



A CRITICAL REALIST ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON
FACEBOOK: A CASE OF BROWNSENSE

By **EDSON MATSIKIDZE**

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Supervisor: Dr Kevin Ncube

Co-Supervisor: Ms Zandile Mxaku

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29th of October 2021

Signed

Date

Abstract: English

The study is conducted in South Africa, a developing country in which Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) have the potential to contribute to socio-economic development. The study also takes place at a time when SMEs can harness the advantage of social media marketing which has been enabled by the proliferation of social media platforms. Social media platforms provide access to large audiences which, for a long time had been prohibitively expensive for smaller companies with small revenues.

The study looks at the performance of SMEs from a marketing perspective. It is informed by findings from literature review, which indicates that there are very few studies with an explicit philosophical underpinning in marketing. The dominance of quantitative research has been flagged as a concern in the field of marketing (Hunt, 1994). A lot of research in marketing is quantitative, and undertaken without an explicit philosophical underpinning and thus the researchers “seem to take a positivist position without perhaps realising it” (Easton, 2010:118). This study therefore argues for the need for qualitative studies and studies with an explicit philosophical underpinning.

The study used grounded theory with a critical realist underpinning. The open nature of the grounded theory enabled the development of a framework for analysing marketing promotions which constituted the 4Ps, the Shostack (1977) product-service continuum and the Attention, Interest, Desire, Action (AIDA) model. The Shostack (1977) product-service continuum contributed to enabling the components of a product to be revealed using a tangibility spectrum. In this study products were thus broadly characterized on a spectrum ranging from goods on one end, characterised by a dominant tangible core to services on the other end which were initially classified as predominantly intangible. However Shostack’s critique of intangibility being one of several characteristics of services led to the service end of the continuum classified as having a dominant service core.

For products with a dominant tangible core, the data revealed that the nature of products contributes to the number of comments, for example the nature of car tyres is such that consumers make an enquiry based on tyre sizes and this increases the number of comments. On the other hand, products like chicken do not require

specification, and as such consumer comments reflected a move towards intention to purchase. The data thus revealed that the nature of products may render the quantification of comments an unreliable measure of the success of a promotion.

Products with a dominant services core were further classified as having characteristics beyond intangibility. The data revealed that these products need several pictures to demonstrate the perceived outcome of the service. In posts where the perceived outcome was not demonstrated by pictures even on hybrid products the comments reflected a need for more pictures to demonstrate the service component.

The use of the AIDA model in the analysis revealed that the success of a promotion falls at different levels, with the Attention being the lowest level and the purchase being the highest or ultimate level, notwithstanding objectives of the promotion.

Analysis of the Promotions “P” categorized the level of engagements into 3, the low, the medium and the high engagements. A major finding from this analysis was that high engagement cannot be automatically assigned a universal success. This finding exposes the use of an extreme positivist philosophical underpinning without realizing it. The use of a qualitative analysis in this study showed that a post with high engagement can constitute a large number of comments asking about a missing component of the marketing mix for example price, and as such the high level of engagement reflects that the price was missing in the promotion and yet creates the illusion of success.

Abstract: Pfupiso muChishona¹

Dzidzo ino yakaitwa munyika yeWenera inova nharaunda irikuratidzira tarisiro yekuenderera mberi kwebudirira kwebhuzinisi. Kupfurikidza kubudirira kwemabuzinisi makuru, kunetarisiro yekutiwo mabhuzinisi madiki achangewo achizohakira mubudiriro iyi, ayo anova nenhorondo yekutambudzika kubudirira achange achiwanawo mukana wekuti abudirirewo zvakare.

Kuuya kwe zishandiswa zveMasai sai (internet) kunove kwakakonzera kugadzirwa kwema application akaita se Facebook, Twitter, ne Instagram kwakaunza mutovo mutsva wekushambadza kwemabhuzinisi kuruzhinji. Nzira nemutowo wekushambadza zvitengeswa kuruzhinji wakanga wagara uripo uyo wainyanya kuonekwa pa Dzangaradzimu, nhepfenyuro pamwechete nepama bepa nhau, asi sandi ese mabhuzinisi aikwanisa kushandisa mutovo uyu nechikonzero chekuti mutengo yacho yekushambadza ipapo yainge iri yepamusoro soro. Masai sai akaudza nharaunda dzekushambadza zvitengeswa nemutowo unomutengo wakaderera. Izvi zvinova zvakanzera kuti kushambadza kuruzhinji kunge kuchikwanisiwawo nemabhuzinisi madiki ayo aiwadzo shaya mukana kupfurikidza nemutengo yaiva yepamusoro soro masai sai asati avepo.

Nogonya yedzidzo iyi iripakutarisa nekuwongorora mashambadziro anoita mabhuzinisi madiki pafacebook tarisiro iriyekuwona kuti pane hukama here pakati pemashambadziro akaitwa nebhuzinisi nekukwevewa kwe vanhu kuti vave vanotenga kana kuda zvitengwa izvi. Chikonzero chirichekuti since mabhuzinisi madiki awanawo mukana wekushambadza kuruzhinji nemutengo wakaderera anofanira kuhakira kugona kushandisa midziyo kuti akwanisewo kubudirira.

Kukwenyenzvera nyaya iyi, dzidzo iyi inoshandisa zivo yebazi re grounded theory ne critical realism anova iwo mapazi edzidzo anatora mutowo wakadzama pakuvhenyengura nyaya iripano. Grounded theory idonho rezivo rinotaura kuti umbowo wenyaya inenge ichida kuwongororwa haufanire kuva nemuganhu nekuti pamuganhu ipapo ndipo panogona kuva

¹ I would like to acknowledge with gratitude assistance in the translanguaging into chiShona from Nigel Mhike, Memory Mhike and Hezel Matsikidze.

nemhinduro. Grounded theory muchidimbu inotaura kuti umbowo hunodiwa unozova unoshandiswa kupa mhinduro yedzidzo haufanire kunge uine muganu pazvibodzwa asi unofanira kutorwa kusvika pava nekugutsikana kuti umbowo huripo hwasisa, kureva kuti hwakwana kusvika pachinzvimbo chekubuditsa mhinduro mhinduro yakakwana.

Critical realism wo muchidimbu idonho rezivo rinotaura kuti zvionekwa ne zvatinowona zvakavapo kupfurikidza nemabasa akasiyana siyana (anowonekwa, neasingawonekwi) anokonzera kuti uvepo watinowona uvepo. Zvisineni, dzidzo ino inotarisa mashambadziro emabhuzinisi nemapinduriro kuchishambadzo pafacebook anaotwa nevatengi. Mapinduriro evetengi ndiwo anowongororwa kuti pawonekwe kuti hukama uripo hwakamirasei. Hukama uyu ndiwo hwakabuditsa mhinduro yekuvashambadzi kuti vanofanira kushamba sei pazvingeswa zvavo zvakasiyana siyana.

Hukama hwevatengi nechishambadzo hwakaerwa pachishandiswa chihero cheAIDA model. Muchidimbu Aida model yaiera vatenga kupfurikidza nemhinduro dzavo kuchishambadzo. AIDA model yakaisa vatengi muzikwata zvakasiyana kupfurikidza mapunduriro avo kuchishambadzo. Chikwata chekutanga chaiva chevaipindura kuchishambadzo kuratidza kuti vaona chishambadzo asi vasina kuradza pfungwa kupfurikidza kuti vanowirirana nacho here kana kuti kwete avo ndivo vanomiririrwa na A wepa AIDA model. Mufananidzo we mhinduro dzavo “kushedza vamwe vanhu vavanofunga kuti vangafarire chitenegswa” imwewo mhinduro vabvudza nzimbo yemushambadzi kana kana kuti “imarii”. Chikwata chechipiri chaiva cheavo vairadza kufarira chitengeswa asi vasingaratidzi kuti vanoda kutenga here kana kuti kwete mufanidzo wemhinduro yavo inotevera “zvitengeswa zvenyu zvakanaka” avo vanomiririrwa na I wepa AIDA model. Chikwata chechitatu ndecheavo vairadzidza kuda zvitengeswa asi vasina kuzonyatsobuda pachena kuti vakazotenga here kana kuti kwete. Mhinduro dzavo dzanga dzakamira sezvizvi “zvitengeswa zvenyu ndirikuzvida”. Chikwata chekupedzisira changa chiri cheavo vairatidza umbowo hwekutenga mifananidzo yemhinduro yavo yanga yakamiras sezvizvi “ndinoda zvitengeswa zviriviri nditumirei account number ndibhadhare”.

Zvikwata izvi zvakakwanisa kubutsa pachena kuti mashambadziro anoita vashambadzi anesimba rekugona kukweva vatengi kana kuti vatengi vave nekugununa.

Abstract ngesiXhosa²

Olu phando lwenziwe kwilizwekazi loMzantsi Afrika, apho amashishini amancinci nasakhasayo alithemba ekuphuhliseni ilizwekazi kwezomnotho. Olufundo luphangaleleyo lubuye lwenziwa ngethuba amashishini akhasayo anokuthi athathe inxaxheba kwelixesha liqondana nokwanda kwamaqonga onxibelelwano kumphakathi. La maqonga onxibelelwano omphakathi enza kubelula ukuqhakamshelana nabaninzi ngezaziso zamashishini. Into leyo ebikade isezandleni zamashishini amakhulu nenxa yamaxabiso ebengafikeleleki. Oluphando luphanda ngendlela zamashishini amancinci zokwazisa uluntu ngemveliso kwingqeqesho yolwazi lokutshutshiswa kwabathengi.

Oluphando lukhanyiswe kukujongiswa uluncwadi kwingqeqesho yolwazi lokutshutshiswa kwabathengi okubonise ukuba zimbaleka izifundo ezisekelwe ngolwakhiwo lwazi olucacisiwe ngaphambi kokuqalwa kophando. Ulongamelo lwezifundo ezixininise azibalweni lufunyanwe njengenkhalabo ezifundweni kwingqeqesho yolwazi lokutshutshiswa kwabathengi. Ezizifundo ezixininise zagxila ezibalweni ingxaki yazo kukuba zinika ixabiso kulonto enenani ephezulu, kodwa ke ixabiso alixhomekekanga ezibalweni. Oluphando lukhuthaza isidingo sokuba abaphandi basebenzise uphando olujonga lonto efundwayo ngendlela epheleleyo kunokuba izifundo ziphelele ekubalweni. Lukhuthaza njalo izifundo ezisekelwe ngolwakhiwo lwazi oluqondene nezimfihlo zokudabuka kwezinto yaye olucaciswe ngaphambi kokuqalwa kophando.

Ubuninzi bophando kwingqeqesho yolwazi lokutshutshiswa kwabathengi bugxile ezibalweni yaye luthatyathwa ngaphandle kwezifundo ezisekelwe ngolwakhiwo lwazi oluqondene nezimfihlo zokudabuka kwezinto. Olutyekelo ezibalweni lwenza abaphandi babenokuwela emgibeni wokuphatha ulwazi njengento emiyo enganakuphuhliseka. Oluphando khange lubeke isakhiwo lwazi esikhethekileyo kodwa lwakhe inqolobane zezakhiwo lwazi ezininzi apho kuzokhethwa khona esosakhiwo lwazi xa sidingeka. Lendlela yokutsala isakhiwolwazi ngokudingeka kwaso ibizwa isikhongozeli lwazi. Umbono osikhonkwane koluphando kukuba lonto ephandwayo inobuqu bayo, kodwa siyiqonda ngezimvo zethu nangolwazilwethu.

² I would like to acknowledge with gratitude assistance in the translanguaging into isiXhosa from my co-supervisor uMama uZandi Mxaku, nabaninawe uYanda Stancu, Mpumelelo Xwetu noKonwaba Ngcukana.

Olulwazi ngobuqu bento kunokwenzeka ukuba aluphelelanga kwaye siyakwazi ukuluphuhlisa xa siqhubeka ngophando.

Esisikhongozelilwazi siqulathe izakhelo zokuhlalutya ezifana nenxubalwazi yokutshutshiswa kwabathengi (marketing mix) eqokelela ukhankaso (promotion), ukuhanjiswa (distribution), amaxabiso (price), nemveliso (product). Isakhiwo lwazi seBTLG silandela izenzo zabantu ezikhomba amazinga ahlukeni aveza okwakuqala ukuba umuntu ubonile umyalezo (Bona), okwesibini ukuthanda into okukhulunywa ngayo (Thanda), okwesithathu ukulangazelela ukubanayo (Langazelela) okokugqibela kukuphakama komuntu athathe isigqibo athenge (Gqiba, thatha isigqibo) [BTLG]. Isakhiwo lwazi esingumlinganiso wokuncipha nokwanda kwento, ukuncipha kwayo kuqala kwinto ebambekayo kuncipha kusiya kwinto engabambekiyo.

Kwingqeqesho yolwazi lokutshutshiswa kwabathengi imveliso ziqhele ukuba yizinto ezibambekayo ezifana nenkobe nomnqayi kwaye zinakho ukuba zizinto ezingabambekiyo zinexabiso nentengo, umzekelo wezizinto ezingabambekiyo bubugqwetha. Umlinganiso wokuncipha nokwanda ubenegalelo lokutyhila ezozinto eziyinxalenye yemveliso.

Imveliso koluphando zicongwe kumlinganiso wokuncipha nokwanda ziqala kwiimveliso ezilawulwa kukubambeka kobuqu bazo nemveliso ezilawulwa kukungabambeki kobuqu bazo. Kwimveliso ezilawulwa bubuqu obubambekayo, ulwazi olufunyenweyo luthyile ukuba indalo yezimveliso inegalelo kumanani ezimvo ezibonakalisiweyo. Umzekelo ngamavili enqwelondlela, wona indalo yawo ibangela ukuba abathengi baqale ngokubuza ngobungakanani bawo. Okhu kubuza kunyusa amanani ezimvo. Kwelinye icala, imveliso ezifana nenkukhu azidingi ukucaciswa kunjalo nje izimvo zabathengi zibonise intshukumo yokuba nenjongo zokuthenga. Ulwazi olufunyenweyo ngoko ke lubonise ukuba indalo yemveliso ingabangela ukuba izibalo zezimvo zibeluvavanyo olungathembakalanga ngempumelelo yokhankaso.

Imveliso ezilawulwa bubuqu obungabambekiyo zinokudinga ukucongwa ngezinye indlela ngaphandle kokungabambeki. Ezindlela zifana nokungohlukaniseki nendawo mhlawumbi nomntu owenzayo, ukuguquguquka kwendlela yokwenza, nokuba ezimveliso umthengi akakwazi ukuba ngumnini ongathintelwanga ixesha. Ulwazi olufunyenweyo luthyile ukuba

imveliso ezilawulwa bubuqu obungabambekiyo zidinga imifanekiso eminizi ezobonakalisa ubuqu bemveliso. Kwimikhankaso apho imifanekiso embalwa engabonakalisanga ubuqu okanye inzuzo yemveliso; nakulezo imveliso ezidityanisiweyo, izimvo zibonakalise isidingo semifanekiso eminizi ebonakalisa izinto eziyinxalenye yezimveliso ezilawulwa bubuqu obungabambekiyo.

Ukusetyenziswa kwesakhiwo lwazi seBTLG ekuhlalutyweni kuthyile ukuba impumelelo yokhankaso inokwahlulelwa kwinqanaba ezohlukeneyo, kuqala ngenqanaba elisezantsi xa abantu belubonile ukhankaso kusiya kwinqanaba eliphezulu, eligqibayo apho abantu bethatha isigqibo sokuthenga. Ezinqanaba zempumelelo yokhankaso zibonakele ngaphandle kokuphandwa kweminqweno yokhankaso.

Uhlalutyo kusakhiwo lwazi sokhankaso esiyinxalenye yesakhiwolwazi esikhulu senxubalwazi yokutshutshiswa kwabathengi sona sohlulahlulwe kwaye saba zindidi ezintathu zamanqanaba othethathethwano. Uthethathethwano olusezantsi, uthethathethwano oluphakathi nothethathethwano oluphezulu. Isiphumo esikhulu koluphando kukuba uthethathethwano oluphezulu alukwazi ukunika isiqinisekiso esikhomba impumelelo yokhankaso engenakuphikiswa. Esisiphumo sibhenca abaphatha ulwazi njengento emiyo enganakuphuhliseka, silumkisa ukuba banokuwela kulomgiba ngoba besenza uphando olungenasisekelo solwakhiwo lwazi oluqondene nezimfihlo zokudabuka kwezinto.

Udidi lohlalutyo olusetyenziswe kuloluphando ngolujonga lonto ephandwayo ngendlela epheleleyo, kunokuba uphando luphelele ekubalweni. Lindlela yokuhlalutya ithyile ukuba ukhankaso olunamanani othethathethwano aphezulu lungaqhatha abaphandi abanika ixabiso kuyo yonke into enenani ephezulu. Ulwazi olufunyenye weyo luthyile ukuba amanani aphezulu anokukhomba inxalenye yolwakhikho lwazi engekho efananexabiso lemveliso.

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List of Acronyms and New Terms

Acronyms

1	3P's	People, Process, Physical
2	4P'S	Product, Promotion, Place and Price
3	AIDA	Attention, Interest, Desire, Action
4	AMA	American Marketing Association
5	CIM	Chartered Institute of Marketing
6	CRM	Customer Relationship Management
7	DRIP	Differentiation, Reminding, Informing and Persuasion.
8	eWOM	Electronic Word of Mouth
9	FMCG	Fast-moving consumer good
10	HOE	Hierarchy of effects model
11	H/VPIO	Heterogeneity or variability, inseparability, perishability, intangibility and lack of ownership
12	IMC	Integrated Marketing Communication
13	SMM	Social Media Marketing
14	SME	Small and micro enterprises
15	SMME	Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise
16	WoM	Word of Mouth

New Terminology

Products with dominant tangible core: a term which refers to goods but acknowledges the relative or non-absolute nature of the tangibility characteristics.

Product with a dominant service core: a term used to refer to a product with relatively intangible characteristics but acknowledging that other service characteristics may define a service. Also acknowledging that intangibility is not a sufficient term for defining services, the acronym H/VPIO is more reflective of the multiple characteristics of services.

Product with a dominant hybrid core: a term used to refer to a product characterised by a dual dominance of both tangibility and service characteristics, where dual does not necessarily mean equal.

Chapter 1: Background and Rationale

1.1 Introduction

This study focuses on the marketing activities of small, very small and micro enterprises on social media. For purposes of brevity I refer to these as small to micro enterprises (SMEs). In the first part of this chapter, I start with a discussion of SMEs and the basis of their classification. I then briefly introduce BrownSense. I go on to discuss SMEs' contribution to the economy, their access to finance and its implications on their survival. I also discuss the state of SMEs which often have low marketing budgets and the unique opportunity for SMEs which arises from the low cost and wide reach of social media marketing. I move on to a discussion on the types of research on social media marketing and argue for a need for research with an explicit philosophical underpinning. Based on these issues the following research questions and objectives emerge and are the focus of the study.

Research questions

1. What is the nature of the promotions on the BrownSense Facebook page?
2. What are the elements of marketing promotions on BrownSense and how do these enable or constrain the success of the promotions, where success is understood as the achievement of promotional objectives?

Research objectives

1. To determine the nature of the promotions on the BrownSense Facebook page.
2. To determine the elements of marketing promotions on BrownSense and how do these enable or constrain the success of the promotions, where success is understood as the achievement of promotional objectives.

Having covered the key issues in the chapter, I then conclude by giving an overview of the chapters in this thesis.

1.2 Small to Micro Enterprises (SMEs)

Literature on small business provides a diverse range of what constitutes small businesses, often authors do not specify their characterisation of SMEs but give examples for instance that SMEs often do not yield search results on Google (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015). Other scholars have defined small and micro enterprises together with medium enterprises (Mboyane & Ladzani, 2011) and have

used definitions from legislation for example from the 1996 National SMEs Act which defines SMEs as follows:

“a separate and distinct business entity, including cooperative enterprises and non-governmental organisations, managed by one owner or more which, including its branches or subsidiaries, if any, is predominantly carried on in any sector or sub-sector of the economy and which can be classified as a very small, a small, a micro- or a medium enterprise (SMME)” (The National SMEs Act South Africa, 1996).

While different authors have given different opinions about how to categorise businesses in this study I draw mainly on the comparatively newer National SMEs Amendment Act of South Africa (26 of 2003). The Act splits small businesses into 3 different categories which are: small enterprises; very small enterprises; and micro enterprises. Small enterprises comprise of a maximum of 50 paid full-time employees, maximum turnover of 5 million rand and assets to the value of 5 million rand. Very small enterprises comprise of a maximum of 10 paid full-time employees, maximum turnover of 0.5 million rand and assets to the value of 0.5 million rand. Micro enterprises comprises of a maximum of 5 paid full-time employees, a maximum turnover of 0.2 million rand and assets to the value of 0.1 million rand. The three segments of small, very small and micro business are the focus of this study and henceforth will be referred to as Small to Micro Enterprises (SMEs).

[1.3 The digital era and economic participation of SMEs in South Africa](#)

The turn of the 21st Century has seen the proliferation of social media platforms on the internet where people engage with each other for social reasons (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The key elements of social media platforms highlighted by scholars include that they constitute shared media, they are social and characterised by two-way conversations. The most common social media platforms include “Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube” in the Anglo-Saxon world (Xie, Neill & Schauster, 2018:169). The pervasive nature of some of the social media platforms like Snapchat, Tiktok and Instagram is highlighted in Wilson’s (2020:5-6) “Spoken-word RAP (Rhyme And Poetry) treatise” journal article in Journal of Marketing Management.

This study focused on Facebook which has approximately 2.38 billion users (Wordstream, 2019). Businesses have also taken the opportunity to engage with people on these platforms (Bruhn et al., 2012) and such engagements on platforms such as Facebook are a fundamental part of marketing (Malhotra et al., 2013). The growth of social media platforms like Facebook therefore provides a means of mass marketing which is typically free (Forrester Research, 2008; Nielsen, 2012). While mass marketing channels like television, radio and newspapers are still common they have however remained prohibitively high priced making them exclusively accessible to large corporates (Gilmore et al., 2007). Social media platforms therefore make such mass communications accessible to SMEs (Wijaya, 2011).

