.23	0.030		3.24	0.029		2.99	0.036		3.01	0.030						
3 years (3)	3.30	0.033		(5) - (1, 2, 3, 4) <sup>A</sup>	3.26		0.031	(5) - (1, 2, 4) <sup>A</sup>		3.17	0.028		3.19	0.028		(1, 2, 3, 4) - (5) <sup>A</sup>	2.96		0.035	(2, 3, 4) - (5) <sup>A</sup>	2.98	0.030	
4 years (4)	3.31	0.034		3.21	0.033		3.15	0.029		3.20	0.029		2.93	0.036		2.99	0.030						
≥ 5 years (5)	3.41	0.034		3.34	0.032		3.05	0.030		3.09	0.030		2.92	0.036		2.95	0.030						
<b>Log-on frequency</b>																							
Daily (1)	3.35	0.024	0.135	3.28	0.023	0.465	3.15	0.022	0.067	3.14	0.021	0.040**	2.98	0.025	0.271	3.01	0.021	0.275					
2 - 4 a week (2)	3.34	0.031		3.29	0.030		3.14	0.028		3.15	0.027		2.98	0.031		2.96	0.026						
Once a week (3)	3.28	0.039		3.24	0.037		3.15	0.033		3.16	0.033		(4) - (1) <sup>B</sup>	2.94		0.039	2.95		0.033				
2 - 4 a month (4)	3.32	0.064		3.27	0.062		3.28	0.047		3.29	0.046		2.98	0.068		2.98	0.057						
Once a month (5)	3.21	0.068		3.19	0.065		3.10	0.062		3.14	0.060		2.82	0.081		2.97	0.068						
<b>Log-on duration</b>																							
≤ 1 hour (1)	3.22	0.028	0.000*	3.13	0.027	0.000*	3.03	0.025	0.000*	3.05	0.025	0.000*	2.81	0.029	0.000*	2.86	0.024	0.000*					
2 hours (2)	3.36	0.032		3.33	0.031		3.13	0.028		3.18	0.028		3.00	0.033		2.81	0.028						
3 hours (3)	3.36	0.037		(2 & 3) - (1) <sup>A</sup>	3.34		0.035	(2, 3, 4) - (1) <sup>A</sup>		3.23	0.031		3.24	0.030		(2, 3, 4, 5) - (1) <sup>A</sup>	2.95		0.040	(2, 3, 4) - (1) <sup>A</sup>	2.97	0.034	(2, 3, 4) - (1) <sup>A</sup>
4 hours (4)	3.29	0.045		3.28	0.044		3.24	0.038		3.20	0.037		3.01	0.053		3.05	0.044						
≥ 5 hours (5)	3.26	0.043		3.18	0.041		3.18	0.040		3.21	0.039		2.93	0.051		2.97	0.043						
<b>Profile update incidence</b>																							
Daily (1)	3.29	0.034	0.001*	3.29	0.032	0.000*	3.28	0.029	0.000*	3.26	0.028	0.000*	3.05	0.035	0.000*	3.05	0.030	0.000*					
2 - 4 a week (2)	3.37	0.034		3.33	0.033		3.21	0.030		3.20	0.029		2.98	0.037		3.02	0.031						
Once a week (3)	3.35	0.035		(2 & 3) - (4) <sup>A</sup>	3.28		0.033	(1, 2, 3) - (4) <sup>A</sup>		3.12	0.031		3.17	0.030		(1) - (3, 4, 5) <sup>A</sup>	2.99		0.031	(1) - (4 & 5) <sup>A</sup>	2.99	0.031	
2 - 4 a month (4)	3.22	0.040		3.16	0.038		3.08	0.036		3.15	0.035		2.87	0.042		2.91	0.035						
Once a month (5)	3.27	0.034		3.22	0.033		3.13	0.031		3.10	0.030		(2) - (4) <sup>A</sup>	3.10		0.030	(2) - (5) <sup>A</sup>		2.85	0.036	(2) - (5) <sup>A</sup>	2.89	0.030
<b>Gender</b>																							
Male (1)	3.32	0.028	0.171	3.26	0.027	0.617	3.13	0.025	0.005**	3.16	0.024	0.044**	2.94	0.031	0.715	2.98	0.026	0.238					
Female (2)	3.28	0.028		3.25	0.027		3.19	0.024		3.20	0.024		(2) - (1) <sup>B</sup>	2.93		0.030	2.96		0.025				
<b>Age</b>																							
18 - 20 (1)	3.32	0.028	0.341	3.28	0.027	0.090	3.20	0.024	0.026**	3.20	0.023	0.145	2.94	0.031	0.982	2.96	0.026	0.671					
21 - 24 (2)	3.31	0.030		3.24	0.029		3.15	0.026		3.16	0.025		2.94	0.031		2.98	0.026						
25 - 30 (3)	3.27	0.036		3.24	0.035		3.14	0.035		3.17	0.034		(1) - (3) <sup>B</sup>	3.17		0.034	2.94		0.037	2.98	0.031		
<b>Population group</b>																							
White (1)	3.17	0.039	0.000*	3.13	0.037	0.000*	3.08	0.036	0.000*	3.14	0.035	0.449	2.85	0.036	0.000*	2.94	0.030	0.237					
Black (2)	3.35	0.025		3.32	0.024		3.22	0.022		3.18	0.021		3.03	0.029		2.98	0.024						
Coloured (3)	3.36	0.029		(2 & 3) - (1) <sup>A</sup>	3.34		0.028	(2 & 3) - (1) <sup>A</sup>		3.22	0.025		3.16	0.025		(2 & 3) - (1) <sup>A</sup>	2.97		0.031	2.96	0.026		
Indian/Asian (4)	3.32	0.055		3.22	0.053		3.13	0.049		3.22	0.048		2.90	0.056		3.01	0.047						