In a country like South Africa characterized by high unemployment with more than 49.6% of South Africa living in poverty (Statistics South Africa, 2020), SMEs have the potential to contribute to the reduction of the unemployment. Blankson and Stokes (2002) states that SMEs are recognized as catalysts in the socio-economic development of any country. SMEs are an important vehicle for the achievement of macroeconomic objectives in terms of employment generation and development of the environment they operate in. As more SMEs survive their likelihood to contribute to the reduction of unemployment is increased.

This choice of the platform which supports SMEs as the focus of this study is informed by the above literature which argues that SMEs are a catalyst to socio-economic development. The focus on Facebook is also informed by the literature which states that social media platforms enable access to mass communications for SMEs. An additional compelling reason to study the selected platform is that it supports businesses that due to historical events are linked to communities most affected by unemployment in South Africa.

It is important to note that in South Africa participation in business has a history of being regulated by apartheid laws. The marginalization of Black people extended to exclusion from economic participation (Luiz, 2006). Repressive measures were put in place to discourage the existence of Black-owned enterprises. Where such enterprises emerged, they were restricted to some types of businesses and could not

grow beyond certain sizes. Thus, many Black owned businesses are characterised by a history of exclusion from mainstream business. However, they are beginning to organise themselves and creating various platforms to coordinate and support each other. This is as evidenced by groups on social media and in particular on Facebook where examples of the following groups can be found:

South African Black Entrepreneurs Forum,
Ekasi Entrepreneurs,
Black Poultry Farmers South Africa,
Black Entrepreneurship South Africa,
BrownSense.

The above groups bring together Black people for various reasons. While they are not homogenous, these groups attract businesses which collectively share a history of being small, marginalised and under researched. A further important part in the marginalization of Black-owned businesses was also through their absence in the research agenda of most business educational institutions during the apartheid era (Mboniyane & Ladzani, 2011). Research is understood as “basing evidence on direct observation and collecting it in an objective and unbiased way” (Ritchie et al., 2013:9). The importance of systematic research has been part of debates in marketing. As early as in 1952, Bartels in an article entitled “Can Marketing be a Science?” linking research with science pointed out that:

“the development of science is contingent primarily upon the nature of the subject studied, upon the method of analysis employed, ... upon the definitive nature of the generalisation derived” (Bartels, 1951:319).

By exclusion from the research agenda Black businesses missed out on the benefits of research which is understood to include “the derivation of laws or principles which may serve as a basis for prediction, decision, and action” (Bartels, 1951:319).

The emergence of Black business groups on social media creates an opportune moment for the activities of SMEs and in particular those of Black businesses to be researched. If research is the careful observation of practice to improve performance

such research would be helpful to improve the performance of SMEs. Researching previously marginalised Black businesses would also contribute to the understanding of problems which are specific to the groups. It would enable issues of the social injustices of the past to be addressed. Furthermore the inclusion of smaller business would broaden economic participation which would also benefit the economy at large.

1.3.1 BrownSense

This study focuses on the marketing practices of SMEs on BrownSense, a platform selected for its intention to support the development of Black business. BrownSense is a trading platform which connects businesses and people who sell, buy, exchange or seek information on goods and services (BrownSense, 2021). It focuses on the trade of SMEs and connects traders with customers through digital platforms and monthly events (702 Live Station, 2016). Most of the traders are not only small but also fairly new making the exchange of ideas a more significant attribute of the platform. The BrownSense platform is dedicated to the development of Black businesses traders in response to a history of colonialism and apartheid which controlled and thwarted the involvement of Black people in business. The platform was founded in 2016. BrownSense is mostly active on social media and in particular on Facebook.

The platform has a high presence on social media which allows SMEs to reach mass markets at low cost or no cost i.e. while there may be expenses incurred in the production of messages the actual use of social media platforms is largely unpaid for. BrownSense has an active Facebook page with a membership of more than 200 000.

SMEs and all traders on BrownSense post communications about their products on the Facebook page. Members of the group make comments and react to the posts, to which the traders can respond. This interwoven interaction on posts is referred to as engagements and has been analysed as a function of marketing {Formatting Citation}. The research thus aims to analyse engagements on the BrownSense Facebook page for the purposes of identifying factors which enable and constrain the success of marketing promotions.

The study asks the following broad exploratory questions.

What is the nature of the promotions on the BrownSense Facebook page?

What factors enable and constrain the success of marketing promotions on the BrownSense Facebook page?

In this study I used an iterative method to collect and analyse data on promotions and engagements from Facebook. The iterative method allowed the repeating of the “collect and analyse” process until I had a sufficiently representative sample and had sufficient data (Holton, 2010) to substantiate the conclusions I make in this thesis. The collection of data was continuous in line with the iterative method discussed in detail in the methodology section. In total, I analysed 26 posts on the BrownSense Facebook page starting from January 2019 to 2021. The selection of posts focused on posts in which a trader offered a product for sale. These trader’s posts are discussed in detail in relation to other post in section 4.4. A critical realist analysis was enacted to reveal the issues associated with the degree of success of the marketing promotions of SMEs.

[1.4 A need to study the social media marketing of SMEs](#)

The need to study the marketing practices of SMEs arises from an understanding that SMEs play a vital role in the economic well-being of a country (Senaratne, 2018). Scholars have argued that SMEs are important for job creation, innovation and thus promote overall economic growth and rejuvenation (Adegbuyi et al., 2015; Olawale & Garwe, 2010). While the SMEs seem to play a major role in the South African economy, their survival rate in South Africa and the rest of the world is relatively low. For instance, in Uganda, one-third of new business start-ups do not last beyond one year of operation while in South Africa, the failure is between 50% and 95% depending on the industry (Olumese & Owenvbiugie, 2020).

The potential of SMEs to contribute to economic development is often restricted by their high failure rate. While access to finance is understood as the main contributor to their failure rate (Abor & Biekpe, 2006) their marketing practices which have been described as ad hoc are a likely contributor to this failure (Simpsons & Taylor, 2002; Olawale, 2018). Brink and Cant (2003) state that there are many things which contribute to SMEs failure and factors such as insufficient marketing, inability to

communicate effectively with customers and inability to do marketing research are amongst the major contributors.

There is therefore a need to study the marketing activities of SMEs to ensure that they operate in an enabling environment that allows them to survive and compete in a competitive market. SMEs survival, operations, growth and well-being are important to the economy since they contribute to the economy. One of the ways to address unemployment is to leverage the employment creation potential of SMEs and to promote the development of SMEs (FinMark Trust, 2010). This study investigates the performance of SMEs on social media and the findings could assist to improve their operations. When SMEs improve their operations they are likely to grow into sustainable businesses which may subsequently benefit the country's economy.

1.4.1 Role of Small to Micro Enterprises (SMEs) in the economy

South Africa, in general is confronted with significant economic and social challenges that continue to affect the financial standing of many households. The country is facing high levels of unemployment rate, high levels of poverty and very low disposable income. The statistics show that the situation has worsened from 2018 to 2021. According to Statistics South Africa (2018), the unemployment rate in South Africa increased to 27.2 percent in the second quarter of 2018 from 26.7 percent in the previous period. In the same quarter, the number of unemployed persons rose by 103 thousand to 6.08 million. The poverty gap in the country widened, with more than 50 percent of the population i.e. 30million people living in poverty. Statistics South Africa (2017) calculates the level of poverty in South Africa using the upper-bound poverty line (UBPL) which states that people living on or below R992 per person per month are in poverty. In the second quarter of 2021 South Africa's unemployment rate rose to 34.4% from 32.6% in the previous period. It was the highest jobless rate since comparable data began in 2008, amid the worsening corona pandemic crisis which affected South Africa from early 2020.

Given the magnitude of the challenges faced by the country, it is important to find interventions that can better serve and benefit the country. Addressing issues of social media marketing which may help SMEs is one such way and as such is the focus of this study.

The South African Banking Association (2017) states that SMEs are identified as drivers of economic growth and development in South Africa. The success of SMEs has a potentially significant effect on economic growth and job creation and that cannot be ignored (World Bank, 2018). According to the South African Banking Association (2017) SMEs contribute about 91% of formalised business, 60 percent of the total employment and contribute about 36% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to the South African economy. While SMEs can play a vital role in the country, it is estimated that less than half of newly established SMEs survive beyond five years of operation (Cant & Ligthelm, 2002). The failure rate of SMEs makes it difficult for SMEs to be part of the sustainable resolution to address high unemployment and poverty in South Africa because the more they fail the more unemployment and poverty remains unresolved.

A number of studies have taken several approaches to try and understand the performance and survival rate of SMEs. At the international level a number of scholars have linked SMEs failure to lack of access to finance and these include Abor and Quartely (2010); Carey (2015); Bennett and Robson (2005); and Blackburn and Jarvis (2010). Similarly studies conducted in South Africa by scholars like Olawale and Garwe (2010) and Ligthelm (2003) have also linked the failure of SMEs to limited access to finances. They argue that SMEs are capable but need a constant and reliable source of funding for stability in the early stages and thereafter to grow.

Fatoki (2014) states that SMEs do not only fail because of one factor which is lack of financial access, but that another major cause of many SMEs failure is lack of functional skills. Van Niekerk (2017:1) argues that “beyond structural and financial support, an underrated but important factor for entrepreneurial success is understanding branding and its impact”.

A number of researchers state that the SMEs marketing practices is different from those of large corporates (Coviello et al., 2000; Gilmore et al., 2001; Hill, 2001; Reijonen, 2010). Large corporates have access to financial resources and can often measure the effectiveness of their marketing activities so as to know where and what to maintain, develop or improve. Whilst in large organisations marketing is

characterised as strategically planned and often measured to know its value and its effectiveness, the marketing done by SMEs has been characterised as informal, unstructured, spontaneous, and reactive (Adegbuyi, 2015).

Stokes (2000) describes the marketing of SMEs as reactive to immediate needs with little attention paid to plans. Furthermore Bocconcelli et al. (2018) who writes about SMEs and marketing states that most SMEs lack a structured approach to their marketing activities and this may mean that they are more likely to miss on the opportunity to use social media marketing to reach mass markets. These unstructured, ad hoc approaches to marketing promotions by SMEs may contribute to the underperformance of SMEs as Simpsons and Taylor (2002) state that effective marketing requires a conscious application of marketing principles. However, it is not always easy for SMEs to achieve their marketing and other business objectives given their restricted access to financial resources (Abor & Biekpe, 2006). The limited access to finance allows very little if any measurement of the effectiveness of their marketing activities (Gilmore et al., 2001; Reijonen, 2010).

1.5 SMEs access to finance for marketing

The cost of mass marketing channels has historically been prohibitively expensive for SMEs (Gilmore et al., 2007). The high cost may be a contributor to the dichotomy in which the marketing activities of large corporates are more structured than those of SMEs which remain under researched and unstructured. However the digital revolution has brought about social media marketing which gives an opportunity for SMEs to access mass and niche markets at no costs. While paid for communications allow more visibility for bigger corporates, promotions on social media platforms which are typically unpaid for make it possible for SMEs to also have access to some mass markets albeit not to the benefit of large corporates which have access using both free and paid for platforms (Wijaya, 2011; Franco et al., 2016; Dong & Yang, 2018).

While social media marketing gives SMEs access to mass markets, they face an extra challenge in that they are often small in size and some microenterprises are often individually owned and thus may not have the expert marketing resource in their business operation repository. It may be for this reason that Blankson (2018) notes that many SMEs have very little understanding of marketing and many of them copy

large corporates marketing strategies without fully understanding of the marketing concepts. Unfortunately, a large number of SMEs find themselves unable to effectively use the internet to promote their business (Charoensukmongkol & Sasatanum, 2017) and because of that Parveen, Jaafar and Ainin (2016) make a recommendation that SMEs need to be empowered with marketing knowledges for them to be successful. However simply replicating the marketing promotions of large corporations may not be the appropriate stance for many SMEs. While SMEs have practised marketing for long periods of time, the effectiveness of their online components need to be researched to improve their chances of success (Walsh & Lipinski 2009). For this reason, this study analyses the marketing promotions of SMEs on social media to contribute to their understanding of their own practices.

1.6 Research on social media marketing

In line with most research in the broader field of marketing which has been argued to be predominantly quantitative (Hunt 1994; Ellis et al., 2011:25), current research in social media marketing has remained inclined towards quantitative. The most common research on social media marketing is enumerative for example, research by Wiese and Akareem (2020), uses online surveys and quantitatively seeks to determine perceptions and attitudes towards social network advertising. Other enumerative research counts engagement features e.g. likes and shares (Rauschnabel et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2015) and then reports what can be observed. Responses and engagements are shown as caused by an element of the promotion. Such research concludes that there are relations between an image and a high number of counts but does not show how the image caused the increase in the number of “likes” or the count the number of engagements.

The predominance of quantitative measures in social media marketing is shown by the extensive use of Likert scales. The Likert scale is an ordinal psychometric measurement commonly used to measure attitudes, beliefs and opinions (Joshi, 2015). Examples include Toor et al. (2015) who use Likert scales to measure purchase intentions, categorising them into five options. Blasco-Lopez et al. (2019) use Likert scales and closed ended scaling questions to investigate engagements and purchase behaviour. Hinson et al. (2019) use a Likert scale to measure bonding-based attachment and identity-based attachment. Buljat, Babic and Capko (2020) also use

Likert scales in a study on the opinions and habits of users of Facebook. In each Likert scale question, a statement is presented in which a respondent indicates the extent to which they agree or disagree in a multiple-choice type format. While such research is important to give an overview of issues being investigated it does not allow for a detailed and more nuanced understanding of attitudes, beliefs and opinions which may not be represented on the linear “ordinal” options on a Likert scale (McLeod, 2019).

In social media research, there is rapid growth in research focusing on engagements and comments for example a study by Sabate et al. (2014) analysed posts and demonstrated that content richness influences a post to gain more likes’ count. Similarly, Khobzi et al. (2018:5) specified that a type of content richness and the use of images increases comments’ count, they further stated that the increase was when the post were published at an appropriate time. The studies however do not provide an explanation of which parts or how the rich content causes the increase in count. Another study by Halloran and Lutz (2021) also reports findings that consumer engagements are “more strongly associated with purchase frequency” in line with a number of studies which associate a high engagement with high success rate of a promotion.

Other studies for example De Vries et al. (2012) looked at whether the number of likes, comments, and shares and reports increase sales. Typically these studies look at the number of media elements on a promotion like including a photo and relate it to the number of “likes”, “shares” and “comments” and conclude that the media element for example the photos had a positive impact which resulted in a comparatively higher number of responses (Rauschnabel et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2015).

Furthermore, some studies for example Khobzi et al. (2018) focused on counts as the goal of promotions. They state that “putting website links in the content of a post may have a negative impact on comments’ count” (Khobzi et al., 2018:5). The study seemed to underestimate other benefits of promotions. For example, when prospective consumers click on a weblink which leads them away from the social media platform, they may have a more in-depth engagement with the website. The taking away of prospectives from social media may lead to a decrease in the number of comments and level of engagement on that post. And yet such engagements may lead to the achievement of higher level promotional objectives like making purchases

or even becoming a more loyal regular customer.

In this case the closed nature of the study, focusing on counts and not going beyond the activity on a particular social media platform missed an opportunity to follow up what happens when potential consumers visit the weblinks. The Khobzi et al. (2018) approach seems to discourage the use of weblink, yet in this case the decrease in the number of comments could have a more positive impact if prospects engage further on websites. There is a need for more exploratory and “open”, unbounded qualitative research which would enable following movements beyond initial research boundaries. Such research could result in a better understanding of the multiple causal entities that make good or effective marketing.

[1.7 Need for explicit philosophical position in social media research](#)

A number of studies (see Coelho, et al., 2016; Gutierrez-Cillan, 2017; Wagner et al., 2017; Poecze et al., 2018; Buljat et al., 2020) have taken several approaches to analyse the success of promotions on social media and most of them are quantitative. In Marketing, quantitative research has been closely linked to positivism as Ellis et al. (2011:25) state that “positivist research is interested in the prediction or explanation and often using large scale survey research and quantitative methods”. The dominance of quantitative research has been flagged as a concern in the field of marketing triggering Hunt (1994) to write a seminal paper entitled “Why are our major journals almost exclusively devoted to research using quantitative methods?”. Quantitative research often concludes from the observed i.e. the empirical. Such studies do not go beyond the immediately observable. Indeed, to enumerate the observable has its use, but it does not explain why things turn out the way they do. Witkowski and Jones (2008:10) have also raised concerns that “mainstream marketing academics may have totally converted to a positivistic, ‘scientific’ philosophy”. Easton (2010:118) further points out that a lot of research in marketing is undertaken without a philosophical underpinning and thus the researchers “seem to take a positivist position without perhaps realising it”. There is therefore a need for a diversity of methods and particularly philosophically grounded research in social media marketing research.

It would seem that a large number of studies in social media marketing, select entities to study and focus almost exclusively on the selected entities. For example, Lu and

Miller (2019) who focus on how social media communications combined with customer loyalty can improve sales and Ramadan et al. (2018) who looked at the impact of brand and social network relationships on the perceived value of customer endorsed Facebook advertising.

The researchers seek to understand the relationship between the entities and seem to be bound by the entities and thus often miss opportunities to discover the unexpected especially in the case where this assumed relationship turns out to be untrue. There is therefore a need for critical exploratory research in which “it is not uncommon for” boundaries established at the beginning of the research “to be changed during the course of the research” (Easton, 2010:123). “For example, determining causality may require that the researcher moves beyond the initial boundary or, alternatively, narrows the boundary because it is clear that the causal mechanisms are more narrowly focused than previously thought” (Easton, 2010:123).

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has argued for a need to study SMEs and their social media marketing practices. It has further argued for more qualitative studies with an explicit philosophical position. In chapter 2, I outline the literature review of marketing for the purpose of locating the study in the field. I also discuss decision making models and concepts like relationship marketing and word of mouth marketing which are core concepts necessary for understanding the nature of marketing on social media platforms.

In chapter 3, I introduce critical realism as the philosophical underpinning for this study. I also introduce grounded theory and its coding tools as theoretical tools which underpinned the preliminary and methodological analysis in the study.

Chapter 4 is the methodology chapter in which I discuss the research design and how the research was actually conducted. The discussion also includes research concepts like the population, sampling, how the data was collected and analysed. Chapter 5 has the actual data analysis and the findings. In the 6th chapter I give the conclusion and implications of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the marketing literature reviewed throughout the study from its conceptualisation, during the data analysis all the way to its conclusion. It begins by engaging with the concept of marketing and locates the study on a social media platform which is a sub section in digital marketing. Based on the argument that the concept of marketing can be understood as existing independent of platform albeit its application should consider the nuances of the platform, I argue that a discussion of marketing provides a firm grounding even for research located on a digital platform.

The chapter is structured using the marketing mix framework. It discusses marketing first using the 4Ps, starting with product, then price, place and promotion. Thereafter it discusses other key concepts of marketing such as relationship marketing, word of mouth and decision-making models with particular attention to hierarchy of effects model (HoE).

2.2 Marketing

Like all other businesses, SMEs use marketing to connect with the market and inform them about their product. Marketing plays an important role in establishing relationships between customers and the business offering to the market (Belch & Belch, 2015). This study is being undertaken on Facebook, a social media platform. Marketing on Facebook broadly falls under digital marketing. Atshaya and Rungta (2016) describe digital marketing as the marketing of products that are showcased using digital technologies. Digital technologies consist of electrical gadgets that can be used to for communication for example cellphones, electronic banners, televisions, radios and computers (Berkhout & Hertin, 2004). The marketing part of digital marketing consists of marketing activities that take place on the digital technologies. Many conflate digital marketing with Internet marketing however, Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström and Freundt (2014) differentiates the two by stating that while the two have similarities of communicating with people, internet marketing is a subset of digital marketing. Digital marketing extends to non-Internet channels that provide digital media, such as mobile phones (SMS, MMS and call-back), and non-internet digital display, In essence this extension to non-Internet channels helps to differentiate digital

marketing from internet marketing. Internet marketing refers to marketing activities that showcase on internet platforms.

Marketing on Facebook falls under a specific subset of digital marketing known as social media marketing. According to Dollarhide (2019) social media refers to “internet-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities”. Examples of social media platforms include “social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Google+), content-sharing sites (e.g. YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram), bulletin boards, and blogs” (Abeza, O’Reilly, Finch, Séguin & Nadeau, 2020). Social media marketing therefore refers to the communication undertaken on social networks. It has the main benefits of digital marketing in that it enables direct and timely engagement with a potentially large audience.

Whether marketing is undertaken on radio, TV, newspapers, online or any other platform it is generally thought to yield benefits to a company and these include the increasing or maintenance of sales, building brand awareness (Kucharska & Confente, 2017; Low & Fullerton, 1994; Wilson, 2020; Wilson & Ying, 2014), growing market share, launching new products and services, targeting new customers and enhancing customer relationships (Aka, Kehinde & Ogunnaike, 2016; Gronroos, 2004; Payne, 1994). The following section begins with a broad discussion of marketing without restriction to a particular platform.

The idea of marketing as understood in the 21st Century began during the time of the industrial revolution. This period occurred during the late 18th Century and lasted into the 19th Century. It was a time of rapid technological industrial change which is perceived to have resulted in an increase in the surplus of goods resulting in producers competing to sell more. The competition led to the development of contemporary inclinations of marketing as it began to draw from disciplines like Psychology (Sheth & Gross, 1988) and alignment with fields like management (Shaw & Jones, 2005).

While there are several views to what marketing is, two authorities dominate the understanding of what marketing is in the English speaking world i.e. the American Marketing Association (AMA) and the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM). The

AMA's current definition of marketing which was last updated in 2008 defines marketing as "the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (AMA, 2008:2). The CIM (2015) defines marketing as "the management process responsible for identifying anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably". While the two definitions may sound different, they are common on the grounds that they both refer to the activities which involve the interface of the manufacturer and consumer which often included the movement of goods and communications between the two. In another definition, the communication aspect is presented as a conversation.

Marketing therefore can be said to be about exchanges, conversations and interventions to improve the quality of goods and services as well as to obtain some benefits. (Iwu, 2009)

The communication aspect of marketing is shown in some definitions which emphasise the persuasion function of marketing.

the process of anticipating, identifying customer needs as the process of getting consumers interested in your company's product or service.
(Becherer et al., 2003)

The persuasive function has been attributed to the field of marketing and its subfield of advertising drawing from psychology.

The concept of marketing has been changing over the years as demonstrated by Brunswick (2014) who provides a chronological listing of the definitions of marketing from 1910 to 2013. A closer look at the history of marketing shows that ideologically, the field of marketing in the early 1900s was more inclined toward distribution i.e. the movement or transfer of goods from producer to consumer.