\* Wald's Chi-square test showed a significant difference at p<0.001

\*\* Wald's Chi-square test showed a significant difference at p<0.05

<sup>A</sup> Bonferroni correction pairwise comparisons mean difference is significant at the 0.001 level

<sup>B</sup> Bonferroni correction pairwise comparisons mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

**Table 3: Effect of usage and demographic characteristics on social media hierarchy response model attitude stages**

Hansson et al. (2013) reported favorable positive attitudes towards marketing on Facebook among 158 Swedish consumers. Yang (2012:56) indicated that Facebook had a favorable influence on cognitive and affective responses, as well as purchase intentions among 256 Taiwanese respondents. Kodjamanis and Angelopoulos (2013) concluded that Facebook advertising had little influence on intention-to-purchase and buying behavior (behavioral) amid 364 UK respondents.

However, the above results vary between both developing and developed countries due to the different contexts in which the research was conducted, while a number used convenience samples that solely comprised of students representing Millennials. This inquiry confirms that South African Millennials have favorable attitudes regarding all of the hierarchy response model stages as a result of social media marketing communications. However, as mentioned above, the respondents' predisposition diminished as they progressed to the higher level behavioral attitudinal responses, which is analogous to the communications effects pyramid theory.

Social media marketing communications displayed the most favorable awareness and knowledge levels (cognitive responses), as well as intention-to-purchase when accessed via mobile devices such as cell phones, smartphones, feature phones and tablets among South African Millennials. This is not an unexpected result as a majority of social media users access these ICT platforms via mobile devices. Swanepoel (2015) disclosed that mobile platforms had become the foremost mass media and the top advertising conduit in Africa with 93% having access to a mobile network. Almost 11 million users access the Internet via mobile devices in SA, which accounts for 90% of broadband connectivity (Wilson, 2013). Additionally, 50% of Africa's 200 million Internet population comprises of Facebook members, with 80% using mobile devices to access this ICT platform (Mendelsohn, 2014).

The rise in smartphones has meant that there has been enormous growth in terms of users accessing social media via mobile devices, as they did not have access to computers. A majority of individuals tend to have their mobile devices with them on a 24/7 basis, which implies that they are always connected and available. This in turn provides organizations and their brands with significant marketing communications opportunities to reach and connect with their target audiences quickly and easily (Barker et al., 2013; Redsicker, 2013).

Millward Brown found that individuals spend more than two and a half hours a day on their phones in SA, of which 14% is spent on social media. A third of consumers in the US spend at least one hour on their phones before buying something versus nearly 90% in SA, which is nearly double in comparison to computers (Andrews, 2014). Mitek and Zogby (2014) revealed that nearly 90% of US Millennials' smartphones did not leave their side, while many companies did not offer good mobile functionality. The Mobile Marketing Association (2015) disclosed that half of Millennials in the UK could recall an advertisement on their mobile devices, while 49% disclosed that they had interacted with mobile advertisements. SA Millennials exhibit even greater mobile growth and use in comparison to their US and UK counterparts, with eMarketer (2014e) establishing that SA had the twelfth fastest smartphone usage growth (27.1%) across the globe in 2014. Furthermore, Facebook accounted for over 20% of global mobile advertising spending in 2014 (eMarketer, 2014b) and therefore, offers companies an effective mobile ICT platform to reach Millennials.