Prior to the AMA's current definition of marketing published in 2008, their older definition of marketing from 1985 was in line with the marketing mix.

Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives.

(Keefe, 2004; Ringold & Weitz, 2007; Wilkie & Moore, 2007)

The marketing mix is a set of marketing tools that the firm uses to pursue its marketing objectives. It is a foundation model centred around product, price, place, and promotion, also known as the 4Ps. The marketing mix is often regarded as a major organising framework and the 4Ps as the pillars of the field (Möller, 2006). The Marketing mix was popularised by McCarthy in 1960, who introduced “the four P’s mnemonic for ‘product’, ‘price’, ‘promotion’, and ‘place’” in a textbook “Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach” (Shaw & Jones, 2005). The Marketing mix is an “organising framework for integrating diverse marketing tasks” and is often used “to bring order to activities that formerly were loosely related” (Magrath, 1986). The marketing mix is essential for this study because it helps analyse every aspect of a marketing promotion, it works as a framework for data analysis.

The posts that are analysed in this study are marketing promotions and these are promotions about a product, that have a price and need to be distributed. The next section gives an overview of the marketing mix.

2.3 Product

While this study focuses on marketing promotions it is important to develop an understanding of what a product is given that its nature affects the marketing activities that can be done. Furthermore the concept of digital marketing brings with it digital tools which also impact on the product form. Examples of how the digital impacts on products include the enablement of the co-creation of products and products in the sharing economy (Hartman, 2020). In the concept of co-creation “customers are central and vital participants in the NPD process and, in some cases, are capable of creating new products with little help from firms” (Hartman, 2020; O’Hern & Rindfleisch, 2010). This is made possible by digital tools and thus may aid the building of relationships from the onset of new product development. The sharing economy is “the recent phenomenon in which ordinary consumers have begun to act as sellers providing services that were once the exclusive province of ordinary sellers”

(Narasimhan et al., 2018:93). The enablement of ordinary consumers to sell products is often enabled by digital tools. While the study focuses on the marketing of products on an online platform it acknowledges that products also have a universal form. The section below thus discusses the product independent of how it is affected by digital tools.

A product is a bundle of want and need-satisfying features that is exchanged and can be easily quantified to determine its value to be exchanged for a monetary price. It encompasses both the tangible aspects, such as the packaging, quality and brand, as well as the intangible attributes such as brand reputation and brand service.

The word product is often used as a collective term to refer to both goods and services especially when reference is made to a company's offerings. For example both a tangible can of baked beans; an intangible financial investment advice or a massage at a health spa can in practice be referred to as a product. On another level the term "product" is also used interchangeably with "good" (Parry, Newnes & Huang, 2011) where goods are distinguished from services. A major distinction between goods and services is often that goods are tangible and services are intangible.

Goods are often defined as "physical objects for which a demand exists, over which ownership rights can be established and whose ownership can be transferred ..." (United Nations Statistics Division, 2008:4). Parry, Newnes and Huang (2011) give an elaborate description of a good as consisting of the following attributes:

- Physical objects for which a demand exists
- Their physical attributes are preserved over time
- Ownership rights can be established
- They exist independently of their owner
- They are exchangeable
- Unit ownership rights can be exchanged between institutions
- They can be traded on markets
- They embody specialised knowledge in a way that is highly advantageous for promoting the division of labour

Some scholars have questioned the classification of services in relation to goods as immaterial or intangible.

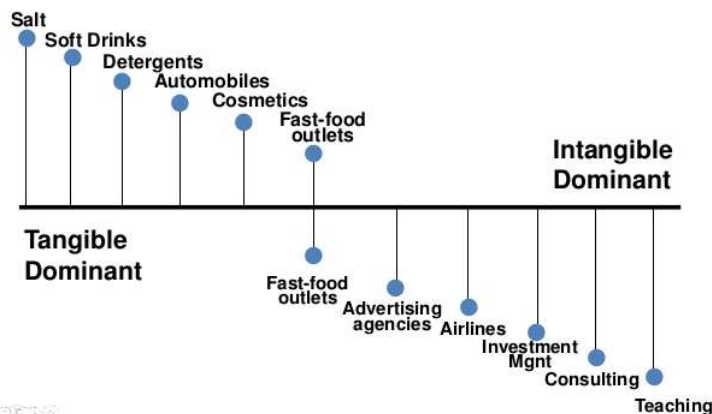
Although services are often dismissed as immaterial goods, they are not special kinds of goods and belong in a quite different logical category from goods. (Hill, 1977:315)

It is wrong to imply that services are just like products “except” for intangibility. By such logic, apples are just like oranges, except for their “appleness.” Intangibility is not a modifier; it is a state. (Shostack, 1977:73)

While Levit (1981) continues to use the term “intangible product”, they seem to agree on the characteristics of the service that “they can seldom be tried out, inspected, or tested in advance”. In addition to service being intangible Parry, Newnes and Huang (2011) also identify service as characteristically heterogeneous, inseparable and perishable. The intangible aspects of an offering include the style, image and the reputation of the manufacturer (Connett, 2004; Boshoff & Terblanche, 2008).

Shostack (1977) argues that there are very few, if any, pure products (goods) or pure services in the market. She advocates for a classification which considers what is dominant and developed the goods-service continuum illustrated below. The goods service continuum shows the degree that a product can be a service and a service can be a product.

Figure 2.1: The good-service continuum (Shostack, 1977:77)



Where an offering is a good or a service, this may require a different marketing approach and as such the analysis of promotion of BrownSense will consider the impact of the characteristics of the product on the nature of the engagements.

2.4 Price

Price is what a consumer pays for a product being offered for sale (Wells et al., 2006), it is the “amount of money charged for a product or a service” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012:290). Marketing promotion is the main vehicle used to inform the target consumer about the price (Wells et al., 2006). The price communicates meaning to the target market and it can be used as a differentiation tool. Consumers may expect different prices in different distribution channels (Burnett, 2008). Digital platforms make it possible for sellers to consider participative pricing strategies like pay what you want (PWYW) strategy (Kim, Natter & Spann, 2009). In the PWYW approach the seller often uses a strategy in which a proportion of the consumer base may be given the liberty to determine the prices they should pay.

The willingness of a consumer to accept a price is dependent on their view of the value of the product and such value is informed by what the product does for the consumer (Burnett, 2008). To the consumer, price determination is not on the same basis as the producer who often uses a calculation of the cost of material, labour and all input costs incurred in the making of the product. To the producer, price is also important as it is the primary source of revenue (Burnett, 2008). The selling price of a product thus comprises the profitability level of the price.

Pricing also has psychological meaning for the consumer, as a high price is often equated with high quality in the absence of other information about the product (Connett, 2004). In addition pricing is an attribute of sales promotions in which prices are lowered for a short time to stimulate interest in a product. However traders are cautioned to “guard against the temptation to adjust prices too frequently since continually increasing and decreasing price can lead customers to be conditioned to anticipate price reductions and, consequently, withhold purchase until the price reduction occurs again” (Owusu-Bempah, Bennet, Okyere-Kwakye & Amoako, 2013:2).

The decision on what price to charge consumers for a product or service is an important one for marketing (Kienzler & Kowalkowski, 2017). While the access to resources which inform price like comprehensive databases may not be as readily available to entities operating on BrownSense, the research engages the concept of prices to understand the manner in which it is used on posts and its impact on the promotions. The making of “a well-informed choice between offering relatively stable prices across a wide range of products or emphasizing deep and frequent discounts on a smaller set of goods” is a component of pricing strategy (Olbrich, Jansen & Hundt, 2017:296). Pricing strategies are sensitive concepts for many organizations because prices that are too high may push consumers to search somewhere else while prices that are too low may be cutting into the profit margins of the seller (Connett, 2004). Kim et al. (2009) states that one of the best ways to establish appropriate pricing is through understanding a target audience and what they value as useful in a company’s provisions. Thus, one of the answers to the pricing model lies in understanding the user and what they perceive as value. It may be of importance for organisations to understand the opportunity cost or the sacrifice the consumer takes in the acquisition of a product to be able to determine the appropriate price (Hawk et al., 2019).

The analysis of pricing on SMEs on BrownSense will also be informed by practices from multichannel retailers who have both online and traditional retail outlets which are often under pressure to offer consistent prices across all channels. They however sometimes face variations in shipping costs but often use as the default the higher price in the channel which often has implications on their competitiveness (Sammut-Bonnici & Channon, 2015). Further consideration in the setting of prices includes consideration of both internal and external factors. Internally the various costs ranging from fixed to variable are often considered together with marketing objectives which may include growing the market share or maximising profits. External considerations in the setting of prices may include market demand and consumer perceptions of price and value (Owusu-Bempah et al., 2013).

2.5 Place

Place also known as distribution is the process of making a product or service available at a convenient place for the consumer or business user who needs it (Thabit & Raewf, 2018). This can be done directly by the producer or service provider, or using

indirect channels with distributors or intermediaries. Shaw and Jones (2005) demonstrate how place was a fundamental defining attribute of marketing during the beginning of the 19th Century when marketing focused more on the distribution of goods by the middleman from the farm and manufacturer to the “place” where the consumer could access the product. During this period of time the distributors/middlemen were called the marketers and their distribution job was marketing (Bartels, 1988). They were in charge of taking the risk of keeping stock and delivering it to the customers. Ellis et al. (2011) note that the early stages in the development of the field of marketing were characterised by a state of balance between supply and demand. However the advancement of mechanisation during the industrial revolution led to a large increase in production and an oversupply of goods. As stocks began to pile_up, consumers became more discerning and this led to a shift in marketing practice and its inclusion of a focus on customer purchase behaviour (Brunswick, 2011).

This study will explore the impact of distribution in relation to the marketing promotions on the BrownSense Facebook page. The analysis of the distribution of the product will consider the common methods available for online platforms which may predominantly include delivery. The distribution of the product includes all the channels followed in transferring the product to the final consumer. The main challenge of a distribution process is to work efficiently by ensuring that the product reaches the target market at an acceptable cost (Connett, 2004). Various intermediaries or resellers may be involved in the process of distribution. However SMEs may be restricted by a number of issues like limited networks or costs and therefore may have to restrict their distribution to provincial boundaries or within their cost structures.

2.6 Promotions

The posts on BrownSense can be characterised under the promotional “P” of the marketing mix which is often referred to as marketing communications and is closely associated with and sometimes used as a synonym with integrated marketing communication (IMC) (Whalley 2010). Promotions constitute the means through which traders present their products in an effort to persuade consumers to make a purchase (Singh, 2012). Promotions or marketing communications have been defined as "the

means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade and remind their customers - directly and indirectly - of products and brands they sell” (Keller & Kotler, 2012). Marketing promotions includes various communication methods and activities for channelling messages from a company to its target consumers. It refers to the entire set of tools which can be used for communicating the product to the user (Becherer et al., 2003).

Marketing communications often constitute “a complex of measures, techniques and methods by which information about goods, services or brand of the company reaches its users” (Todorova, 2015:368). It includes all the relevant activities, materials, and media used by a marketer to inform and remind prospective customers about a particular product offering (Connett, 2004). The promotions “represents the ‘voice’ of the company and its brands and is the means by which it can establish a dialogue and build relationship with customers” (Ul-Rehman & Ibrahim, 2011:188). The voice is through various mass media platforms typical of advertising (Ross & Richards, 2008) , traditional print (Jibril, 2017) and social media platforms (Todi, 2008).

The objective of marketing promotions include to attract customers attention, create awareness trigger interest and desire for the purposes of generating sales and repeat purchase. The informational function of marketing promotions is responsible for making the product and the business to be known by the people and to persuade the target consumer to buy or consume the product offering.

Marketing promotions channels have seen a steady growth which in the 1950s and 1960s was dominated by print media, broadcast, outdoor billboards, direct mail and telephone marketing (Alin & Hasan, 2020; Shen, Zhang & Yao, 2015). The 1970s saw the beginning of 24hour cable TV and the growth of broadcast channels. The online and digital media started in the 1990s and resulted in multiple channels for marketing communications.

While media space and outlets were no longer a scarce resource after the explosion of digital media, many companies faced the challenge of keeping a single voice to maintain a stable image while communicating through several media (Garcia, Garcia, Blanco & Sanchez, 2019). Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) thus emerged

as a necessary tool for “managing the growing range of marketing communications choices available to marketers” (Duncan, 2002). The IMC presents a unified way of using promotional elements to enhance a company’s “ability to reach the right customer with the right message at the right time and in the right place” (UI-Rehman & Ibrahim, 2011). The integration of various communications activities leads to the achievement of a synergistic communication effect in which the total benefit exceeds the sum of each promotional tool taken separately (Naik, 2007; UI-Rehman & Ibrahim, 2011).

The IMC framework emerged “as a powerful tool that guides practitioners in developing and implementing marketing communications” (UI-Rehman & Ibrahim, 2011:188). It was valued as it enables a holistic approach to the planning and execution of marketing communications (Naik, 2007). The main objective of the coordination of the marketing promotion tools has been captured so as to “ensure that the message clearly, coherently and uniformly reaches the target audience” (Navarro-Bailón, Delgado-Ballester & Sicilia-Piñero, 2010:151) and was reflected in the first definition of IMC by the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) in 1989 (Garcia et al., 2019).

A concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluated the strategic role of a variety of communication disciplines, e.g. general advertising, direct response, sales promotion and public relations, and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communications impact. (The American Association of Advertising Agencies in Baker & Hart, 2008:330)

While the marketing communications has a large number of promotion tools the most common which make up the pillar of the promotional “P” include advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing (Whalley, 2010).

Advertising is the most common of the promotional tools, in layman speak it is often used as a synonym for marketing. It is common because it involves mass communications and thus many people are exposed to advertisements. Advertising is

any paid for form of non-personal promotion of goods and services through mass media, by an identified sponsor (Richards & Curran, 2002; Ross & Richards, 2008).

Other common promotional tools include personal selling and sales promotion. Traditionally personal selling was described as a face to face interaction between a company representative and the customer with the objective to influence the customer to make a purchase (Coman, 2012). Personal selling involves direct interaction between a salesman and customers and often involves visits by the sales people (Keller, 2018). However developments in technology have stretched personal selling beyond face to face contact for example through the phone and more recently using online platforms like social media.

Sales promotions often involve the crafting of short term incentives given to the customers to increase their chances of making a purchase in a given period (Keller, 2018). An example of a sales promotional offer is a price reduction valid for ten days or while stocks last. Other common marketing promotions used by retailers include “price reductions, coupons, cash mail-in rebates, free gift cards, and buy-one-get-one (BOGO) discounts” (Khouja, Subramaniam & Vasudev, 2020). Generally, sales promotion schemes are often aligned to festivals to increase sales of themed products or the end of the season to increase sales and clear stocks. Sales promotions are often used by companies for the objective of increasing short-term profits, by attracting both the existing and the new customers.

Public relations and direct marketing are promotional tools which are often used by larger corporates. Public relations refers to the efforts made by a company to build a favourable image in the market and with its publics (Hobbs & Mann, 2015). The publics are an extended form of the stakeholders groups and comprises of the customers, employees, suppliers, distributors, shareholders, government and the society as a whole (Coman, 2012). Companies often can carry out several broad campaigns with the objective of building relations with people in the communities associated with it either directly or indirectly (Coman, 2012).

Direct marketing emerged from the advent of technology which enabled companies to reach customers directly without intermediaries or paid mediums. The e-mails, text

messages, Fax, are some of the tools of direct marketing (Keller, 2018). The companies can send emails and messages to the customers if they need to be informed about the new offerings or the sales promotion schemes.

The focus on promotions in this study is further informed by a need for a well thought through marketing promotion strategy. Such a promotion strategy is required if businesses are to reach their communication objective yet promotions within SMEs is often given inadequate attention and this affects their efficiency, growth and in general they lose out on the benefits of marketing (Kirner & Lindemann, 2013).

2.7 Relationship marketing

The web based nature of social networking platforms enables a dialogue between traders and consumers on the BrownSense Facebook page. The use of web-based promotions makes it “possible to create a dialog between the marketers and their target market through web-based promotion because of its’ interactivity feature” (Gide & Shams, 2011). The web-based promotions are also essential for building long-term relationships between traders and consumers. The literature on relationship marketing is thus explored to inform the analysis of the engagements which are relational and their impact on the marketing promotions.

Relationship marketing is a type of marketing that focuses on cultivating relationships with customers to ensure long-term customer satisfaction and loyalty (Ebrahim & Seo, 2019). The practice of relationship marketing often involves creating two-way communication channels between a business and its target market. In this way, a company is able to not only inform consumers about its products but to also bring in consumer insight to improve the relevance of the products they are making to the target market. The two way communication enables the company to stay in close contact with customers, to collect information about how consumers use products and such consumer data allows insight into consumers’ expectations. A company’s understanding of consumer’s expectations enables companies to improve or create new products to even better meet the needs of consumers. In some instances, the use of technology enables companies to provide high value tailor made products to the consumers.

Relationship marketing is often contrasted with transactional marketing, which focuses on increasing the number of once off purchases (Morgan & Hunt, 1999). In transactional marketing the focus is on the point of sale transactions. The emphasis is on maximizing the efficiency and volume of individual sales rather than developing a relationship with the buyer.

Transactional marketing is often linked with the industrial revolution during which the advancements in machinery enabled the mass production of goods (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Mass production led to a large increase in the supply of similar products to a market whose demand was growing at a slower rate. The production orientation also meant that manufacturers were focused on producing more and selling as much of what they produced. Berry (1983) states that the oversupply of similar goods led to an increase in middlemen and a focus on sales which separated the producer and the consumer leading to the emergence of the selling orientation. However the sales orientation led to the loss of direct interaction and emotional bonding between firms and their customers. The focus on production and selling compromised the communication with consumers and meant many products were not keeping up with the constant changing needs of consumers. A shift from transactional marketing back to relationship marketing became necessary to increase the focus on the needs of the consumers (Bolton & Tarasi, 2007).

The shift towards relationship marketing involved a refocus on development of long term relationships in which mutual benefit became the focus (Berry, 1983).

Other developments included concepts like customer experience management (CEM), which focuses on improving customer interactions to foster better customer loyalty. The use of customer relationship management (CRM) tools to enhance the customer experience also emerged. CRM includes software which collect and analyse consumer data like purchase history, preferences and trends, to give an in-depth understanding of customers purchase behaviour (Palmer, 2010).

The activities that are responsible for maintenance of long-term customer relationship often results in, increased revenues, profits, and shareholder value. These activities

require an in-depth understanding of the underlying sources of value that the firm both derives from customers, as well as delivers to customers.

Another compelling reason for the adoption of relationship marketing is that once a relationship is built with customers, they can be communicated to directly using the company's own resources. This saves the company spending on external communications which is necessary in the acquisition of new customers. Sheth (2002) argues that the cost of maintaining an old customer is far lower than the cost of developing a relationship with a new customer. Furthermore a company can benefit when consumers share their positive experiences with a brand in what is known as word of mouth (WoM) marketing. Takala and Uusitalo (1996) argue that brands with exceptional relationship marketing programs spend less on marketing communications.

While these interactions can still occur in person or over the phone, much of relationship marketing has taken to the web (Pol, Galetzka & Pruyn, 2020). Technological developments on the web and use of social media have also led many consumers to expect to be part of the development of products and services (Pol, et al., 2020).

2.8 Word of Mouth

Another characteristic of social media which is particularly pertinent to traders of BrownSense is that friends share their experiences with products in their social circles, a practice classified as word of mouth in marketing. Word of mouth (WoM) is one of the oldest ways through which consumers pass on their experiences about products (Dellarocas, 2003).

WoM is a consumer-dominated marketing promotional tool in which the source credibility is due to the assumption that the peer who is sharing the information is independent of commercial influence (Brown et al., 2007; Arndt, 1967; Lee & Youn, 2009). The peers give information related to products based on experiences and or perceptions, independent of company coercion (Brown et al., 2007). It is considered to be an important information source in consumer's decision making due to the power

of social bonds in the peer information sharing (Litvin et al., 2008; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

WoM has been defined in many ways. One of the earliest research on WoM was done by Katz and Lazarsfeld in 1955 who “found personal influence to be seven times more effective than magazine or newspaper advertising, at persuading housewives to switch brands of household products” (Ennew, Banerjee & li, 2000).

WoM is an old mechanism through which experiential information or “opinions on products and brands are developed, expressed and spread” (Ennew et al., 2000). While Cox (1967) gave a simplified view of WoM as nothing more than a basic conversation about products other authors like (Arndt, 1967:188) gave a more formal definition and referred to WoM as “oral, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver concerning a brand, a product or a service offered for sale”.

The wide adoption of computer technologies and the subsequent growth of online media has led to a new form of WoM known as electronic word-of-mouth or eWoM (Yang & Gabrielsson, 2017). This form of communication emerged with the growth of online social media platforms, which has made it a major source of information on the web (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). Another conception of eWoM was proposed by Litvin et al. (2008), who described it as informal i.e. non-commercial form of communication via the internet from one consumer to another where information is often shared on the basis of experience.

Electronic word of mouth provides companies with an advantage over traditional WoM since it gives more data which can be analysed to understand how consumers share their opinions online and to gauge how the comments are received (Cantalops & Salvi, 2014).

Electronic word of mouth can be a liability for companies when consumers make bad comments about products and services. However, if companies improve their offerings and service to satisfy consumer needs, they can benefit from positive eWoM as some studies have shown that when customers are satisfied with a product, they tend to

become loyal representatives of a company and often contribute to brand image through positive eWoM (Royo-Vela & Casamassima, 2011). Furthermore, the tailor made products tend to evoke customers to give positive feedback.

Electronic word of mouth has become an important medium for companies' social-media marketing (Hussain, Ahmed, Jafar, Rabnawaz & Jianzhou, 2017). It offers businesses a cost-effective means of communicating with consumer (Nieto, Hernandez-Maestro & Munoz-Gallego, 2014). This study which focuses on SMEs on BrownSense will also analyse the extent to which the SMEs harness the advantages given by word of mouth and more broadly by social media marketing.

2.9 Decision making, hierarchy of effects model and the AIDA model

The analysis of engagements between traders and their target audience on Facebook is in line with the objective of marketing promotions which often includes the movement of consumers towards purchase. This section engages literature on consumer behaviour. The literature avails many models which offer a variety of ways to analyse the impact of promotions on people. The models outline the methods used in marketing to identify and track the decision-making process of a customer journey from how it begins up to how it ends (Vrakraatsas & Ambler, 1999). The decision-making process, the AIDA and an overview of other hierarchy of effects models are discussed below.