South African Millennials who had utilized social media for 5 years or more exhibited the most positive awareness and knowledge levels towards SNA. Young adults who have used social media for an extended period of time would have become accustomed to the design and functionality of social media; therefore, they would also have greater cognitive awareness of the advertisements, which will be useful to acquire knowledge of certain companies and products. A number of other investigations also confirmed that the degree of online users experience on several interactive ICT conduits had an effect on hierarchy response model attitudes and consumer decision-making stages (Balabanis & Vassileiou, 1999, Hoffman et al., 1996; Liao & Cheung, 2001; Sago, 2013).

Conversely, favorable affective responses were displayed by less experienced Millennials, which is also an acceptable notion, since long-time social media users would have become habituated marketing communications and not as easily influenced. Several studies also established that Internet users with less experience were more readily influenced by online marketing communications (Cox, 2010; Previte & Forrester, 1998).

There was no discernable trend in terms of log-on frequency influence on social media marketing communications, and this was, therefore, a largely inconsequential result that warrants further research. Consequently, several inquiries also yielded divergent results *vis-à-vis* log-on frequency: Maddox and Gong (2005) and Roberts (2010) indicated that more active digital ICT users were more prone to favorable hierarchy response predispositions; Yang (2003) ascertained that online ICT users were more likely to view online marketing communications negatively; whereas Chandra et al. (2012) concluded that there was no difference between regular and intermittent social media users in terms of cognitive and affective hierarchy response attitude stages towards marketing communications on these interactive ICT channels.

South African Millennial respondents who spent two or more hours logged on to social media displayed positive attitudinal responses across all hierarchy response model stages to marketing communications, compared to those who had spent one hour or less. This is reasonable supposition, since the longer time Millennials spent on social media, the greater the possibility of them viewing and interacting with marketing communication on these online ICT channels. McMahan et al. (2009) reported that online users who spent extended periods of time on websites increase the probability of more favorable behavioral responses. Yet, Yang (2003) posited that Internet users who spent several hours online tended to have unfavorable sentiments towards marketing communications, but both of the aforementioned inquires only considered websites and not social media.

Favorable attitudinal responses were exhibited by Millennials in SA who updated their social media profiles on a regular basis, compared to those who update theirs less frequently across all hierarchy response model stages as a result of social media and specifically Facebook advertising. This is a rational discovery as greater interactivity on social media sites would increase the likelihood of Millennials engaging with other components such as marketing communications. Chandra et al. (2012) confirmed that regular digital ICT users exhibited more favorable hierarchy response attitudes towards social media marketing communications.

There was no noticeable trend in terms of gender on the other hierarchy response attitude stages, which necessitates additional investigation. Accordingly, a number of other studies reported conflicting findings in terms of results *vis-à-vis* of gender on various interactive ICT

conduits: Bannister et al. (2013); Taylor et al. (2011) and Walter (2014) established that women had more favorable attitudes towards social media marketing communications than men in terms of varied hierarchy response stages; Sago (2013) disclosed that women had lower affective sentiments from using social media, while Barreto (2013) and Agrawal and Jaliwani (2013) found that there were no significant differences among attitudinal responses towards social media.

There were no other perceptible trends regarding age in *vis-à-vis* of marketing communications on this online ICT channel, which requires supplementary inquiry. Accordingly, several other investigations reported contrary results concerning age: Maddox and Gong (2005) indicated that young online users had positive attitudes towards online marketing communications; Sobel (2010:24) ascertained that young social media users displayed a range of differing, but predominantly unfavorable behavioral responses; whereas Moore (2012) revealed that Generation X exhibited more positive behavioral tendencies than Generation Y in terms of various interactive ICT channels. However, it should also be taken into consideration that none of the above-mentioned studies considered age differences within a single cohort.