A five-stage buyer decision making process is attributed to John Dewey in 1910 (Ali & Talwar, 2013) and was later development by Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (1973). The five-stage model of the consumer buying process involves five steps that consumers move through and these are need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase evaluation. It is important to note that while the model is linear, decision-making does not always follow such a linear approach and often involves skipping some stages (Reddy, 2016).



Consumer decision-making process (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012)

The first step in the consumer decision-making process is need recognition, it happens when there is a gap between the consumer's actual situation and the ideal and desired one (Kim et al., 2009). Internal or external stimuli may trigger the recognition of a need. For example, in an advertisement when consumers see a pizza (external stimuli) they may realise that they are hungry (internal stimuli).

The second step is the information search stage which is when consumers seek information from several sources. These sources of information often include:

personal sources (family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances), commercial sources (advertising, salespeople, dealer web sites, packaging, displays), public sources (mass media, consumer rating organizations, Internet searches), and experiential sources (handling, examining, using the product). (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012)

While most information search has often been on commercial sources, the growth of the digital platforms bring up a twist of the sociality of the information, which will be analysed further in this study.

The evaluation of alternatives is the third step and at this stage, the consumer evaluates information about the product and whether it satisfies their needs (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). This evaluation is often based on a consumer's beliefs and attitudes. The design of digital marketing promotions is encouraged to consider incorporating the values and beliefs of the target audience (Reddy, 2016).

The fourth stage is when the consumer makes a purchase often using information gathered and organised at the evaluation of alternatives stages. However, a purchase may also be influenced by both expected and unexpected situational factors. Expected factors may include the expected product benefits or an expected income and the unexpected influences may include an economic downturn or a consumer reporting disappointment about the product category (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).

Post-purchase evaluation is the final stage during which consumers experience a level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). The digital platforms present opportunities as the sharing of positive information which often benefits the brand and information on dissatisfaction may also present invaluable feedback to the brand (Reddy, 2016). Furthermore, responsive brands can take the opportunity to resolve issues raised and build relationships with the consumers.

The Engel et al., (1973) is often associated with the hierarchy of effects models (HoE) as they both deal with the consumer decision-making processes. The HoE constitute a body of literature which explains how marketing communications with an inclination towards advertising works. It seeks to explain why communications affects the consumer.

The hierarchy of effects “posits that audiences go through a variety of stages (cognitive, affective, and conative) in responding to advertising and other persuasive marketing messages” (Sinh, 2013). The foundational model of the hierarchy of effects models is the Attention, Interest, Desire, Action (AIDA) model. It was is credited to St. Elmo Lewis, who developed it in 1898 (Boon-Long & Wongsurawat, 2015). The acronym is explained as follows (Wijaya, 2012):

‘A’ for Attention, the stage in which a consumer is exposed to a message and becomes aware of the product.

‘I’ for Interest, at this stage the consumer becomes interested in a product, the interest can be associated with seeking more information about the product or brand.

‘D’ for Desire, a stage in which consumers develop a passion towards the product or brand.

‘A’ for Action, this stage is often associated with the purchase of a product.

Several models were developed subsequent to the AIDA model and below is a brief description of the awareness, trial, and reinforcement (ATR) model, the Defining Advertising Goals for Measuring Advertising Results (DAGMAR) models and the purchase sequence model.

The ATR model (Ehrenberg, 1974) presents trial as the action but also “highlights the importance of reinforcing repeat behaviour because through experience consumers develop not only repetitive habits, or loyalty, but build a brand consideration set or a repertoire of the brand” (Yaakop, Mahadi, Ariffin & Omar, 2018:212).

The DAGMAR was developed by Colley (1961) as a recommendation for the setting of communication objectives which can be measured. The model outlines Awareness, Comprehension, Conviction and Purchase as the stages through which messages influence the behaviour of consumers (Wijaya, 2012).

The purchase sequence model was developed by Lavidge and Steiner (1961), also based on the AIDA model. It is a sequential linear model which outlines “a series of six steps towards the final choice i.e. awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction and purchase” (Yaakop et al., 2018:212).

There are several criticisms of the HoE. A major criticism emanates from the often-overemphasised assumption that consumers respond to marketing communications in a linear orderly manner (Yoo, Kim & Stout, 2004). In one study the authors concluded that the (HoE) failed to adequately represent the impact of the communication “process on the complex emotional/rational decision-making that takes place when choosing” a product. (Yaakop et al., 2018:212). Sihm (2013) also points out that while in a few marketing situations marketing communications may cause sales, “in the majority of marketing situations, sales are caused by a combination of marketing factors”. Sales may thus be attributed to the nature of the products, the efficacy of the distribution system, the pricing as well as the effectiveness of the integration of the communication mix.

The criticisms of the (HoE) include a challenge by several scholars, for example Barry (2002) argues that the models are rational and explicit that they are guidelines. The lack of overt validation of the model does not undermine its usefulness which “lies in the complexities of the measurement process to understand how people process information, form attitudes, and behave as a direct result of that information processed and those attitudes formed” (Barry, 2002:45).

While the “AIDA model was developed to represent the stages a salesperson must take a customer through in the personal selling process” and “depicts the buyer as passing successively through attention, interest, desire, and action” the HoE models also clarify that “not all consumers go through the same linear process from the very beginning, and consumers vary, and go through the stages at different rates” (Yaakop et al., 2018:212).

In line with the critical realist and grounded theory, the decision-making and HoE are considered in the analysis of the data. While the models are often used to inform communication plans in this study the models are applicable in the analysis of the data, as they enable the uncovering of the movement of consumers towards purchase.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter discussed issues pertinent to the field of marketing. It highlighted issues in both contemporary marketing though a discussion of digital marketing, social media marketing and how digital tools impact on the practice of marketing. The greater part of this chapter discussed core issues in marketing and used the marketing mix as a framework for organising the chapter. This structure also impacted on the outline of the data analysis chapter. This chapter also discussed issues fundamental to social media marketing like relationship marketing and word-of-mouth marketing. The discussion on decision making models and in particular the HoE informed the selection of the AIDA model as a key component of the data analysis framework. The next chapter discusses the philosophical and theoretical frameworks which underpin this study.

Chapter 3: Philosophical and Theoretical Frameworks

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I start with a detailed discussion of the philosophical framework required for studies in social media marketing. This is in line with the argument made in chapter 1 for a need for studies in marketing to also take an explicit philosophical position for the purposes of increasing the understanding of core issues in marketing beyond the surface. I introduce critical realism through a discussion of the often critiqued extreme positions of positivism and relativism. Thereafter I give a brief discussion of depth ontology as the core of critical realism. I then move on to introduce grounded theory, an analytical framework compatible with critical realism. I also discuss the tenets of grounded theory which are pivotal in the methodology of this study. These include the iterative approach and the three main types of coding from initial, axial to advanced coding.

3.2 Critical Realism

This section discusses the philosophical underpinning for this study. A study of social media marketing like all other studies should consider its philosophical underpinning to make explicit the notion of truth which informs the various stages of the research process like data collection, analysis and interpretation. This is particularly important in marketing, a field where much research has been criticised for not taking a clear philosophical position (Easton, 2010). Where the philosophical position is not decided at the onset of the study, researchers tend to slide into default philosophical positions like positivism unknowingly (Hunt, 2014). A further consequence of an undeclared, inconspicuous philosophical position is that the limits of findings may go unnoticed. For example, the default positivist positions have also tended to lead researchers to treat findings as absolute and unchanging truths (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Wohlin and Runeson (2021) define a philosophical underpinning as a set of common beliefs and agreements shared between researchers about how problems should be understood and addressed. Thus, the philosophical underpinning of a study acts as a framework that guides how the research is carried out.

The philosophical underpinning for this study is critical realism. I start with a brief overview of critical realism and then move to a discussion on the extreme positions of positivism and relativism. Thereafter, I return to a discussion of critical realism as a more suitable philosophical position.

Critical realism is an ontological philosophy which begins with the understanding that the world exists independent of our knowledge of it (Bhaskar & Callinicos, 2003). In other words, “critical realists propose an ontology that assumes that there exists a reality ‘out there’ independent of observers” (Easton, 2010:3). The main implication is that in the event that our accounts of the world are untrue, such accounts do not taint the truth about the world. For example, when the world was believed to be flat these beliefs did not change the truth about the nature of the world, that it was spherical. Critical realists further acknowledge that the world is experienced through the senses however, while the senses reveal the truth, it may only be a part of the truth and not the whole truth. Critical realism emerged as a set of philosophical positions which seek to balance on one hand, the limits of positivism which focuses on absolute truths and on the other, relativism where there is no single truth and the truth is subjective (Rutzou, 2015).

I will start by discussing positivism and then discuss relativism thereafter. In marketing, positivism is associated with a shift in which the field sought to create an impression of a “thorough discipline” associating itself with the perceived rigor and quantification of its parent discipline, economics (Boateng, 2014:34). Positivism in marketing dominated consumer research and followed scientific protocols in which what was observable and or quantifiable was prioritised in research. Experiments were valued and the researchers sought a “single and unchanging” truth. (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988 ... in Boateng 2014).

Positivism is a philosophical position underpinned by empirical research which focuses on the observable (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) and does not engage with the often-unobserved entities that have generative powers. Positivists also believe that when two events occur in sequence regularly, they can make causal statements and conclude that the event that happens first causes the other event that follows (Hunt,

2010). They are therefore more likely to conflate co-existence or coincidence with causality.

A further common trap affecting many positivists is taking what is experienced through the human senses as giving a complete account of the world (Hunt, 2014). Positivists often take such an empiricist position yet human senses are not always reliable. While “the empirical”, which consists of those things observed through the human senses, is an important starting point for understanding the world, it however can be limiting especially given that humans are susceptible to sensual illusions. For example, a straight stick partially immersed in water will always be observed as bending at the point it meets the water. Illusions are only one out of many ways of demonstrating that what is seen is not always the whole truth. The theory of refraction goes beyond what the eye can see to explain the illusion.

When a philosophical position is not declared in advance the default position is empiricism where researchers tend to reach conclusions based on the observable and assigning causal relationships based on sequence (Archer, 1995). Empiricism however, does not give complete explanations, it does not give the reason why things are the way they are. One event following another does not give the reason why or how the first event causes the second one except aligning itself to the view that what is seen is a full representation of the world (Rutzou, 2015). The close association between empiricism and positivism raised a further problem when true but incomplete findings are treated as an absolute truth.

Furthermore, when researchers slide into a positivist philosophy, they often justify sample sizes in research methodology based on past experience without theoretical or scientific backing (Easton, 2010). The fact that many people have used a sample size of 120 respondents on its own does not make it an ideal sample size for quantitative research.

On the other hand, relativists argue that the truth is subjective and therefore what one chooses to believe cannot be challenged as it is how they experience the world (Ononiwu, 2015). They believe in a world where senses vary between individuals

leading to different, incomparable experiences and a different truth that cannot be challenged.

Critical realism is a series of philosophical positions that emerged in opposition to the extreme views of positivism and relativism (Archer et al., 2016). Critical realists' main critique of both positivism and relativism is their incompleteness. Critical realists in part agree with positivists as they acknowledge that our knowledge of the world starts with the empirical. The empirical constitutes the observable parts of the world we experience with our senses which do not always give a complete view of the world.

Critical realists are concerned about instances in which the incompleteness of these philosophical positions leads to errors, untruths or misinformed views about how the world is (Rutzou, 2015). Based on the notion that the empirical is only a part of the world and does not always give a full understanding of the truth, critical realism proposes a depth ontology in which the world can be understood through three levels or layers which are the empirical, the actual and the real (Bhaskar, 2008). Davis (2011) explains the depth ontology using the example of an apple stating that "when an apple falls from the tree, the event is the specific instance of an apple falling due to wind, the shaken branch, the weakened stem, and possibly the ripe weight of the apple".

The empirical level constitutes the observed and the experienced. For example an apple can be observed after it has fallen on the ground. In studies of social media marketing, posts and comments are often observed after they have been made and thus are at the level of the empirical.

Beyond the empirical is the level of "the actual" in which things happen (Wheelahan, 2009). For example, the falling of an apple is an event in the realm of the actual. It takes place regardless of whether an observer is there or not there to experience the falling. The domain of the actual constitutes of events. The events may or may not be observed. In social media marketing, the act of commenting on a post is an event which may or may not be observed. However, events are an outcome, they emerge from the interplay of objects or entities with powers which are classified as at the level of the real.

The level of the real consists of underlying mechanisms with causal powers. The interplay of several mechanisms may be required for an event to occur. For example, the force of gravity pulls objects with weight to the ground i.e. pulls the apple down toward earth and causing it to fall. However, the stem holds the apple to the tree, ripening loosens the grip and the force of wind may speed up the falling of an apple and indeed impact on when it falls from the tree. In social media marketing the influences and reasons for responding to a post cannot be observed but in some instances the analysis may allow the causal mechanism to be read off the text, e.g. explicitly stating the need to support SMEs or black owned businesses.

Critical realists argue that it is necessary to investigate beyond the empirical as the observed is often the outcome of the interplay of other entities which may or may not be observed. For example, gravity may not be observed and the interplay of gravity and wind may explain/cause the falling of unripe apples. For this reason, critical realists argue that causal explanations can not only be based on the observable but can be confirmed or disconfirmed through the study of the actual and the real (Bhaskar, 2008; Gorski, 2013).

Critical realism is a relational philosophy in which events are understood as outcomes which are emergent from generative mechanisms with causal powers (Bhaskar, 2008). The mechanisms may be constituted by several entities. The events emerge when the powers of each of the multiple entities come together. However, the production of the powers that cause an event are not governed by the event as both the natural and social worlds operate in an open system (Wheelahan, 2009). The causal powers of the generative mechanism are always potential and may or may not be exercised. They are thus often produced out of phase. Being out of phase means they are produced in different quantities while some may not be produced at all and for this reason outcomes that result from the interaction may not resemble each other (Rutzou, 2015). In some instances, the powers of the entities may cancel each other or change the way in which they act. Therefore “not everything that could happen does happen” (Wheelahan, 2009:229).

Critical realism is an appropriate philosophical position for this study as it provides a framework for qualitative research. In this study engagements on social media

marketing resemble open ended qualitative interview data, they typically include a broad range of issues that can be analysed to reveal connections between entities that have causal powers. Such entities may also operate as mechanism which may enable or constrain the success of promotions. Unlike other philosophical positions which predominantly focus on validating pre-existing facts about the objects of the world, critical realism seeks to discover the reality of how the observed parts of the world i.e. the empirical come to being.

Promotions have objectives and the achievement of these objectives can be enabled or constrained by mechanisms and structures which may or may not be readily accessible or observed. Engagements allows access to the issues that may enable or constrain the success of promotion to be analysed. In critical realist terms the world is understood to consist of mechanism and structures with causal powers and liabilities which can be explored at the level of the real and capable of generating events which take place at the level of the actual and observed at the empirical level (Easton, 2010).

In this study the comments made by consumers are qualitative, open responses. They are entities which can be analysed qualitatively. While they are an entity observable, at the empirical level, they also are a reflection of an event, at the actual level. Comments may also reveal connections to mechanisms which may be the unobservable ideas which influenced the nature of the comments. Such an in-depth analysis has the potential to reveal the position of the people who comment on the posts, towards its contents, towards the product, their likelihood to buy or not buy.

3.3 Grounded Theory

The data collection and analysis stages of this study was conducted using the grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is an open framework which consists of a set of systematic methods for conducting qualitative research (Baturina, 2015). It is a framework suitable for a critical study as it enables an analysis to move towards a deeper understanding of the issue being researched. In a critical realist study of marketing promotions on a social media platform grounded theory allows an analysis that is open to understanding the observed outcomes as a result of the interplay of several forces observed or unobserved.

The grounded theory method is unlike other data analysis approaches in which the researcher chooses an existing theoretical framework, and only collects data to show how the theory does or does not apply to the phenomenon under study (Glaser, 2003). The grounded theory approach allows a researcher to have a flexible repository of theories to draw from but remains open to new theories which may help to understand issues as they emerge in the data (Bisman, 2010). It enables an analysis to bring to the fore an understanding of the reasons why things are the way they are. This can be done through its flexible iterative methodology which allows movement to and from data collection and theories in the analysis (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

In the grounded theory approach the researcher does not seek data to confirm or disconfirm an existing theory, the purpose of research is to go beyond validating insights but also to gain new insights from data (Kempster, 2011). In the colloquial grounded theory can be said to “let the data speak for itself”. The grounded theory approach thus enables a critical study to discover new and unexpected insights through an analysis that remains open to multiple theories as lenses to understand the data (Holton, 2008).

While studies using other philosophical positions for example a number of empirical positivist studies often select a theory to study a phenomenon and report on findings such findings are often restricted by and to the theories they use (Easton, 2010). Grounded theory as a framework which supports critical qualitative research acknowledges the importance of such approaches but also seeks to point out that the approaches are incomplete as they are restricted. Studies which are strictly based on a pre-selected theory may restrict the researcher from discovering an unexpected phenomenon in the data. Failure to engage an unexpected phenomenon may impede a researcher from understanding causal mechanism which are circumscribed out of the initial research problem and may thus stifle the development of science and growth of knowledge.

3.3.1 The iterative approach

During the data collection phase, grounded theory was supported by the iterative approach which informed the selection of units to achieve a more balanced sample (Bisman, 2010). In line with the grounded theory approach the first set of data is

collected, preliminary analysis is conducted and theory is reviewed to further inform the analysis. This process is iterative as it entails moving to and from the data collection, data analysis and checking relevant literature to ameliorate the quality of analysis. The iterative process in grounded theory is an approach that is applied in a cyclical manner (see Figure 2.1 below). The cyclical movement allow a more thorough engagement with data which enables the discovery of the issues that enable or constrain the success of a promotion.

Figure 3.1: Illustration of the cyclical nature of the analysis using grounded theory



To improve the representativeness of findings the analysis of the data collected in the initial stage informs the type of data to be collected in the second and subsequent stages (Holton, 2008, 2010). For example, where a finding is not clear or where it is not clear if it applies only to a single sample unit or has a universal applicability, a second sample unit could be selected on the basis of similarity to give clarity to the prevalence of the issue at hand within a group of similar units of study. In instances where a single set of data provides a clear new and unexpected finding subsequent data may be collected to increase diversity of data to check applicability across different units of study (Holton, 2010). For example, if a trend is found in the promotions of tangible goods, services may be analysed for purposes of clarifying if the issue affects both products categories which are goods and services.

3.3.2 Coding

To conduct a detailed analysis of data, the grounded theory approach provides a three-level coding framework in which data is analysed by being grouped and organised into themes using the iterative method (Ononiwu, 2015). The three-level coding which is classified as initial or open coding, axial coding and advanced coding allows the relations in the data to be observed and analysed.

3.3.2.1 Initial or open coding

Open coding also referred to as initial coding is the first step in the coding process in which data is broken into discrete parts, closely examined, in relation to the similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1988). The initial coding seeks to identify salient ideas which can then be grouped into categories and subcategories (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019). The purpose is to question how phenomena is reflected in data (Strauss & Corbin, 1988). The data is examined line by line while closely monitoring trends that emerge. The emergent trends are categorised and constitute basic themes or first order themes (Ononiwu, 2015). In some instances, new marketing literature may need to be consulted in the interpretation of trends as they emerge from the data (Mey & Mruck, 2011).

Open coding involves the signification and categorising of data (Halmi, 2003). Signification is the labelling of data, it involves the construction of new meaning where a word or phrase is assigned meaning representative of a set of ideas. The new word is infused with meaning from a network of smaller ideas which may not be significant when taken individually but the assemblage of the smaller ideas creates a system of meaning making the new word an abstract concept which is representative of the collective set of ideas (Munday, 2016).

3.3.2.2 Axial coding

Axial coding is intermediate coding or “substantative coding” (Holton, 2009) in which the focus is finding relationships between initial codes. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) it involves a careful examination of the categories developed in the initial coding stage. Intermediate coding involves keeping a close eye on the possibility of the derivation of new concepts. Analysis moves between codes established in the initial coding stage while continuing to refer to relevant marketing models and

literature. Holton (2010) states that axial coding involves bringing data together in order to reveal codes, categories, and subcategories ground within the data.

Ononiwu (2015:242) identifies the stage of axial coding as involving the development or the organising of themes, clustered on the “basis of similar functionalities and meanings”. In the axial coding stage, the analysis involves the scrutiny of first order themes, combining these to allow new intermediate order themes to emerge. In other words, axial coding involves the sorting, synthesizing, and organizing of codes with some reference to the large amounts of data they are drawn from and thereafter reassembling them in new ways to allow new themes to emerge (Charmaz, 2006). Axial coding thus includes a way of reviewing linkages between data, initial codes and follows the development of a major category even though it may be at an early conceptualisation stage (Charmaz, 2006).

Axial coding predominantly involves analysis of data through moving between codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and back to re-examining the data to confirm the basic themes and in some instances come up with a more refined analysis through either revealing new connections or exterminating prior connections. It may also involve moving to and from the newly organised themes emergent from the data and some marketing literature.

[3.3.2.3 Advanced coding](#)

Advanced coding is the highest level of coding in which close attention is given to the outcomes in relation to the theories and literature used to analyse the data. It involves the development of what Ononiwu (2015) identifies as global themes. Global themes emerge when various middle-order themes are combined. Global themes are third-order or the highest-order themes which typically “hold no data, but a number of organizing themes” (Ononiwu, 2015:242). This stage involves the organising of core categories and checking concept density.

The grounded theory framework allows things to emerge and is open to other models to be used in the analysis of data. Models that track decision making can be brought in for example the AIDA model which is used to describe the steps or stages that occur from the time when a consumer first becomes aware of a product or brand through

marketing communications to when the consumer tries a product or makes a purchase decision. Models like the 4Ps marketing mix and a variety of other marketing concepts can be used at this stage as will be seen in the data analysis chapter.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed critical realism as the philosophical underpinning of the study and depth ontology as its means of enabling an analysis which goes beyond the observable. The discussion also revealed it as a philosophical position which enables the researcher to make a more conscious analysis, informed by an awareness of the limits of their analysis. It ensures that the researcher does not fall into the trap of positivism in which researchers tend to conflate coexistence with causality. Furthermore the chapter argues that critical realism enables researchers to pay particular attention to issues in the engagements and thus allows the unexpected to be observed.

The chapter also discussed grounded theory and the use of the iterative approach in the cyclical methodology which underpinned this research from data collection and the various coding types used in the data analysis. Using these methods, the research focused on identifying entities in marketing promotions, their causal powers, how they come together to form mechanisms which then exert structural constraints or enablement to the success of promotions.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the overarching thinking and process which informed the research from the conceptualization of the study. I further discuss the decisions which influenced the formulation and process of the data collection and analysis in ways that allow the reader to examine the strength of the inferences made in the subsequent chapters. The research design is conceived and expressed through an underpinning of a critical realist philosophical position and a grounded theoretical framing both of which support a qualitative exploratory type research.

After discussing the research design, the chapter engages with issues of data collection, starting with the classification of what constituted the BrownSense population and issues surrounding sampling. A discussion of the qualitative analysis is discussed after a detailed outline of how the actual data was collected from BrownSense.

4.2 Research Design

For this study the research design is conceived and expressed through a qualitative design underpinned by a critical realist philosophical position. In accordance with the exploratory nature of the research the qualitative design does not seek to prescribe pre-existing facts about the world but instead it seeks to understand how traders on BrownSense, a social media platform, construct their own practices. This study thus uses a framework compatible with critical realism which is the grounded theory approach. The grounded theory analysis allows the researcher to discover the ideas behind the observable practises of traders and go after the roots of the practices.

As a research study using the grounded theory approach, this study makes reference to marketing theories, however theories are not imposed on the data but the analysis requires the researcher to move between the data and the marketing theories. The researcher links the observed practices to theories or parts thereof, other than simply describing the practices (Holton, 2008). The main distinction is that the grounded theory approach does not take theory and look into the data to confirm or disconfirm the theory. Instead it allows the data to speak for itself so that the researcher can

analyse observable ideas, seeking connections or disconnections from the observable and beyond. This of course requires tenacity from the researcher on whom the quality of the research lies.

The function of a research process is to ensure that the evidence to be obtained enables the research to answer the questions at hand as unambiguously as possible. It is also known as a research design which is used to structure the enquiry process from collection, through analysis to the reporting of findings (de Vaus, 2005). The research process refers to the logic that connects the selection of the data to be collected, how it is going to be collected and specifies the strategies and methods used to analyse (White, 2011). The research process also serves the function of ensuring adherence to a coherent approach to enable the fulfilment of the objectives of the research. As mentioned in the first chapter, the study focuses on promotional posts that are on BrownSense. As stated in chapter one, the study is expected to answer the following questions.

1. *What is the nature of the promotions on the BrownSense Facebook page?*
2. *What are the elements of marketing promotions on BrownSense and how do these enable or constrain the success of the promotions, where success is understood as the achievement of promotional objectives?*

4.3 Population

The population in this study constitutes of all posts that were posted from the inception of the BrownSense Facebook page. Pilot and Hungler (1999) defines the population as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications that are to be researched. In some research undertakings it may be possible or deemed necessary to research all the elements in a specified subset. The procedure of researching the population is called a census. While a population study may provide more detailed information about the object of study, the data on the BrownSense Facebook page is however too large to be analysed and completed in this study (Erhardt & Dennett, 2017). Therefore, for this study only a portion of the population was collected from the BrownSense Facebook page for analysis and this will be explained in detail in the next paragraph.

4.4 Sampling

The collection of the data from the BrownSense Facebook page followed an informed systematic approach to draw the sample units. A sample is a subset of a population that is selected to participate in a study (Pilot & Hungler, 1999). Strydom and Delport (2012) describes sampling as a process that involves drawing a portion of a population subset, or some part of a larger population for the purposes of taking a measurement from which population characteristics are estimated. This is predominantly the case in qualitative research where a sample is often drawn for the purposes of making an analysis where representativity is not the main focus (Easton, 2010). The analysis is such that a phenomenon, or part thereof can be understood in detail as it emerges in an interaction of entities. In qualitative research a phenomenon may be studied and informative findings can be drawn regardless of its prevalence i.e. it is possible for a single occurrence to inform the practices of social media marketing. A phenomenon can thus be understood in relation to those elements whose causal powers make it possible or give it its form and its relevance to future practice.

In line with Guest et al. (2013) who posit that “most research initiatives in the qualitative vein take an iterative approach” this research used iterative sampling in which the sample size was left flexible and adjusted as the data was collected, analysed and more data collected. The iterative sample selection approach involved a review of the top trending posts, on the BrownSense page and selecting one post at a time.

The initial criteria for selecting the sample units was that they should be salient for example posts with a large number of engagements were considered. After a post was identified, the first step was to check if the post was within the delimitation i.e. to check if the post was made to create awareness about an identifiable product. As opposed to a general social post not linked to a commercial objective, the qualifying posts are referred to as Traders' posts. A detailed classification of posts became necessary at an early stage of the research. The posts that are found on the platform were categorised into three different posts, which are Traders posts, Inquirers posts and Social posts. The Traders posts are posts for the purposes of showcasing goods and services in-order to generate leads or to create awareness for products. The main objective of the Traders post is to make a sale. The Inquirers posts are posts that seek information from BrownSense group members, they mostly seek information on

products and service providers within a geographical reach. The Social posts are posts which are not directly related to product or services and do not have a business transaction as their focus. They tend to address general social issues or charitable activities for example donations to the needy, various rehabilitation activities and general business advice, the business advice is not of a consultancy nature, consultancies are classified as trader's posts.

The study initially focused on posts that had more than 50 comments. The rationale for this was that posts with a high number of engagements would bring out more elements of a marketing promotion that have capabilities of enabling or constraining the success of a marketing promotion.

The first sample unit underwent a preliminary analysis as specified in Appendix 4.1. The preliminary analysis informed the criteria for the selection of the subsequent sample unit for the purposes of improving the validity and representativeness of findings. For the purposes of validity, similar posts were selected where it was not clear if a finding applies only to a single sample unit or has a universal applicability. In instances where a single set of data provided a clear new and unexpected finding subsequent data was collected to check if the finding was representative or had a universal applicability across different posts.

The initial estimate was to collect between 16 to 24 posts however 26 posts were analysed. The iterative sampling technique was applied with the cumulative collection and analysis of posts until a point of saturation was reached to make a plausible argument from a set of representative data.

In line with the grounded theory approach, the selection criteria was adjusted to include a representative sample i.e. also considering posts with medium to low engagement for the purposes of wanting to understand the reason behind the nature and quantity of engagements. As such posts with below 50 comments which had been excluded were then included in the analysis.

The study objective is to explore and identify the factors which enable or constrain the success of marketing promotions on BrownSense. The data that was collected

was therefore only limited to Traders posts because Traders post are promotional post with the intension to give information with the purpose of alerting people on the availability of products such that the people may decide to buy if they believe the products could meet their need. The promotional activities are limited to Traders post because these posts are closely aligned to the marketing practices which is a focus in this study. Inquiry posts and Social posts were not analysed in this study because these posts are not for trading purposes.

4.5 Data collection

The data was collected from the BrownSense Facebook page, which is a live platform. The nature of Facebook is such that the most current post or a post with the most recent comments goes on top shifting an earlier post immediately below the newer post. New posts or comments on posts therefore constantly shift older posts below. The top posts are referred to as the trending posts due to the current attention they are receiving.

The posts selected were those that were amongst the top 10 posts during the days of data collection. Most of the data was collected between January and February 2019. All posts which did not fall under the sample characteristics were excluded.

The data was collected using screenshots. A screenshot is a function on the computer which allows the capture of the information that is showing on a computer screen and converts it into a picture or a pdf format. A screenshot is thus the resultant still image of the contents which were reflected on a computer or smartphone display at the time of capture (North, 2016). A screenshot is taken by simultaneously pressing the keys shift, command and 3 (on a MacBook) then an image of what is displayed on the screen will be saved as a picture.

The screenshot function was used to capture the posts. Each post consists of at least a picture, some text about the product and sometimes information like how customers can access the product. The screenshot captured the text on the post, the pictures of the posts and the comments. The taking of screenshots is necessary as the data on the BrownSense Facebook page is “live” and thus constantly changing. If not captured some items may be edited or even deleted. Screenshots therefore allowed the posts

and the moments of engagements to be frozen in the same manner that interviews are recorded and transcribed. While taking screenshots, careful attention was taken to ensure that as much of the engagements and responses were fully captured to represent the large variety of ways in which people react to posts.

These reactions took a variety of forms including comments, “likes”, “shares”, memes and emoticons. Some parts of the posts needed to be opened up as they were in some instances constricted and the data collection required the clicking of “read more” function to reveal the engagements in full. Comments mostly take the form of texts responses and may include responses by a variety of images. “Likes” are typical Facebook responses which are used when a respondent indicates that they agree using a thumb up sign. A “share” is when a group member reposts a post on their own Facebook page. Memes are usually a combination of text and an often humorous graphic image. Emoticons are usually simple graphics that represents emotional expressions for example a smiley face to represent happiness or a frowny face to represent sadness or anger.

The comments and the text on the post already resembles transcribed interview data and it is therefore ready for coding and analysis. In qualitative data analysis the text is analysed by closely reading it, identifying and organising key ideas as they emerge (Calitz, 2016). Such organised collection of data should result in logical insights in the findings and conclusions (Muposhi, 2015).

4.6 Qualitative Analysis

This study analysed how people engage with marketing promotions on the BrownSense Facebook page. Such engagements are open ended and resemble “naturally occurring conversations” (Guest et al., 2013) to which a qualitative methodology was used as it involves an interpretive naturalistic inquiry (Flick, 2007). Aspers and Corte (2019) also describes qualitative research as research that is inquiry in nature and does not seek to prescribe pre-existing facts about the world but engages a critical analysis that would make it possible to understand how the structures of the world interact to yield the observable outcomes. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations and it provides insights into the problem at hand. The data from the engagements on the post

resemble responses to open ended questions, the data is similar to that from in-depth interviews and from focus group discussions (Guest et al., 2013). In such instances qualitative research is also used to uncover thoughts, opinions and dive deeper into the problem, i.e. the question of the effectiveness of the marketing promotion. A qualitative methodology is appropriate as it seeks an in-depth understanding approach to the world, focusing on the "why" rather than the "what" of social phenomena (Flick, 2007).

The data analysis used the grounded theory approach, a framework compatible with critical realism as discussed in section 4.2 above. The grounded theory framework involved the grouping, organising of themes using the iterative method. It used the three level coding framework from initial or open coding, axial coding and advanced coding. The coding framework is discussed in detail in the theoretical framework chapter and also illustrated in Appendix 4.1.

[4.7 Conclusion](#)

The chapter has argued for a research design that is coherent with the various parts of the research. It has used critical realism to show how an iterative method can be used.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the promotional posts on BrownSense and the engagement between traders and members on the BrownSense Facebook page. The chapter starts with a brief overview of the AIDA model which is a key framework in the analysis. In the data all the posts were typically a combination of text and images (refer to Appendix 5.1 for examples of posts). However, some had more pictures than others and others had comparatively more text. The BrownSense group members engaged with the posts in several ways. Engagements mainly took the form of text comments, emoticons, Gifs, memes and videos (see Appendix 5.2 for image engagements). This analysis mainly focuses on comments which are qualitative in nature and typically take the form of enquiries, seeking clarification, compliments about the products and testimonials from those who have tried the products. The qualitative analysis of the engagement is done to reveal the factors contributing towards enabling or constraining achievement of promotional objectives.

While marketing promotion objectives differ, the common objectives for promotions are discussed in Chapter 2 and involve persuasive communication for the purposes of moving consumers from getting to know about the product (Attention) to making a purchase (Action). The comments on the trader's posts enable the analysis of consumer decision-making processes using the Hierarchy of Effects (HoE) models (see detailed discussion in Chapter 2) which seeks to explain why and how communications affect the consumer. In this chapter the analysis uses the foundational HoE model which traces the impact of communications effects on consumers from the AIDA model. Below is an extract from the AIDA model which is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

- 'A' for Attention, Attention is the first stage of the model in which the consumers are exposed to a message and becomes aware of the product. In this study, it is counted as the number of people who comment on a post and this excludes the trader. For attention, multiple comments by one person are counted as one person. The count for attention can be much lower than the total number of comments.

- 'I' for Interest, at this stage the consumer becomes interested in a product, the interest can be associated with seeking more information about the product or brand. The interest often involves sentiments of liking however they fall short of an explicit indication to make purchase.
- 'D' for Desire, a stage in which consumers demonstrates a passion towards the product or brand. They also often show more enthusiasm about the product than at the interest level. Passion is usually evident when a consumer makes a positive comment and an explicit intention or plan to purchase.
- 'A' for Action, this stage is often associated with the purchase of a product.

The AIDA is used as a tool to determine how far towards purchase consumers move through engaging with the elements under analysis i.e. the posts, trader and other consumers. The analysis of the posts and the subsequent engagements with the posts helps reveal the elements of the posts and the engagement both of which have causal powers to enable or constrain the achievement of the objectives of the marketing promotions.

The posts are analysed using the 4Ps marketing mix framework of Product, Promotion, Price and Place. In the 4Ps mnemonic, the P for Place is often preferred as a synonym of the distribution component in marketing. The 4Ps frameworks enables the analysis to consider that the promotions are about a product, which is influenced by the price and how the product moves through the distribution channel from trader to consumer. While the separation of the 4Ps is important to bring clarity in the analysis, the 4Ps are also understood to be intertwined and as such a slight overlap may be observed in the discussions that follow. The next section begins by analysing the posts and engagements focusing on the product part of the marketing mix.

5.2 The Product

Each piece of data was collected from a post promoting a product and the first stage of analysis involved classification of products. The classification was for the purpose of enabling the analysis to reveal the extent to which the form of the product has an impact on the achievement of promotional objectives. The classification of the product drew from Shostack's (1977) product-service continuum which begins by classification of products into goods and services using the tangibility nature of the products. While

goods can be broadly characterized using their tangibility, the characterization of services as intangible has been challenged as services are argued to belong to a “different logical category from goods” (Hill, 1977:315). Shostack (1977) further argues that intangibility is not a modifier but a state. While tangibility seems to suffice as an identifier of goods, intangibility cannot be used as the only classifying variable for a service. Thus, services require classification using the unique characteristics of services like heterogeneity or variability (H/V), inseparability (I), perishability (P), intangibility (I) and lack of ownership (O) (Parry, Newnes & Huang, 2011; Levitt, 1981; Shostack, 1977). These characteristics of a service can be represented by the acronym H/VIPIO. The analysis below uses the Shostack (1977) product-service continuum and classifies products into three categories i.e. goods which are products with a dominant tangible core, services which are products with a dominant service core and hybrid products with a combination of a tangible component and a service component.

5.2.1 Products with a dominant tangible core (goods)

Eight out of the 26 products were classified as products with a dominant tangible core. The table below (Table 5:1) shows posts classified as having a dominant tangible core and these include Hair and Skin Products (Post 10), Tyres (Post 8) and Chicken (Post 2).

Table 5:1 Posts with a dominant tangible core (products/goods)

Post with dominant tangible core	Service support
Tyres (Post 8)	Delivery dependent on number of orders
Chicken (Post 2)	Extra fee for delivery (Joburg delivery)
Hair & Skin Products (Post 10)	Courier fee for delivery
Hair Growth Products (Post 4)	Courier fee for delivery
Packaged Vegetables (Post 6)	Scheduled delivery by region
Moringa Products (Post 26)	Courier fee for delivery
Swimming Clothing (Post 18)	Courier fee for delivery

The products are physical in nature and some of the comments were related to the physical product and how it is packaged.

“Your packing is on fleek [good].” (Post 2)

Some comments were enquiries that asked about physical components and composition of a product.

“Ingredients?” (Post 4)

“100% pure. It was made of shea nuts.”

(Post 4: Trader Response)

“Do you have run flats [tyres]?” (Post 8)

“Hello, I’m looking for 265/45 ZR 20Y [Tyres size specification]” (Post 8)

On the post on tyres, 51 comments were enquiries on the physical nature of product, the type and size of tyres (Table 5.4). This was 18% of the comments which is a relatively high proportion.

The data thus shows that the physical nature of the product also contributes to the number of engagements i.e. in the case of the Tyres (Post 8), it seems the need for specification of the size of the tyres is a necessary component of the enquiry process prior to purchase. However, in the case of the Chicken (Post 2), which had 22 comments (Table 5.1) it would seem that interested parties may simply respond by making an order directly to the trader without making a comment as the product does not require further specifications than is already on the post. The nature of the product in the case of the Chicken (Post 2) is such that the success of the promotion may not be accurately measured through quantification of the engagement. Another method of measuring the success of the communication objective may be required to measure the effectiveness or contribution of posts to the purchases (Action).

The data revealed that the nature of the product may be such that for some products, the purchase process requires specifications, like tyres, which thus generates a high number of comments. When products like tyres are compared to products like chicken

whose order process may not require a series of engagement for specification of the product order, quantification of comments does not become a reliable measure of success of the promotions. Furthermore, a conclusion based on a comparative analysis of posts in which a post with more comments is portrayed as more successful than one with less comments may not be representative of the success of the posts.

5.2.1.1 Service component of the product with a dominant tangible core

While the above products are physical in nature, can be touched and thus have an undisputable dominant tangible core, they were however in most cases also attached to a service element. The most common service element was delivery, since they require to be delivered to reach the final consumer. Products with a dominant tangible core often require to be transferred physically from the trader to the consumer. The transport used in the distribution seems to bring a “service” component albeit sometimes outsourced.

“We deliver nationwide. Aramex additional R100.”

(Post 4: Hair Growth Products)

The delivery is a service as it characteristically cannot be owned (lack of ownership). It is a process which uses tangible vehicles to deliver the tangible goods. However, the ownership of the vehicle that delivers is not transferred to the buyer. For the products with a dominant tangible core, the data shows that service support is as important as the product in influencing the extent to which a consumer moves towards taking an action.

“I want three packs but I am in Vaal.” (Post 2: Chicken Post)

“Hi [Name], unfortunately we don’t have a presence in Vaal. We are looking forward to opening more stores and Vaal is on the potential areas planned.” (Post 2: Trader Response)

The engagements on the Chicken (Post 2) shows that where the enquirer is out of the distribution range, the limits on the transport becomes the restriction to the enquirer’s movement beyond the “desire” stage on the AIDA as they cannot complete the

purchase. However, where the product is within the distribution range, movement towards purchase was evident.

“Where are you based?” (Post 6: Packaged Vegetables)

“Based in Sophiatown, Joburg. Just behind Northcliff.”

(Post 6: Trader’s Response)

“So close, can I pick them up and drop the money?”

(Post 6: Packaged Vegetables)

“Yes Sure, I just need a day to prepare the order.”

(Post 6: Trader’s Response)

The process of offering service options in addition to a good such as providing a delivery service has been reported by a number of scholars (see Vander Merwe & Rada, 1988; Oliva & Kallenberg, 2003) who have indicated that companies use this approach in a variety of ways. The inclusion of the service component is often aligned with the corporate objectives of increasing revenue.

The Chicken (Post 2), Hair Growth Products (Post 4) and the Packaged Vegetables (Post 6) shows that while consumers become aware (attention) of the product with a dominant tangible core and develop an interest and desire, their movement towards purchase is further affected by a need to consider the additional service. The extracts from the data above show that delivery is a necessary service which is a contributing factor to whether the decision to purchase is made or not. For example in the Chicken (Post 2) the enquirer’s location is not covered by the delivery and as such they cannot make a purchase while the Hair Growth Products (Post 4) shows that purchase can be made dependent on the availability of the Aramex delivery service in the location of the enquirer.

5.2.2 Products with a dominant service core

Nine of the 26 products in the study have a dominant service core (Table 5:2). Some of the products which have a dominant services core include the Cleaning Agency (Post 3), Swimming Lessons (Post 7) and Bootcamp (Post 24).

Table 5:2 Posts with a dominant service core (services)

Post with dominant service core	Dominant service component
Cleaning Agency (Post 3)	Intangible
Bootcamp (Post 24)	Inseparable
Swimming Lessons (Post 7)	Inseparable
Culinary Garden Lessons (Post 9)	Inseparable
Restaurant & Cooking Lessons (Post 17)	Dual business:
Restaurant (Post 17.1)	Tangibles to facilitate meal experience
Cooking lessons (Post 17.2)	Inseparable, intangible
Estate Agent (Post 12)	
Estate Agent (Post 21)	
Mechanic (Post 5)	Service only: Does not sell parts

The Cleaning Agency (Post 3) is a mobile service which while performed on site is characteristically intangible as the cleanliness cannot be touched. The equipment used to clean is also removed after the cleaning. The cleaning service is also inseparable from the people performing the task.

The data also showed that products with a dominant service core have more pictures than those of products with a dominant tangible core (goods). All the posts analysed in this study had at least one image. While some posts had more pictures than others, the number of pictures ranged from a post with one picture to posts with thirty pictures (Appendix 5.2). The top five products analysed which had more than 20 pictures constituted four posts classified as having a dominant service core. The Dentist (Post 13) had the highest with 30 pictures together with the Restaurant and Cooking Lessons (Post 17). The Cleaning Agency (Post 3) was the third highest with 25 pictures, followed by the Bootcamp (Post 24) which had 20 pictures. The other post on the top five with more than 20 pictures is a hybrid post, the Clothing Designer (Post 11) with 21 pictures. While the business produces tangible products i.e. tailor-made clothing, the bespoke component makes the business offering more inclined towards a dominant service core.

The twenty pictures on the Bootcamp (Post 24) demonstrate the activities which are part of the bootcamp program. The comments engage with the images with some respondents showing anxiety which the trader handles.

“This looks rough.” (Post 24)

“Looks rough but when we are training, we are family who encourage and push each other. No competition or shaming we are family.”

(Post 24: Trader Response)

Other responses show an initial concern about the pictures but also show movement towards action as they indicate a desire to join the next bootcamp.

“Your pictures look intense it discourages those who are not fit, try showing pictures of light training as well. If you do, but (it) is a good thing, I might join this weekend.” (Post 24)

“Perception is everything my guy. If you think negative you will produce negative. These pictures display the type of exercises and actual intensity of the showpiece unedited and not necessarily the body types.”