Black and Colored South African Millennials respondents displayed the most positive attitudinal responses across a majority of the hierarchy response model stages as a result of social media advertising when compared to their White counterparts. This is not an unexpected finding, since the Black middle class has grown substantially over the past two decades (post-Apartheid), and its spending power now exceeds their White compatriots in SA (Petzer & Meyer, 2013). Statistics SA (2012) confirmed that 78% of the South African Internet population is comprised of PDIs of which a majority used mobile devices to go online. Many PDIs still live in relative poverty, but many were first introduced to social media via the Mxit. Grier and Deshpande (2001) revealed that Black ethnic groups in SA were more likely to be positively affected by marketing communications. White Millennials, generally, have more experience with social media than their Black and Colored compatriots and, therefore, are less susceptible to accompanying marketing communications on these digital ICT channels.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE INQUIRY

This investigation is not without limitations, and provides opportunities for future investigation. There are many different types of SNA that can be utilized to target Millennials, but these were collectively assessed, whereas different attitudinal responses may arise in terms of the hierarchy response model stages if the various forms of SNA are analyzed on an individual basis. This study also did not examine specific brands of advertising on social media, but assessed SNA in general terms, which may also be an avenue for further research. This inquiry employed surveys to gather data that takes a snap shot of the research population, but a longitudinal approach examines research subjects over an extended period time, which would result in more comprehensive outcomes regarding attitudinal responses towards social media marketing communications. The quantitative design is frequently employed to analyze the attitudes of research populations, as used in this investigation, but a qualitative approach may provide a deeper understanding and further clarification of the motivations of Millennial respondents' social media behavioral outcomes and attitudinal responses.

## CONCLUSION

This research was a pioneering academic study, which showed the effect of social media marketing communication on South African Millennials in terms of the adapted hierarchy response attitude stages. The suitability of traditional marketing communication theories to social media and other online ICT platforms has been a focal point among advertising researchers and practitioners since the emergence of interactive advertising.

Although, from a theoretical viewpoint, hierarchy response models were formed via traditional advertising inquiry, there remains a dearth of research regarding the influence of SNA concerning this recognized theoretical framework. This investigation revealed that social media marketing communications had a significant impact on all of the hierarchy response attitude stages, but on a declining scale, which is congruent with the communications effects pyramid model theory. Hence, this study confirmed that traditional theories remain relevant to the interactive advertising environment, since the basic principles of online advertising tend to be equivalent to ATL marketing communication objectives, and theoretical ideologies, which were established for ATL advertising, are also appropriate for interactive advertising. Therefore, it can be concluded that social media follows equivalent notions when compared to the adapted hierarchy response model attitude stages. This investigation has made an important contribution to theory development and attitudinal research in terms of new ICT platforms.

Additionally, a number of usage and demographic characteristics impact on the hierarchy response model stages, several of which had not been considered in prior social media research in SA and around the world, which were also found to have differing influences on Millennials' attitudinal responses. The most noticeable of which were the favorable influence of extended log-in periods (2 hours or more), frequent (daily) profile update incidence and Black Millennial South Africans' attitudinal responses, across a majority of the hierarchy response model stages, towards social media marketing communications.

Therefore, from a practical perspective, organizations should include a variety of SNSs' large selection of apps and social plugins to keep Millennials occupied on social media for extended time periods, which should result in favorable hierarchy attitudinal responses. SNA should also be changed on a regular basis to avoid advertising wear out, particularly when targeting Millennials who quickly become uninterested with stagnant interactive ICT platforms that they access daily. Organizations should also consider the use of social media games, contests, virtual gifting, photo up-loaders and other interactive promotional tools, which enable marketers to promote word-of-mouth among SNS friends while creating brand experiences. South African Black Millennials represent a lucrative target audience that receives increased exposure to SNA, which should be exploited by shrewd marketers and brands. Social media provides information on demographic characteristics in terms of who have interacted on an organization's SNS, therefore, allowing for more efficient targeting, which should result in increased positive attitudinal responses among specifically targeted population groups.

From a society perspective, SA was previously considered to be the African leader regarding ICT infrastructure development, but access to these services has seen a decline in comparison to several other African nations (Lesame, 2013). However, this study has revealed that a majority

of South African Millennials not only have access to and spend copious amounts of time on social media, but also display positive predispositions towards marketing communications on these interactive ICT channels, especially as a result of the explosion of mobile devices, which have served as mechanisms to circumvent the deteriorating ICT infrastructure in SA.

Rapid growth in the acceptance and usage of these new online ICT conduits has coerced organizations to reconsider their marketing communication strategies in order to remain relevant and to interact with Millennials in an ever expanding digital arena in SA and across the globe. Yet, many organizations have used social media marketing communications without actually knowing the true attitudinal influence that it has on their consumers. This study has made an important contribution towards understanding the effects of social media marketing communications in emerging markets on a global basis. While the study was limited to South African Millennials, it has provided a sound platform for future local and international research within this field.

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