(Post 24: Trader Response)

The comments on pictures make reference to the intensity of the activities at the Bootcamp (Post 24) revealing the service characteristics of the product. The service characteristics of the Bootcamp (Post 24) also shows the stronger relationship of a service to the extended marketing mix, people, process and physical evidence (Magrath, 1986) which is sometimes argued to have been developed to accommodate service characteristics of a product. Similarly, in other posts, the extended marketing mix also reveals the characteristics of services for example the processes and physical evidence are important in the Restaurant and Cooking Lessons (Post 17). The data shows the instructors who are people, who are key in the delivery of Swimming Lessons (Post 7).

In the data, products with a dominant service core including the Dentist (Post 14), the Cleaning Agency (Post 3) and the Bathroom Resurfacing (Post 19) show before and

after pictures in which the people, process and physical evidence which are key concepts in facilitating the provision of services were evident. The amusement reflected in the comments of the Bath Resurfacing (Post 19) shows that the service was new to many in the audience as they were amazed that this type of the services existed.

“I just can’t believe this is my bathroom. Wow, thank you [Trader].” (Post 19)

The comments ranged from amused satisfied customers as shown above and similarly from other members of the audience which evoked other testimonial responses as shown below.

“Just wondering what happened to the poor Bath tub.”

(Post 19: Bath Resurfacing)

“This was at my home in Nelspruit last weekend. Thanks again Nelson, without your help I would have replaced the entire bathtub, wall, floor and tiling.” (Post 19: Customer’s Testimonial)

The before and after pictures also evoked enquiries about product form like colour changes.

“Hi, I have a 3 seat that is blue (toilet basin and bath tub) can you turn it into white?” (Post 19: Bath Resurfacing)

“Yes, I can do that” (Post 19: Traders Response)

Similarly, on the Dentist (Post 14), the before and after images also evoked comments from prospective facing situations similar to the before and seeking the after-service solutions.

“Wow, I wish you were in JHB too, my child needs this. Teeth are so bad from the bottle I am so confused what to do” (Post 14: Dentist)

“My front tooth is brown, I fell when I was a kid and it turned brown over the years, I want it white can it be fixed?” (Post 14: Dentist)

The before and after pictures in this case seem to show a movement from attention to interest and towards the desire to have teeth re-whitened. Other comments were reflective of both an enquiry to confirm the category of the product, indicative of its newness and also indicative of movement towards desire.

“I need this, is this a crown?” (Post 14: Dentist)

The before and after pictures show samples of what the customers may expect to get from the service, the physical evidence of what prospective may receive after the service has been performed (Muaia & Qurneh, 2012). Rafiq and Ahmed (1995) also make reference to physical evidence as a component which consumers use to evaluate the quality of a service. They further state that the variability of service may require a sufficiently large number of imagery. As such the data proved that the majority of posts on products with a dominant service core used several pictures. The data shows that before and after pictures contribute to influencing the movement of customers towards action on the AIDA especially when the product being promoted is new to the audience. The need for pictures on promotions of products with a dominant service core is further highlighted in instances where the promotion of a hybrid product underplays the service component. This is shown by the Geysers Timers (Post 20) which is discussed in detail in Section 5.2.5.

5.2.3 Inseparability and multiplicity of products characterised

The data also shows the impact of the multiplicity of components of a product on the promotions. A promotion is impacted by the multiple component of a product like its service characteristics. The broader implication is that the multiplicity of the characteristics of a product should be considered in the development of a promotion. While service characteristics like inseparability may influence the nature of a promotion it is necessary to consider the full characteristics of a product e.g. the tangibles required to facilitate the service or the tangibles produced as an outcome of the service process.

For example, the Restaurant and Cooking Lessons (Post 17) has 30 pictures which illustrate that the product has several components required for its performance like a

building, tables, chairs, the crockery and the tangible decor. A larger number of pictures is therefore necessary to show the broad range of the characteristics of a product. Furthermore, the images show that the inseparability characteristic co-exist with other elements required for the performance of the service. In the data, two of the pictures show tables and chairs which are set up for service. A third picture shows an outside sitting area at the restaurant (Appendix 5.3). Eleven of the images show the people “P” of the 3Ps extend marketing mix. People are shown preparing food but this also includes celebrity endorsement like Tbo Touch. Other images with people show the inseparability of the service as it shows satisfied consumers in an appreciative state, smiling with the owner and even seated at the dinner table (picture 2, Appendix 5.3), an attempt to highlight a pleasant experience one receives as part of the service while at the restaurant.

Fifteen of the pictures for the Restaurant and Cooking Lessons (Post 17) show food and give an evident emphasis on the aesthetics through gourmet presentations of the food (Appendix 5.3, pictures 3 and 4). The service process includes the production of food and food is a product which is a tangible outcome of the service. Food is consumable and as such is perishable. However, the service itself is inseparable from the restaurant. The aesthetically pleasing presentation of the food may not be separable from the skilled chef’s artistic hand which prepares and presents the food.

The comments do indicate that the responses are in line with inseparability of the service as prospectives demonstrate that their desire is to visit the restaurant where the service is provided.

“Your food looks yummy, I am definitely going to pay you a visit one of these days.” (Post 17)

Similarly, services like the swimming lessons are inseparable from the person providing the service, in this case the teaching cannot be undertaken in the absence of either the swimming instructor or the trainee who needs to learn how to swim. For the swimming posts, the largest number of comments, 88 out of 230 were enquiries on locations of the swimming instructor indicative of the inseparability of the service from the provider (Table 5:6).

“Where are you based.” (Post 7: Swimming Lessons)

“Based?” (Post 7)

“Where are you?” (Post 7)

In the case of the Swimming Lessons (Post 7), while the instructor may be mobile due to a wider availability of swimming pools, the service is still inseparable from the instructor.

“When are you coming to Limpopo.” (Post 7: Swimming lessons)

“I am based in Pretoria; I can travel to any location if you are a group.”

(Post 7: Swimming post: Traders Response)

The data shows that products with a service dominant core like the swimming post are performed by a person and they require that the service provider is present in delivering the service. The Swimming Lessons (Post 7) shows a gradual decline from attention to desire as enquirers need to wait until location and or mobility is confirmed. This is in contrast with the Tyres (Post 8) on which a fixed location is given and a restricted mobility is also indicated. The Tyres (Post 8) thus shows a higher level of desire than interest:

Attention [230] → Interest [78] → Desire [62] (Post 7: Swimming Lessons)

Attention [282] → Interest [22] → Desire [102] (Post 8: Tyres)

For such inseparable products when either location or mobility is not given, consumers are most likely to remain at the lower stages of the AIDA model like attention and interest. The data shows that the move towards purchase only becomes possible after full information is available to evaluate possibility of accessing the service.

The Dentist (Post 13) and Construction (Post 14) also have a dominant service core (Table 5:3). They are largely dominated by the service characteristics of inseparability. A dentist is required and often needs their surgery and its equipment to provide the service. In addition, the dentist service may or may not involve a tangible component.

In cases where braces are part of the dental care, these constitute a tangible component, similarly dentures are a physical form received during the appropriate dental care process.

Table 5:3 Post with dominant service core (with tangible outcome/output)

Post with dominant process core	Product component	Service-process component
Dentist (Post 13)	Filling or tooth-fitting or braces	Dentist equipment, in surgery (inseparable)
Construction (14)	Completed building	Construction equipment, on site (movable)

Likewise, the inseparability nature of services e.g. the Dentist (Post 13), makes it impossible for it to be performed in the absence of the provider. For this reason, consumers were asking the service provider to open a branch in Gauteng.

“Would you consider opening another practice in Johannesburg and alternate your visits or work with a partner, we are many this side and we want to support black businesses.” (Post 13: Dentist)

“Try have a branch in Johannesburg.” (Post 13: Dentist)

“Please suggest an area that I can open my practice in.”

(Post 13: Dentist Trader’s Response)

In the case of the Dentist (Post 13) the count of comments shows that inseparability contributed to the high number of comments. Seventy-nine out of 302 comments were on distributions (Place) including enquiries on whether the service can move to cities in Gauteng (Table 5:6).

While the enquiries may be classified under the distribution P, Place, the comments reflect the inseparability of the service from the person providing it. Most of the

comments on products with a stronger inseparability core tend to remain on “Attention” or “Interest” as moving closer to desire is often restricted by the location which either enables or constrains access to the service provider and or the facilities required to perform the services. The data thus showed that services with a stronger inseparability core may need to be performed in the presence of the service provider for example a registered dentist or a certified fitness instructor. The data also shows that inseparability in products with a dominant service core is thus often supported by tangible features.

5.2.4 Products characterized by dual dominance: both a tangible core and service core

Section 5.2 above introduced the common classification of products which is based on the binary classification of tangible goods and services. This classification allows many products to be classified on a continuous spectrum based on the degree of tangibility e.g. from low to high tangibility. However, both in the data and in marketing theory the idea of a pure good and that of a pure service as distinct forms of a product is not common practice (Shostack, 1977). Table 5:4 below shows eight of the products which are classified as hybrid products. The products are a combination of both the tangible component of goods and the service component. The hybrid products include Geyser Timer (Post 20), Designer Clothing (Post 11) and Bath Resurfacing (Post 19).

Table 5:4 Post with hybrid product-service core

Post with hybrid product-service core	Pictures	Product component	Service component
Geyser Timer (Post 20)	1	Geyser timer	Fitting
Portrait Print on T-shirt (Post 1)	14	T-shirt and print on T-shirt	Portrait printing
Bath Resurfacing (Post 19)	16	Coating on bathroom ceramic	Coating process
Floor Coating (Post 15)	19	Floor finish materials	Coating process

Designer Clothing (Post 11)	21	Clothing items	Design and making processes
Leather Bags & Products Manufacture (Post 23)	8	Bags, purses and leather products	Design and making processes
Shoe Manufacture (Post 22)	11	Shoes	Design and making processes
Metal Fabrication (Post 16)	9	Gates, sliding doors, windows and burglar bars	Design and fitting processes

5.2.5 Instances where service component is not supported by sufficient pictures

The balance of the dominance between the tangible core and the service core was partly reflected on the number of pictures where products with a hybrid core had comparatively more pictures on the post than products with a dominant tangible core (refer to Appendix 5.2.5). The Geysers Timers (Post 20) was however an exception with only one picture. The nature of the Geysers Timers (Post 20) is such that the tangible core is separable from the service core i.e. a geysers timer can be purchased and an electrician can be hired separately to install the timer. This is a reflection that while the product is hybrid in nature, the post has a predominant focus on the tangible core.

The data also shows that the success of a promotion may be constrained if products with a dominant service core do not use sufficient pictures. A case in point is the Geysers Timers (Post 20) which is a hybrid product with a dominant service core. The hybridity is shown through the differential prices i.e. a separate price for the timer which is the tangible component and a separate price for the installation of the timer by the electrician which is the service component.

“How much?” (Post 20: Geysers Timer)

“R950, I supply, R650, you supply.” (Post 20: Traders Response)

The pricing shows that the timer costs R300 and the installation costs R650. The pricing therefore shows that the Geysers Timers (Post 20) offering is inclined towards a product with a dominant service core.

An analysis of the pictures on the posts shows that the Geysers Timers (Post 20) has a single picture. The post therefore has the lowest number of pictures compared to other hybrid products. For hybrid products the number of pictures ranges from eight for the Leather Bags & Products Manufacture (Post 23) to 21 pictures for the Designer Clothing (Post 11).

While the comments were overwhelming supportive on the Geysers Timers (Post 20) the choice of the picture also reflected a need for a more representative set of images.

“Choose a better photo next time ... Your timers are the best thing to have in a household.” Geysers Timers (Post 20)

“Next time use a smart DB box for your marketing because they will ruin your business when they think you did the whole job.” Geysers Timers (Post 20)

The Geysers Timers (Post 20) seemed to have underplayed the service component by only posting one picture and as such its success may have been constrained by insufficient pictures. Furthermore, the request for better pictures may be indicative of the need for hybrid posts to consider the service component of the product for example demonstration of the process of fitting the timer. The comments also reflect the need for services to give assurance through use of appropriate people, physical evidence and process as has been observed in the Bootcamp (Post 24) in which the posts highlighted the activities undertaken in the camp using images of appropriately “fit” people and the Dentist (Post 13) which also showed the before and after pictures. The data therefore shows that products with a dominant service core and hybrid products which also have a dominant service core need (more) pictures to demonstrate the service component of the product.

5.2.6 Multiple classification of services with tangible durable outcomes

Using the Shostack's (1977) product-service continuum enabled an analysis which considers the hybridity of products and its impact on the nature of promotions. It allowed theorizations beyond the product service continuum which showed that the classification of whether a product is a good or a service may be perspectival, i.e. dependent on ownership and use.

An analysis of the Construction (Post 14) shows that while construction is associated with buildings which are tangible, these buildings are the outcome of the process of construction which is characteristically a service. The post therefore constitutes a product whose offering is characterized by a dominant service core. The contractor-client receives a tangible product which is the outcome of the construction process.

The nature of the promotion on the Construction (Post 14) reveals the service characteristics of the product which can be understood in relation to the extended marketing mix i.e. the people, process and physical evidence (3Ps).

The Construction (Post 14) has ten images which show the different stages of the construction process (refer to Appendix 5.2.6). The first image shows the digger (Image 1), a tangible component which is a tool required in the performance of the service. Image 2 shows external paving at the construction site and images 3 and 4 show interior finishes like tiling and window, sliding door fittings. Images 5 and 6 show the construction site and image 7 shows the near completed construction structure. Images 8, 9 and 10 show the completed building and or model.

The construction is performed by skilled people, the people are shown in images 1 to 4. The process uses tangibles such as tools for production in the construction industry. Image 1 shows a digger as one of the tools and images 3 to 4 also show people using smaller tools to perform their task.

An analysis of the promotion posts allows theorizations beyond the product service continuum. The case of the construction company shows that the promotion is targeted at a contractor who requires a building. The construction company therefore provides a service. Once contracted, the construction company undertakes the

process of building. At the end of the construction process, the contractor receives the building which is a tangible end product of the construction process. However, should the contractor decide to rent the building, the contractor who is now a landlord, has a tangible product. The tenant rents the physical building, rental is characteristically a service as is shown by the Estate Agent (Post 12).

Construction Company Service	Construction Process	The Building Product	Rental of Building Service
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To the tenant the service is characterised by inseparability. Benefit from the facilities is realised in full when the facilities are in use. To the landlord, premises are also characteristically perishable i.e. when not rented out for a period of time e.g. for a month the premises are not used and subsequently the rental is lost. The Construction (Post 14) and Estate Agent (Post 12) therefore reveals that the degree of service-ness or product-ness can be a matter of perspective i.e. to the owner, the building is a tangible product and the tenant rents a service.

5.3 Promotion

This section focuses on the qualitative analysis of the data. It begins by discussing the level of engagement i.e. organizing the comments by quantification. Thereafter, the section is followed by an analysis of the extent to which the promotional objectives are achieved as measured by movement from attention towards purchase on the AIDA.

Table 5:5 shows the posts in the study arranged by number of comments. The Cleaning Agency (Posts 3) with 12 comments has the lowest number of comments and the Dentist (Post 13) with 302 comments has the highest number of comments.

Table 5:5 Posts by number of comments

Low Engagement Posts	Number of comments	Medium Engagement Posts	Number of comments	High Engagement Post	Number of comments
Cleaning Agency (Post 3)	9	Leather Bags and Products Manufacturing (Post 23)	42	Shoe Manufacture (Post 22)	120
Moringa Products (Post 26)	9	Packaged Vegetables (Post 6)	42	Bath Resurfacing (Post 19)	125
Estate Agent (Post 12)	14	Swimming Lessons (1) (Post 7)	45	Gyser Timers (Post 20)	160
Metal Fabrication (Post 16)	12	Swimming Clothing (Post 18)	45	Restaurant and Cooking Lessons (Post 17)	180
Chicken Business (Post 2)	22	Floor Coating (Post 15)	46	Mechanic (Post 5)	224
Property (Post 21)	11	Potralt Print on T-shirts (Post 1)	49	Swimming Lessons (2) (Post 25)	230
Culinary Garden (Post 9)	33	Lifestyle Bootcamp (Post 24)	71	Tyres (Post 8)	282
Designer Clothing (Post 11)	34	Hair and Skin Products (Post 10)	80	Dentist (Post 13)	302
Construction (Post 14)	40	Hair Growth Products (Post 4)	94		

The posts are classified into three different categories based on the number of comments i.e. the post with 40 comments and below were classified as low engagement; posts with 41 to 100 comments were classified as medium engagement and posts with more than 100 comments were classified as high engagement post.

An analysis of posts which begins with their categorization by level of engagement is necessary to engage with the nuance of the relationship between the number of comments on a post and its ability to achieve promotional objectives. The qualitative analysis following the categorization of posts by level of engagement is informed by the literature on chapters one and two in which a number of researchers consider the quantity of engagement as the most important objectives of a promotion (Gerolimos, 2011; Rauschnabel et al., 2012; Khobzi et al., 2018). Most quantitative research falls for the trap of positivism in which authors using the positivist paradigm often view the main objectives of posts on social media as to increase the number of comments (Goose, 2019). This study sought to avoid this trap by using a critical realist philosophical underpinning which acknowledges the importance of quantification but also argues that the enumerable which is empirical does not give a full understanding of the extent to which a post's promotional objectives are met when there is an increase in engagements. Therefore, the analysis of data in this study considers the objectives of promotions to exist beyond increasing the number of comments. As such other objectives of promotions which often includes the movement of consumers towards purchase are considered to give a more nuanced analysis of the success of promotions.

While objectives of promotions are broad e.g. DRIP³, the ultimate objectives of promotions are linked to purchase and the need for a business to make a profit. The analysis uses a HoE model to track movement towards purchase. It tracks the success of promotions at different levels of the AIDA model. The tracking considers the quantification of comments but delves deep into a qualitative analysis of the comments to classify the extent to which the engagements constitute a meaningful contribution to the Trader.

³ The acronym DRIP is used to represent the four promotional objectives which are Differentiation, Reminding, Informing and Persuasion.

5.3.1 High engagement post

The analysis on promotions begins with high engagement posts which have more than a 100 comments. It starts with a discussion of posts where a missing element of the marketing mix increases engagements without necessarily showing movement towards purchase. It also discusses the nuance of success in posts with high engagements.

5.3.1.1 Missing element of the 4Ps increases the number of comments

This section discusses the data in which the posts show that a high engagement rate is not always a universal reflection of the success of the promotions. This is contrary to the positions taken by most researchers as discussed in Chapter 1. The data shows that in some cases a missing element of the 4Ps increases engagement without necessarily demonstrating success as measured by movement towards purchase. For example, the Dentist (Post 13) and the Swimming Lessons (Post 7) have 302 and 230 comments respectively yet the comments predominantly constituted prospects enquiring about a missing element of the marketing mix like location of the service.

“Where are you based?” (Post 7: Swimming Lessons)

“Where are you located?” (Post 13: Dentist)

“Do you only operate in Witbank?” (Post 13: Dentist)

Other comments were enquiries on price:

“How much per lesson?” (Post 7: Swimming Lessons)

“How much” (Post 7)

“How much is your service for Polo TSI 90 case” (Post 5: Mechanic)

Some posts combined the enquiry on both location and price.

“Where are you? How much?” (Post 7)

“Where and how much?” (Post 7)

In total the Dentist (Post 13) and the Swimming Lessons (Post 7) had 79 and 88 comments about place accounting for 26% and 38% respectively (Table 5:6). A closer analysis shows that the Swimming Lessons (Post 7) had 88 enquires on location and 44 on price. Therefore, a total of 132 comments out of 230 comments making 57% of comments on place and price. Similarly, the Dentist (Post 13) had 79 comments on place and 72 on price giving a total of 152 out of 302 comments which constitutes 50% of the total comments. The two posts show that more than half of the comments, were consultative in nature and constituted enquiry on missing components of the 4Ps.

Table 5:6 Total comments by enquiry on missing element of the marketing promotion

Posts	# of comments	Place	Price	Product
Mechanic (Post 5)	204	30	7	35
Swimming Lessons (Post 7)	230	88	44	16
Tyres (Post 8)	282	21	20	64
Dentist (Post 13)	302	79	72	83

On BrownSense while there are many different reasons for people to comment on a post, there is evidence that when a post does not have a price, location or both price and location the chances of it having a lot of comments is high. Consumers enquiring on price or location tend to dominate and therefore the analysis demonstrates that a simple count of comments does not show a corresponding conclusion that a high number of comments is reflective of the success of the post.

The data shows that while there are instances in which high engagement posts can be understood as successful from a marketing promotional point of view, these need to be understood as nuanced. While the comments do show that the promotional objective to achieve attention was successful it is however comparatively restrictive success. These enquiries which contribute to the highest number count do not show the movement of consumers towards the interest and desire and as such attention may be far off from the purchase required to sustain businesses.

5.3.1.2 Nuance of success in high engagement posts

While in some instances it may be important to increase the engagements on a post, a qualitative engagement with the comments is essential. A detailed analysis of the comments may provide a more nuanced understanding of the extent to which the comments shows the movement of consumers towards purchase. The nuance would clarify those instances when comments can have a high number of engagements which also reflect the success of a post.

On the Swimming Lessons (Post 7) discussed above there was also evidence of comments which showed movement on the AIDA model, e.g. towards interest:

“I’m interested, please in box me.” (Post 7)

“Interested.” (Post 7)

“I’m interested but do not have a pool, where are you situated.” (Post 7)

Some of the posts also showed an inclination towards desire.

“Interested, get in touch on [telephone number given]” (Post 7)

“Say that again, I need lessons asap” (Post 7)

On the Swimming Lessons (Post 7), in total there were 78 comments which showed interest and 62 comments which showed an inclination towards desire (Table 5:7). The comments on interest accounted for 34% and desire accounted for 27% of the total attention comments. The Swimming Lessons’ (Post 7) success can thus be understood as variable. The success is more nuanced, as a much higher number of comments demonstrates evidence of interest and a comparatively smaller number of comments show evidence of desire. Furthermore Table 5.7 below show the Dentist (Post 13), Mechanic (Post 5) and Tyres (Post 8) which are high engagement posts whose success can be understood to be at different levels on the AIDA model.

Table 5:7 Post with high engagement and measurement of movement on the AIDA

Post name	Attention ⁴	Interest	Desire	(Action) ⁵
Mechanic (Post 5)	204	34	18	
Swimming Lessons (Post 7)	230	78	62	
Dentist (Post 13)	302	72	98	
Tyres (Post 8)	282	22	102	

The total count of all comments is indicative of the number of prospective consumer's attention that have been captured by the post. Comments like "nice" (Post 7), "impressive" (Post 13) are counted as evidence of attention, however they do not show a move towards action. Some comments however move beyond showing that attention has been achieved and indicate that the prospective is interested in the product e.g. "Price lists?" (Post 13); "How much do you charge for braces? I need a rough estimate" (Post 13).

For the Tyres (Post 8), interest was often shown at the enquiry level "Contact details, please" (Post 8). The qualitative analysis revealed that for Tyres (Post 8), the word interested was much more inclined towards desire as the enquirers often went on to specify their sizes of the tyres they require.

"Interested! 17.225/45 [Specification of tyre size]. Please confirm if you have got Fullway tyres and whereabouts are you. Call me please [Number given]."
(Post 8)

"Definitely coming straight to you for my next dental scenario [treatment]. (Also from Tasbet)." (Post 13)

However, in some posts a correlation exists between high engagements and a high success rate on the interest and desire measures on the AIDA model. For example,

⁴ Attention represents the count of the number of people commenting and not the number of comments; Interest represents the number of comments classifiable as showing interest. Desire represents the number of comments classified as having exceeded interest, often includes comments which indicate intension to purchase or order.

⁵ The type of data collected did not allow quantification of purchases (Action). Comments could only be confidently classified as reflective of a purchase if they were testimonials. However, there were too few testimonials in the data for analysis in this type of study, hence the section has no numbers/values.

the Tyres (Post 8) has a higher number of desire comments i.e. 102 (Table 5:7) and also evidence of purchase through a testimonial.

“I bought 4, 18 inch from him, they are good tyres” (Post 8)

The analysis therefore shows that quantification alone, while indicative of the success rates of promotions at the attention level is not a sufficient or an exclusive measure of the success at the upper levels towards desire and purchase.

Broadly the above posts show that high engagements are not automatically reflective of ultimate success. Posts which capture the attention of consumers and gain their interest show that their success typically covers the first two stages of attention and interest and thus the success tends to fall on the lower end of the AIDA model. Table 5.7 shows that the Mechanic (Post 5) and Swimming Lessons (Post 7) have higher success on the lower end of the AIDA albeit at different rates. On the other hand, the Dentist (Post 13) and Tyres (Post 8) showed success at the upper end of the AIDA as they achieved more desire comments than interest. Such success tends to be more closely linked to revenue and profits. Thus, data from posts with a similarly high number of comments show that high engagement may mean different things i.e. they could either reflect higher success at the lower end of the AIDA or success on the upper end of the AIDA. The nuance may be linked to the nature of the product as discussed in Section 5.2 above.

5.3.2 Physical distance and comments evoking ideas of new product development

This section analyses data which showed physical distance as a constraint to making a purchase and instances when the comments led the Trader to reconsider the product, the target market and even the location. For example, on the Dentist (Post 13) initial comments either enquired about availability of service in Gauteng province or explicitly suggested a move to Gauteng.

“If only you were in Joburg.” (Post 13: Dentist)

“Please consider a Branch in Gauteng, we are a lot here.” (Post 13: Dentist)

“Please consider a having branch in Jhb and Pretoria.” (Post 13: Dentist)

However, the comments also give evidence that while the consumers show a high level of both interest and desire, they do not move towards purchase due to physical distance.

While the Trader initially did not respond to suggestions that the surgery be in Gauteng, the growing number of requests resulted in a softening of attitude and evidence of reconsideration of possibilities to provide the service.

“Have a branch in Johannesburg?” (Post 13: Dentist)

“Suggest an area please I am thinking about it as well.”

(Post 13: Dentist Trader’s Response)

The Dentist (Post 13) engagements show that the comments evoked a consideration of geographical expansion. Similarly, other posts seemed to evoke ideas of new product development.

“Do you make wheeled bags?”

(Post 23: Leather Bags & Products Manufacture)

“We have never done one but doing one would really be a challenge we would want to embrace” (Trader’s response: Post 23)

The nature of enquiries about presence in Gauteng for the Dentist (Post 13) and about addition of new features to products seemed to give the traders a type of data similar to data obtained through research.

Therefore, the comments on the Leather Bags & Products Manufacture (Post 23) show a different success trajectory where the enquiry does not lead to a direct purchase but shows an unusual request in which the trader is given a challenge to expand their product range. Similarly, new product-service ideas are shown in the Swimming Lessons (Post 7).

“Do you also teach Kids” (Post 7: Swimming Lessons)

“Only Adults” (Post 7: Trader’s Response)

“Do you also teach Kids?” (Post 7: Swimming Lessons)

“I might consider teaching kids soon; I have been receiving a lot of requests” (Post 7: Trader’s Response)

The Swimming Lessons (Post 7) also shows a trend of enquiries which increase the number of comments however the enquiries are about a possible future offering and therefore do not constitute a movement towards purchase. The trader in this case seems enticed by the enquiries to consider extending their service offering to a new target market.

Such comments while not immediately of benefit to the financial sustainability of the business and therefore not readily qualifying to be classified as current success are indicative of possibilities of future success.

5.3.3 Low and medium engagement posts

The detailed analysis of the high engagement posts above showed that high engagements cannot be seen as a success merely because they have a high number of comments. Similarly, the medium to low engagement posts require a need for a qualitative analysis to reveal the nuance in the extent to which they meet the promotional objectives. Table 5:8 shows the medium engagement posts.

Table 5:8: Medium Engagement Posts

Post Name	Attention	Interest	Interest (%)	Desire	Desire (%)	(Action)
Packaged Vegetables (Post 6)	42	5	12%	21	50%	
Portrait Painting on T-shirt (Post 1)	49	9	18%	4	8%	
Floor and wall coating (Post 15)	46	9	20%	13	28%	
Lifestyle Bootcamp (Post 24)	71	14	20%	16	23%	

Of the four medium engagement posts, the Packaged Vegetables (Post 6) has 42 comments which is the lowest number of comments on Table 5:8 yet 50% of the comments express a desire to purchase.

“Can I come straight to you there in Triompf? That’s like on my way to and from work? If yes, what are your office hours? (Post 6)

The Packaged Vegetables (Post 6) therefore has both a relatively low number of comments and the highest proportion of desires. The Lifestyle Bootcamp (Post 24) which has a higher number of comments has a comparatively moderate proportion of desire at 23%. The medium engagement comments therefore also show that the count of comments alone is not a sufficient reflection of the level of success and the nuance in the type of success.

On the low engagement posts, the Cleaning Agency (Post 3) has the lowest number of comments of all posts in the study, however, it shows a proportionately higher level of desire at 44% in comparison to the other low engagement post.

“I need your services to clean my bed. I am moving out when can you come”
(Post 3)

“Can you travel to Sacunda, if I get 20+ people that need your services”
(Post 3)

“If you get just 4 we will travel” (Trader’s Response: Post 3)

“I have submitted a quotation request to mobile number listed in your inbox, looking forward to using your services” (Post 3)

Table 5:9 below shows the low engagement posts.

Table 5:9: Low Engagement Posts

Post Name	Attention	Interest	Interest (%)	Desire	Desire (%)	(Action)
Metal Fabrication (Post 16)	17	8	47%	1	6%	
Cleaning Agency (Post 3)	9	3	33%	4	44%	
Chicken (Post 2)	22	2	9%	7	32%	
Estate Agent (Post 12)	14	1	7%	5	36%	

Furthermore, the low engagement posts demonstrate that an analysis of the success of the posts needs to be done in consideration of the nature of the product. The

Chicken (Post 2) is a fast-moving consumer good (FMCG), it is purchased and consumed routinely. The Chicken (Post 2) has 32% of comments classified as desire. The nature of desire is inclined towards an indication of a higher likelihood to purchase.

“I would like to place an order how do I go about it?” (Post 2)

“My next delivery please, I am waiting” (Post 2)

“I want 3 packs but I am in Vaal” (Post 2)

“Let’s go get some meat here” (Post 2)

Similarly, the Estate Agent (Post 22) which also was classified under low engagements also shows that a number of comments were from people who were in need of the product as shown by the specifying of the nature of accommodation required.

“I am desperately looking for a place to rent in Mtubatuba, can you assist?”
(Post 12)

“Do you have any stands available?” (Post 12)

“Looking for a place to rent in Benoni for R4000.” (Post 12)

“I am looking for a place to rent around Naturena, do you have anything around there?” (Post 12)

“Do you have any rent to buy offers?” (Post 12)

The nature of comments on the Estate Agent (Post 22) which is a low engagement post is more inclined towards desire i.e. shows a higher likelihood of movement towards purchase. The qualitative analysis of posts with low engagement therefore also shows that they cannot be simply classified as not successful. Furthermore, products like rental properties are low turnover products and as such the nature of the product may need to be considered before concluding that low engagement posts are unsuccessful. A qualitative analysis may thus assist to reveal the nuance of success.

The qualitative analysis of the posts by level of engagements shows that while it may be important to increase the engagements on a post, it is equally important to note that the success of a post cannot be measured only through the quantification of engagements. In some instances a qualitative engagement with the comments is essential. Looking at the details of the comments may provide a more nuanced

understanding of when comments with a high number of engagements also reflect success of a post.

5.3.4 Other promotional approaches

The posts analysed are by traders who are largely classifiable as SME, predominantly new business and as such are characterized by limited access to funds for marketing activities and may often not have access to marketing expertise. However, the data shows that the traders used a wide variety of methods in the promotion of their products and these included celebrity endorsement, use of website links and hashtags and word of mouth. Translanguaging which involved use of multiple languages at the same time emerged as a common practice.

5.3.4.1 Celebrity endorsement

In the data there is evidence of celebrity endorsement on posts and engagements on BrownSense. The celebrity endorsement phenomenon has been highlighted by several scholars for example Wilson (2020) gives an overview of celebrities and their association with successful advertising.

The Cleaning Agency (Post 3) and the Restaurant and Cooking Lessons (Post 17) show evidence of Celebrity endorsement. Appendix 5.3.4.1 shows a picture of the trader with celebrity DJ Zinhle and the cleaners. The pictures also include a screenshot of a testimonial by DJ Zinhle on twitter thanking the cleaners for the job well done.

“@BasaniCleaners, did a great job. My chairs and carpets amazing.” (Post 3)

The Cleaning Agency (Post 3) also shows a testimony by Carol Tshabalala a famous football journalist.

“Got a new home and I am ensuring that I get the best start thanks to @BasaniCleaners making sure that my furniture and my carpets are spotless. Give them a call on [Phone number]. I vouch for them. #SupportBlackExcellence.” (Post 3)

The Cleaning Agency (Post 3) also shows a picture of a cleaned house next to a large portrait of Somizi, a South African omni celebrity (Appendix 5.3.2.1, picture 2). The Restaurant and Cooking Lessons (Post 17) shows a series of photos of the trader with a famous radio personality Tbo Touch and meals at the radio station (Appendix 5.3.2.1, picture 5). There was evidence of celebrity endorsements being recognized in the engagements.

“Are your prices still competitive even after you have worked with celebrities?”
(Post 3)

“Yes, they are, you are all celebrities to us, anyone who supports us is a hero for life.” (Post 3: Trader’s Response)

While celebrities are associated with crowds or large numbers, this was not evident in all the posts in the data as celebrities are not only used in posts with high engagement posts but they are also used in those with low engagements. This study does not focus on the detailed analysis of celebrity endorsement and as such a different method may be required to measure their impact on effectiveness of social media posts.

5.3.4.2 Hash tags for search-ability of posts

Hashtags (#) are used on the Chicken (Post 2) and Hair and Skin Products (Post 10). They enable posts to be discovered/found/come out when customers conduct broad search enquiries. Hashtags connect social media content to a specific topic, event, theme or conversation. The following hashtags were on the Chicken (Post 2).

“#freerange; #nohormones; #noinjection and #brinefree.” (Post 2)

While the hashtags the Chicken (Post 2) were not focused on making a direct sale, they represent a subtle marketing approach through association with a life style of healthy eating. The following hashtags were on the Hair and Skin Products (Post 10).

“#buyblack; #buylocal; #haircare; #skincare; #organic.” (Post 10)

Hashtags aggregate all social media content with that same hashtag. They also make it easier for a person to discover the posts if a hashtag is used and aligned to broad topics associated with search interests. The hashtags on the Hair and Skin Products (Post 10) also demonstrate an intelligible link to the issues surrounding the type of product.

5.3.4.3 Reference to website and other online platforms

Eight out of 27 posts had links to websites and other social media platforms. These are Designer Clothing (Post 11); Culinary Garden Lessons (Post 9); Floor Coating (Post 15); Dentist (Post 13); Restaurant and Cooking Lessons (Post 17); Leather Bags & Products Manufacture (Post 23); Estate Agent (Post 12) and Metal Fabrication (Post 16). Some of the posts explicitly referred prospective consumers to websites or other social media platforms for example:

“If you are looking to buy, sell or rent a property, we would love to be of service. Visit our site ... <https://www.premier-estate.co.za>.” (Post 12)

“Please visit my page @zinniaexclusiveclothing or zinnia exclusive clothing on Facebook to view my collections.” (Post 11)

Both posts 11 and 12 are low engagement posts. While the level of engagements cannot be conclusively determined by a single element, the nature of external links is such that they take the potential consumer away from the posts and have the potential to reduce the number of engagements. An additional/different method is required to measure the extent to which such posts with external links contribute to the success of the holistic business success albeit in some cases having reduced evidence of success of the post.

5.3.4.4 Word of mouth

The data shows evidence of consumers tagging each other on the engagements of posts as a means of recommendation of products. Such recommendations can be classified under the electronic version of WoM, eWoM. The eWoM can be broadly defined to include “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or

former customers about a product or company which is made available to a multitude of the people and institutions via the Internet” (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004).

The implications of such a broad definition is that all comments in this study constitute eWoM as the information is available to a large multitude i.e. all members of the BrownSense group. The data shows that comments were predominantly positive.

“This looks amazing.” (Post 10: Hair and Skin Products)

“The packaging looks amazing” (Post 10: Hair and Skin Products)

“Amazing product, it has done wonders to my hair”

(Post 10: Hair and Skin Products)

The eWoM comments above also include testimonials which are comments about a product but often the person sharing their experience shares over a much broader audience that may be unable to verify the truth of the testimonial.

However eWoM can also be shared within one’s social circles. In most instances, the power of eWoM is in its sociality i.e. when people share within a close circle of friends and family. In close circles of trust people can often determine if the shared information has or has not been stealthily sponsored to promote products.

The data also showed instances in which respondents tagged people in their close trust circles. Such taggings can be categorized into two main types. The first is a tagging without a comment which may or may not have a response.

“[Name]” (Post 24: Bootcamp)

“Let’s do this next Saturday, you will carry me when I am dead”

(Post 24: Bootcamp [Peer response])

The second is a tagging with both a comment but also a response from the third party tagged.

“[Name], can you please try this for your daughter, I have used it on my daughter and it does wonder.” (Post 10: Hair and Skin Products)

“Thanks [Name], It looks great how do I order?” (Post 10: Hair and Skin Products [Peer response])

“[Name] Join us next Saturday.” (Post 24: Bootcamp)

“Asseblief.” (Post 24: Bootcamp [Peer response])

“[Name], Let’s join next week.” (Post 24: Bootcamp)

“[Name], maybe you will have to drag me.”

(Post 24: Bootcamp [Peer response])

The data shows that Facebook is a platform in which eWoM is a natural way of communication which takes different forms. Where one is tagged and they respond the impact is measurable. However a different study may be necessary to focus on the forms of eWoM or their impact and to inform the choice of how eWoM can be used in promotions. The study would also need to use a critical lens to ensure that the analysis is more nuanced and the success of eWoM on promotions is not reduced to an enumeration of taggings their responses.

5.3.4.5 Translanguaging

While all the posts had their text in English which is the dominant language of business in South Africa. The data reveals that multi-lingualism was common in engagements. Respondents engaged using African languages and also used translanguaging i.e. using more than one language at the same time, in one sentence.

“I need you urgently I removed my teeth 3 weeks ago, I am still in pain and bleeding. I can’t eat bro #sengizwileJehovah!!! Ngokungadli, so please help bro I am in Johannesburg south” (Post 14: Dentist Post)

[Loose translation: Sengizwile Jehovah!!! Ngokungadli – “I am suffering from not eating.”]

“Why Durban is so boring. Ningalokhu ningibuza izinto eziningi mase ngi relocate.” (Post 4: Bootcamp)

[Loose translation: Ningalokhu ningibuza izinto eziningi mase ngi relocate Don't stop me when I am relocating; implying relocating to access the Bootcamp.]

“Akena flopo le bridgework, net keno te confemela bla a bolele, straight wabo” (Post 20: Geyser Timer)

[Loose translation: I have no problem with the bridgework, I just want the electrician to tell his version.]

The posts above were mostly in Nguni-Zulu and Sotho-Tswana and other engagements also included new forms of language.

“Uska wara I got you” (Post 13 dentist)

[Loose translation: Uska wara – Don't worry]

Having several African languages is often given as a reason for only using languages of European origin. The engagements raise a need for small businesses on BrownSense to also consider including African languages in their communications.

[5.4 Price impact on engagement](#)

In the data, price appeared to be an important aspect of marketing promotions and its presence or absence seemed to have an impact on the level of engagements and movement towards purchase. The increase in comments when a component of the marketing mix was excluded seemed to be the case across the data.

Where the price was present, the posts showed proportionately higher success of promotional objectives as measured by movement towards purchase without regard to whether the post achieved high, medium or low engagements as discussed in Section 5.3 above.

The data analysis shows that when posts include a price like the Bootcamp (Post 24) and the Tyres (Post 8) the comments are inclined towards desire as they show an immediate intention to purchase.

“[Tagged 4 peers] let’s do this, this weekend.” (Post:24: Bootcamp)

“[Tagged a friend] let’s go next weekend.” (Post:24: Bootcamp)

“I am joining you this weekend guys.” (Post:24: Bootcamp)

“I need a set” (Post 8: Tyres)

The section on promotions above also highlighted that when price is not included on a post, the engagements are often increased as most comments seek the price. The seeking of price is reflective of that it is a key element which influences whether consumers purchase a product or not (Pearl & Hunger, 2019).

Therefore, on the posts that did not have a price, the increase in comments only reflected success on the lower level of the AIDA, i.e. enquiries on price indicate that consumers attention has been captured. In some cases, comments were also reflective of the fact that the post was also successful at achieving success in triggering the interest in the product. However, the increased comments reflect that consumers needed to know the price before evaluating the product and moving on towards purchase. For example, in the Swimming Lessons for Adults (Post 7), 44 comments (Table 5:6) were similar to the one below, simply enquiring on price.

“How much is it per session?” (Post 7: Swimming Lessons *for Adults*)

On posts where the trader delayed to respond to price enquiries some consumers even got emotional about seeing a product they were interested in and not being able to make a decision due to delayed response by Trader.

“How much is the switch and the installation.”

(Post 20: Geyser Timers and Installation)

“We have asked about price a long time ago we are still waiting for the response.” (Post 20: Geyser Timers and Installation)

As discussed above on the promotion section, when a post does not have price on it, it tends to have relatively more comments that are price enquiry in nature. The impact of the inclusion or exclusion of price can be seen on a comparative analysis of Swimming Lessons for Adults (Post 7) and Swimming Lessons (Post 27). Both posts offer swimming lessons. While Swimming Lesson (Post 27) had full details including prices on the post, the Swimming Lesson for Adults (Post 7) did not include the price on the post.

On the Swimming Lessons for Adults (Post 7) the comments were inclined on enquiries on the missing price.

“How much is it?” (Post 7: Swimming Lessons for Adults)

“I need this, how much is it per lesson?” (Post 7)

The Swimming Lessons for Adults (Post 7) thus falls under high engagement post with 230 comments while Swimming Lessons (Post 27) is a medium engagement post with only 45 comments. The Swimming Lessons for Adults (Post 7) had many comments yet as much as 28% of the comments were asking about the missing price.

Price, therefore demonstrates that its inclusion or exclusion also impacts on the level of engagements achieved by a post. The evidence in the data that some of the increase in engagements are not necessarily linked to movement towards purchase shows the need for both marketers and researchers to exercise caution when analysing engagements.

The level of engagement needs to be understood as emergent from a variety of causal factors some of which, like a missing component of the marketing mix, price in this case, increase comments but without improving the success of the promotional objectives linked to purchase.

5.5 Distribution (Place)

Similarly, place has been discussed in the section above on product and promotion. Its contribution also needs to be understood beyond the high number of comments. A qualitative analysis shows that the engagement reflects the nature of products. For

products with dominant tangible core, the enquiries were predominantly focused on confirming the geographical limits/coverage of the distribution range and the cost implications.

“I like the backpack, can you ship to the UK?” (Post 23: Leather Bags)

“I’m in Midrand, will you be able to deliver?” (Post 6: Packaged Vegetables)

“Yes, we would be able to deliver at an additional cost, can we WhatsApp?”

(Post 6: Trader’s Response)

For products with a dominant service core and hybrid products the enquiries also reflected the characteristics of the service e.g. for inseparability, the comments sought to confirm the mobility of the service.

“Can you come to Gauteng “(Post 5: Mechanic)

“Do you do call outs?” (Post 5: Mechanic)

“Yes I do.” (Post 5: Trader’s Response)

“I am based in Soshanguve do you charge for call outs” (Post 5: Mechanic Post)

“Yes, I do, send me your address I will work it out for you.”

(Post 5: Traders Response)

The engagements on distribution thus also contributed to increasing the number of engagements however their contribution cannot be classified as success simply by looking at the number of comments. The qualitative analysis, revealed that when place is not included, the engagements remain as evidence of achievement of the attention of consumer. This contribution, if classified as success needs to be restricted to the lower levels of the AIDA as it does not show movement towards purchase which is required for business to make sales, revenue and profits are made.

5.6 Data Analysis Conclusion

The analysis used the 4Ps marketing mix framework which in practice works in unison however, it was separated for analytical purposes. The separation helped with distinguishing how each factor of the marketing mix elements contributed to the level of the success of the promotions.

The analysis began by using Shostack's (1977) product service continuum which was necessary to reveal the impact of the characteristics of a product on engagements. Based on the continuum products were classified into three categories i.e., those with a dominant tangible core, those with a dominant service core and hybrid products. In the analysis what stood out was that products with a dominant service core need their promotions to be supported by use of a variety of pictures. Pictures seemed important to demonstrate the service component even in hybrid products.

In the analysis on promotion, the level of engagements with posts was categorised into three i.e., low engagement posts, medium engagement posts and high engagement posts. The analysis also revealed that not all posts with a high number of comments can be assumed to be successful. A qualitative analysis of the posts showed that a missing element of the marketing mix could increase engagements. Thus, the success may need to be understood as nuanced. For example, when price was missing, a high number of comments were asking about price.

Posts in which the distribution is specified, and a price is given showed a higher level of intention to purchase. Based on the finding, a recommendation can be made for posts to include price, except for products in which price is subject to request for a quotation e.g., on bespoke products. Inclusion of price may reduce the number of comments asking about price and thus remove the illusion emergent from association of high engagement with success. A similar recommendation to ensure that price is included can be made except for those products where service is mobile.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In South Africa, the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (2013:38) states that a Master's graduate must be able to demonstrate "a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence as well as demonstration of the ability to relate knowledge to the resolution of complex problems," and "be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively". Such cannot be an easy task! In this chapter, I attempt to demonstrate how the theories I engaged with as I undertook this study transformed my ability to understand the world.

I begin by engaging with the background of the study and how it informed the research design. I then give an overview of the findings and their implications using the 4P's framework. I also included a discussion of the implications of a critical realist philosophical underpinning and then ended with final remarks on research in the marketing discipline and on relevance of marketing research on Small to Micro Enterprises (SMEs).

6.2 A responsive research design

The design of the study was informed by concerns raised by a number of scholars who pointed out that research in marketing is predominantly quantitative (Ellis et al., 2011; Hunt, 1994) and often does not take a clear philosophical position from the onset of the study. As a consequence most such research tends to slide into a positivist philosophical position without realizing it (Easton, 2010; Ellis et al., 2011; Witkowski & Jones, 2008). The implications of a philosophical position which is not explicitly considered is that the assumptions and limits of the philosophical position may go unnoticed and researchers may treat findings as absolute and unchanging truths (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

This study was thus designed with critical realism as an explicit philosophical underpinning, discussed in detail in Chapter Chapter 3:. And as such continuous reference to critical realism ensured that I remained conscious that the findings are a contribution to truth, a truth that is not absolute but a truth that can stand as objective and testable against competing disciplinary accounts. Truth in this study is classified

as the best of the currently known accounts of understanding the world. Furthermore, the qualitative but scientific nature of this study also means that while the findings are presented as objective truth, they are open to improvement or even falsification as new realities emerge. The relativity of issues under study is underpinned by ontological realism, the falsifiable nature of objective truth is represented by epistemological relativism and these critical realist tenets are discussed in Chapter Chapter 3:.

The framing of the research questions for this study remained broad in an attempt to not foreclose its findings. The broad nature of the research question is in line with the call of critical exploratory research in marketing and the qualitative approach used to analyse promotions and engagements.

In this chapter I also give an overview of the findings. Briefly these can be understood as in relation to the research questions.

1. What is the nature of the promotions on the BrownSense Facebook page?

A major finding related to the first question discussed in detail below is the use of images as a necessary component for those products with a dominant service core.

2. What are the elements of marketing promotions on BrownSense and how do these enable or constrain the success of the promotions, where success is understood as the achievement of promotional objectives?

The rest of this chapter also gives a brief overview of the marketing mix elements as some of the elements which affect the success of promotional posts. The impact of the product “P” on promotion is discussed in the next section.

6.3 Product

In this study the Shostack (1977) product-service continuum provided a theoretical framework for analysis. It enabled a critical and rigorous engagement with the complex issues surrounding the promotions of products. The continuum revealed that the success of the promotion cannot be analysed independent of the nature of the product which while multidimensional can be classified on a tangibility continuum with goods classified as predominantly tangible and services predominantly intangible (Shostack, 1977).

Products like Tyres (Post 8) and Chicken (Post 2) were classified as having a dominant tangible core while products like the Swimming Lessons (Post 7) and Bootcamp (Post 24) were at first broadly classified as having a dominant intangible core. However, the study also took into account arguments from Shostack (1977) that intangibility is not a sufficient descriptor of services and as such services were classified as products having a dominant service core. The use of the term “dominant service core” was in response to the data which showed that services were also characterized in other ways beyond intangibility. The observation on the multiplicity of characteristics of a service led to the development of the H/VIPIO acronym through the consolidation of theoretical characterization of services including heterogeneity or variability (H/V), inseparability (I), perishability (P), intangibility (I) and lack of ownership (O) (Parry, Newnes & Huang, 2011; Levitt, 1981; Shostack, 1977). The H/VIPIO acronym is a small contribution to theory made during the review of literature in this study, it is discussed in detail in the data analysis Chapter Chapter 5:, Section 5.2.

The framework also showed that the marketing mix elements need to be understood as working in unison but separation is only necessary for analytical purposes.

The findings on the product P revealed the importance of understanding the nature of the product in relation to whether the products have a dominant tangible or service characteristics.

6.3.1 Findings from products with a dominant tangible core

This study also revealed that the nature of product is important in the analysis of promotions for products with a dominant tangible core. For example, the engagements on the Tyres (Post 8) showed that the nature of the products is such that enquiries must include the size of tyres. The data on the Tyres (Post 8) thus revealed that the need for consumers to make an enquiry based on the sizes of tyre sizes led to an increase in the number of comments. On the other hand, the comments on products like Chicken (Post 2) which do not require specification showed that the nature of the product may encourage a move towards intention to purchase without increasing the number of comments. A major finding on tangible products was that the nature of products may render quantification of comments an unreliable measure of the success

of a promotion. The implications of this finding is that a qualitative analysis is essential to enable a more nuanced interpretation of the nature of success.

6.3.2 Findings on products with or associated with a dominant service core

The use of pictures was shown to have a high correlation with products with a dominant service core or hybrid products inclined towards a dominant service core. The data also showed that the number of pictures used in the promotion was proportionate to the service component of the product. Products with a dominant service core generally had more pictures than products with a dominant tangible core.

The data revealed that in instances where a Trader did not recognize service as a component of a hybrid product, the service was not considered in the development of the post. And as such not enough attention was paid to the inclusion of the appropriate type or number of pictures. This led to the finding that where the service component is not supported by sufficient pictures, an increase in comments may be a reflection of a need for more demonstrative pictures. The need for the use of appropriate pictures was shown when respondents were asking for better pictures which would give assurance on the quality of service.

Data also revealed that pictures were used to show the broad spectrum of service characteristics. Such use of pictures reveals the importance of understanding products as constituted by multiple characteristics and as such promotions may need to consider as many of the characteristics of a product. The consideration can be guided by service characteristic using the H/VIPIO model. The lack of consideration of the multiplicity of a product in particular its service component or the needs for support services may lead to the underplaying of the need for pictures on a promotion. The data showed that underplaying the need for pictures on service component of a product has the consequence of skewing the success of the promotion.

The implication of the findings is the need to create a guideline for SME's on how to analyse the product attributes and thereafter ensure that promotions for products characterised by or associated with a dominant service core, pictures should be added appropriately. These service characteristics were also shown using the before and after pictures format. The data also showed that the before and after pictures evoked

comments which reflected in some cases the newness of the product being sold to the market. It would seem a recommendable strategy will be to use before and after pictures on those services that result in a change or improvement of a current situation for example a resurfaced bath tub.

6.3.3 Impact of services with a tangible durable outcome on promotions

An analysis of the data also showed that the nature of the product can be fluid and may require promotions to consider such fluidity. While products can be classified as goods and services, in practice the classification is also dependent on their form which can be temporal i.e. dependent on or reflect the changes in the form and the perspective of the key stakeholder i.e. the people producing it which may be different to the people using it.

The analysis also revealed that products whose outcome is durable and lifelong like a building in which the owner seeks a construction company for, may have the same product classified in different ways to the owner who is responsible for the physical property and the tenant who relates differently to the property, e.g. does not own the property.

The data showed that services with a tangible durable outcome like a building may require different classification to reflect the different ways in which different players relate to the product at the different stages of the service to product process. For example, in the construction post, the trader provides a service which needs to be supported by tangibles like construction machinery to produce a tangible durable outcome i.e. a building. To the owner the construction process provides them with a tangible durable outcome, the building. Should the owner decide to rent the building, the tenant can classify the rental as a service. The implication to the marketing promotions is that, communications need to consider which elements are relevant to which audience.

6.3.4 Transport of tangible goods bringing in service component

The analysis showed that the transportation of goods i.e. products with a dominant tangible core brought in a service component. The transportation of goods has service characteristics as the transport itself is inseparable from the transporter and it cannot

be owned by the consumer to whom the tangible product is delivered. The implication is that the service components may need to be considered in the development of the promotions for example images may have to be added in line with the findings that service promotions require more images.

6.3.5 Multiplicity of product: instances of dependence of products on services

The data also showed that the classification of products is underpinned by complexity for example even when products are initially classified as having a dominant tangible core, they may have an element or a relationship with a service i.e. interdependence with other products. In instances where a product with a dominant service core is essential to access the product, the dominant service core would need to be considered as an extension of the product and as such should inform the development of promotions. Furthermore, the comments show that the increase in number of comments may be a reflective of enquiries on the availability and coverage of the service and as such cannot be seen independent of the nature of product and its interdependence on a service.

6.4 Promotion

In the analysis the posts were classified by level of engagement into three strata i.e. low engagement, medium engagement and high engagement. The high engagement posts showed that the increase in the number of comments was not a reflection of success of the promotion where success is measured by movement towards purchase on the AIDA. Some of the posts like the Swimming (Post 7) and the Dentist (Post 13) also gave evidence that a missing component of the 4P's on the promotion increases the number of comments without movement towards purchase. For the two posts, more than half of the comments were enquiries on the missing components of the 4P's.

The data also shows that a simple count of the number of comments cannot be used to draw a conclusion of a universal success of a promotional post. The success needs to be understood as nuanced i.e. as restricted to drawing attention of the audience but not necessarily moving them towards purchase. The nuance of the success in high engagement can be achieved through an analysis based on the classification at the level of the AIDA model process.

The study found out that high engagement post may have variable success i.e. some posts may be more successful at achieving attention and other posts may be comparatively more successful at moving consumers towards purchase e.g. where a higher number of posts show that desire was achieved. The data thus shows the importance of a qualitative analysis of the nature of comments beyond simple quantification.

6.4.1 Physical distance and comments evoking new product development

The analysis also showed that some of the engagement could not move consumers towards purchase yet they evoked a consideration of a variety of means of developing the business e.g. through indication of the availability of market areas outside the current coverage of the market. This finding further validates the need for qualitative analysis in addition to quantitative research for a balance of research in the field. Such a balance would also ensure that the full value of research is achieved. For example, the increase in engagement by consumers who fall outside of the geographical delimitation of a product are important as they may contribute or reflect a potential for the future success. However, such an increase in engagements does not constitute current success yet which may be necessary for the sustenance of the business in the immediate presence.

6.4.2 Low and Medium engagement post

The data also showed that the success of medium engagement posts also needs to be understood as nuanced. This was shown when Packaged Vegetables (Post 6) which had low engagements had 50% of the engagements inclined towards desire. For the low engagement posts analysis also revealed that these may not be assumed to be unsuccessful but that a qualitative analysis may evoke consideration of the nature of the product e.g. the Rental Properties (Posts 12 and 22) also show that rental is a low turnover product than chicken i.e. rental contracts are less frequently signed in comparison to the frequency with which chicken is purchased.

6.4.3 Diversity of use of promotions e.g. WoM

The data also shows that besides the post being by SME's characterized by low turnover and low marketing budget. Social Media Marketing (SMM) was also widely used and included celebrity endorsement, hash tags, weblinks and other online platforms, word-of-mouth and translanguaging. These are discussed in detail in Section 5.3.4.

6.5 Price

The data largely confirmed that price like the other elements of the marketing mix is an important component of the promotion and if not included it tends to increase the number of comments. Posts which included price showed a higher level of movement toward purchase (action). Excluding instances where the price of products is only generated on order, the recommendation is that price must be included for two reasons. First, to remove the illusion of a successful post by high engagement and second, to increase chances of movement towards action as shown in the post which included price.

6.6 Place

For distribution, the comments showed that enquiries were inclined towards the nature of the product. For products with a dominant tangible core, enquiries sought to confirm if they fell within the geographical coverage of the distribution range and or the cost implications if they were outside the distribution range.

For products with a dominant service core and hybrid products, the comments sought to confirm the inseparability characteristic of the product i.e. mobility range of the service. Similarly, where place information was missing, the number of comments increased without a corresponding increase in movement towards purchase. As such the recommendation is that there should be a consideration of information on place.

6.7 Critical realist implications

The qualitative methodology underpinned by critical realism enabled the causal powers of a marketing promotion to be revealed. The marketing promotion has the causal powers to evoke responses which result in attention and movement towards purchase. Critical realism enables the powers of the promotion itself to be analysed

as interdependent with other entities for example the nature of the product has its own power evident in the Chicken (Post 2) which constitutes a regularly consumed product and brings with it an inherent possibility for regular purchase. This is in contrast with the Rental Properties (Posts 12 and 22) in which rental leases are often signed annually. For products like Rental Properties (Posts 12 and 22), a well-constructed marketing promotion which may have the power to compel a prospective to engage with a post on rental properties may however not have the power to compel a target consumer who has recently entered a legally binding annual rental lease. The Rental Properties (Posts 12 and 22) thus belong to a type of products whose relevance to a consumer may be dependent on timing i.e. action can only be taken when the promotion coincides with the period in which the consumer also needs the product.

The critical realist lens also shows that a series of entities and events that made the promotion possible may or may not be observable. For example, administrative controls imposed by structures like Facebook and BrownSense quotas of posts per minutes may not be observed but may affect the time a post appears which may be different to the time it was posted. The critical realist lens therefore enabled the delimitation of such an analysis as outside the scope of this study. A different methodology may thus be required if the impact of such entities and events on promotions needs to be understood.

The promotions and engagements are outcomes which emerge from interactions between entities with causal powers. For example, products like the Geyser Timers (Post 20) can also be understood as made up of two entities, the timer itself having a tangible core and the fitting of the timer by a registered certified electrician as the service core. Analysis of the engagements revealed that the promotion seemed to have overlooked the service component of the product. While the Trader may not have been consciously aware of the importance of including images to represent the service component, the service component as an entity of the product evoked the enquiries on credibility of the service which showed the causal powers of the service core.

[6.8 Overview of Implications of Findings on Research and Marketing Practices of SMEs](#)
In summary the findings from this study has implications to both research in marketing and the practices of SMEs.

For researchers, the broad findings point towards the need for increased use of qualitative research with a philosophical underpinning. This is to enable research in Marketing to develop a deeper understanding of what makes some promotions more successful than others. Furthermore, research may also consider using multiple methodologies to include the financial performances of companies in relation to their social media practices.

For SMEs, the findings lead to the following practical implications for the marketing practice of small businesses:

To start with a classification of their products for the following reasons

- 1) To reveal the extent to which products have a dominant service core and or
- 2) To reveal the extent to which a product is associated with a dominant service core.

Thereafter to check if images are sufficient, in line with the research findings which show that a promotion for a product with a more dominant service core requires more pictures.

6.9 Final Remarks

The use of critical realism in this study provided a lens to understand the little but important aspects of a marketing promotion. The review of literature also revealed a long-standing critique of common research practices and the need for the field to develop a balanced and systematic approach to research. The study further reinforces the need for research in marketing to be underpinned by explicit philosophical positions to avoid the traps of positivist philosophical ideologies and the subsequent implications of reducing the contribution of research to the development of power knowledges in the discipline of marketing.

The study also found that while small business on a small budget often have limited access to expert knowledge their marketing practices were often intelligible. The data also revealed the importance of such research to SMEs as they help to point out the small but important issues which can slip the hands of a multitasking small start-up business. A key finding which would be of benefit to SMEs was that products which are constituted as having both a dominant tangible core and a dominant service core appeared as having the potential to be mis-classified as on either side of the

continuum. The implication of the finding is that SMEs need to be advised to understand product characteristics as nuanced and as such consider such nuances in the development of a complete and balanced marketing promotion.

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Appendix 5.1: Example of a Post

The post has text and pictures

 **Lungelo Matangira**
10 October 2017


Since we're all on a mission to boycott the major cosmetics company (after that terrible soap ad) products as best as possible, why not try out the Earthy range of products? A black, woman-owned local brand. Our entire range is all ORGANIC (no harsh chemicals), so even those with sensitive hair and skin can give it a try. It's suitable for hair, skin and bodies of all ages (kids included) and smell divine. 🌸

Benefits include strong, healthy hair, scalps and hairlines. Smooth radiant skin and healthy beards.

Find all our product pricing 🙌 www.earthy.co.za/products and then WhatsApp me on 0747770618 to order. 😊

Please also like my page for regular natural hair are tips
<https://www.facebook.com/EarthyLungelo/>

#BuyBlack
#BuyLocal
#SkinCare
#HairCare
#Organic



Appendix 5.2: Example of an Engagement on a Post

453 80 comments

Like Comment

Lerato Tsebe Natalie Chesi Buthelezi and Silindile Parirenyatwa. This looks amazing!
Like · Reply · 2y 1

Sandra Nomcebo Nkosi I love the packaging and colour scheme. #Perfect
Like · Reply · 2y 1

Mapule Shonisani Mudzhiba I use them. Love em! They soften your hair too if you've got Natural hair.
Like · Reply · 2y 6

Zanele Benya AM using them for my fro....smell amazing!!!!
Like · Reply · 2y 6

Lungelo Matangira I can never get over the smell too.
Like · Reply · 2y

Mamorena Sekgonyane it's done wonders to my daughter's hair
Like · Reply · 2y 3

Mamorena Sekgonyane Mo Love please order for Uluthando & Oarabile
Like · Reply · 2y

Zimasa Dziba Amazing product and brand....I use it for my Afro!!
Like · Reply · 2y 2

Langanani Mbodi Are they only available at direct sales? Anyone distributing or availability at retailers?
Like · Reply · 2y

Lungelo Matangira Hi Langanani. You can order online too if you'd prefer. We also have a brand spanking new store just opened at the Workshop in Newtown. Everything has been structured in such a way that it serves your convenience 😊.

Appendix 5.2.5: Post by number of pictures and comments

Post number	Product	Number of pictures	Number of comments
13	Dentist	30	302
17	Restaurant and cooking lessons	30	180
3	Cleaning Agency	25	9
11	Designer Clothing	21	34
24	lifestyle Bootcamp	20	71
15	Floor and Wall Coating	19	46
12	Estate Agent	17	14
21	Estate Agent	17	11
19	Bath resurfacing	16	125
1	Portrait painting on T-shirts	14	49
22	Shoe Manufacture	11	120
5	Mechanic	10	224
9	Garden landscaping	10	27
14	Construction	10	40
16	Metal Fabrication	9	12
25	Swimming Lessons 2	9	45
23	Leather Bags & Products Manufacture	8	42
4	Hair growth Products	5	94
8	Tyres	5	282
6	Packaged Vegetables	4	42
10	Hair and skin products	4	89
18	Swimming clothing	4	45
2	Chicken	3	22
7	Swimming lessons	1	230
20	Geyser timers	1	160
26	Moringa products	1	9

Appendix 5.2.6: Construction (Post 14)



1 Digger



4 Interior finishes



8 Complete - Outcome



2 Paving



5 Construction Site



9 Complete - Outcome



3 Tiling



6 Construction Site



10 Complete – Outcome or Model or Plan



7 Near complete

Appendix 5.3: Restaurant & Cooking Lessons (Post 17)

Picture 1: Outside sitting area of restaurant



Picture 2: Satisfied consumers in an appreciative state



Pictures 3 & 4 Food as physical evidence in the extended marketing mix



Appendix 5.3.4.1: Celebrity endorsement

1. DJ Zinhle and a member of the Cleaning Agency (Post 3)



2. Somizi's picture as evidence of cleaning Somizi's house: Cleaning Agency (Post 3)



3. Tweeter post by celebrity (Carrol Tshabalala) endorsing the Cleaning Agency (Post 3)



4. Tbo touch and the restaurant owner: Restaurant and Cooking lessons (Post 18)



5. Food presentation at Tbo Touch radio station: Restaurant and Cooking lessons (Post 18)



Appendices⁶

Appendix 4.1: Framework for data collection and analysis

Step 1	Selection of sample unit (post).	<p>Procedure 1. Check if post is within the delimitation i.e. posts made to create awareness about an identifiable product.</p> <p>Procedure 2. Select one post from first 10 posts.</p> <p>Procedure 3. Select most salient post i.e. post with highest level of engagements or comments most engagements.</p> <p>Procedure 4. Make notes if additional criteria used to select post.</p>
Step 2	Data collection.	<p>Procedure 1. Highlight text – copy and paste onto word document</p> <p>Procedure 2. Maximise browser, open up compressed comments by clicking “read more”.</p> <p>Procedure 3. Take screenshot by clicking the keys “ALT, Command and 3” at the same time. The picture is automatically saved as a picture.</p> <p>Procedure 4. Rename the picture and number the screenshots for the same post.</p>
Step 3	Preliminary classification and categorisation of post. <i>Excluding engagements.</i>	<p>Guideline 1. Classify business into e.g. product or service. Classify the nature of business according to industry type e.g. financial service, construction, hospitality, manufacturing, retail etc.</p>
Step 4	Initial coding (Ngulube, 2010). <i>Identifying basic themes.</i>	<p>Guideline 1. Establish codes to describe nature of the engagement, including the shares and likes and reactions. Use “data reduction” (Miles and Huberman Framework) (Ogbamichael, 2018) which is the use of words and phrases to mark or code long texts of potential interest in the analysis.</p> <p>Guideline 2. Start with comments and check again the promotional posts and responses from the business.</p>
Step 5	Axial coding. <i>Grouping themes.</i>	<p>Guideline 1. Contacting “substantive coding” (Holton, 2009), an intermediate</p>

Step 6	Advanced coding. <i>Establishing global themes.</i>	coding in which the focus is finding relationships between initial codes. Guideline 2. Analysis moves between codes established in step 4 and start to refer to relevant marketing models. Guideline 1. Organising core categories and checking concept density.
Step 7	Analysis and reporting.	Notes. Themes are now sufficiently large to be written up into a thesis chapter.

⁶ Appendices are named by chapter and section they are found in for ease of tracking.