

**DETERMINING THE SOCIAL MEDIA FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE BRAND  
EQUITY: A CASE OF MOBILE NETWORK OPERATORS IN ZIMBABWE**

**by**

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# DECLARATION

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I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I have submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



15 DECEMBER 2021

SIGNATURE

DATE

## **DEDICATION**

To my loving and supportive family; Amai Itai naMdara Shakey, my wife, Cleo and the boys: Lee, Tino and Kundy. And to my siblings Erry (Jej), Star, Itai and Rachy and the whole family who supported me all the way. May God bless you for allowing me to invest in my career and future. *Mhuri yaMukwani uko!!!*

*“We all have dreams. In order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline, and effort” Jesse Owen (1935-1980)*

*Go as far as you can see, and when you get there, you will see further- Orison Swett Marden*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The increased use of the internet in the past number of years has resulted in an increased global use of social media for business purposes and it is likely to continue increasing as the world continues to do business online. Businesses now have the opportunity to generate content related to their brands, products and services, share content, communicate and sell to customers through the social media platforms. The consumers also are generating a lot of online content about businesses, products and services and sharing the content through social media. The increased use of social media in business to promote brands has the potential to enhance the development of brand equity. With the increased use of social media in business in promoting and marketing brands, there was a need to determine the social media factors that influence brand equity, which was the primary purpose of this study.

An empirical study was conducted, where the data were collected from Zimbabweans in Harare Province who met the requirements by means of a face-to-face self-administered questionnaire. A positivism research paradigm was used in the study. The study followed a quantitative approach in order to satisfy the research objectives of the study. A descriptive research design and survey research strategy were used in this study.

Based on the research results, it was found that the mobile network consumers attach value to the mobile network operators' businesses and their products and services to which they are exposed through the various social media tools. The study revealed that social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media cost effectiveness, social media exposure, social media perceived usefulness, social media subjective norms and social media ease of use are the social media factors that primarily influence consumer-based brand equity in terms of brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations and perceived brand quality. The mobile network operators need to ensure that their social media platforms appeal to these needs of their customers and followers on social media to create value for their businesses, brands, and products. This is because the consumers tend to rely on the mobile network operators' social media pages for information about the business, products and services, not only as shared by the mobile network operators, but also shared by other users of social media (the consumers).

### **Key Terms:**

Social media; social media engagement, influence, trustworthiness, cost effectiveness, exposure, perceived usefulness, subjective norms, ease of use; brand equity; mobile network operators; brand loyalty, awareness, quality.

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## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

**Brand:** A brand is defined by Keller and Swaminathan (2020:16) as a combination of physical and psychological attributes that separate one product or service from another.

**Brand equity elements:** Brand equity elements refer to the premise upon which brand equity is built; the elements of brand awareness, loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations are used to measure brand equity (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020:16; Pahwa, 2017:2).

**Brand equity:** A set of assets and liabilities connected with a brand name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service, and which often translates to financial success and customer preference of a brand (Poerwedi, Sunyato, Hidayat, Purwadi & Mustafa, 2019:26).

**Confirmatory factor analysis:** Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is a multivariate statistical technique to assess how well a specified number of observed scale variables represent particular latent theoretical constructs (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:29).

**Consumers:** The final users of goods and services (Al-Shatanawi et al., 2014). In the current study, any individual who purchases mobile network operators' goods and services for personal use will be considered as consumers.

**Covid 19:** An infectious respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (WHO, 2020).

**Customer based brand equity:** Customer based brand equity is defined as customers' knowledge and response to the performance of a brand (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020:16; Keller, 2016:2).

**Firm based brand equity:** Firm-based brand equity is defined as the assigning of a monetary value to the brand, as determined by consumer purchases of the product (Shuv-Ami, 2016:708).

**Firm created content:** Firm-created content refers to communication of the business to tell its story, its products, and services and engage its customers through official social media platforms generated by the businesses to create knowledge in consumers' mind (Siu, 2018:4).

**Global social media landscape:** the number of social media active accounts and the number of user accounts worldwide (Statistica, 2021:1).

**Mobile data:** The use of a mobile phone network to access the internet.



**Mobile network operator:** Firms that offer mobile network products and related services.

**Social media:** Social media is a term that has been used to describe internet-based interactions that include blogs, microblogs, social networking sites and content sharing platforms (Aichner, Grünfelder, Maurer & Jegeni, 2021:215). Bishop (2019:61) defines social media as web-based services that allow users to create content, share content and interact with other people.

**Social media factors:** Social media factors refer to the elements that motivate and drive the increase in the number of social media users, patterns of use and frequency of use of the various social media platforms (Sanmamed, Carril & Satomayor, 2017:204).

**Standardised factor loading:** The standardised factor loadings reflect the degree of strength of the correlation between an observed variable and a latent variable (Field, 2017).

**User-created content:** User-created content is content generated and shared by the consumers related to the business, its products and services (Bashir, Ayub & Jalees, 2017:746).

**Web2.0 technologies:** Web 2.0 technologies are web-based information-sharing systems that allow users to instantly access, send, and receive data in a variety of formats through the Internet (Sonmez & Cakir, 2021:109).

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>ANOVA</b>   | Analysis of Variance  |
| <b>BE</b>      | Brand Equity  |
| <b>CBBE</b>    | Consumer Based Brand Equity                                   |
| <b>CBZ</b>     | Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe                                   |
| <b>CFA</b>     | Confirmatory Factor Analysis                                  |
| <b>CFI</b>     | Comparative Fit Index   |
| <b>DPC</b>     | Digital Preservation Coalition                                |
| <b>EFA</b>     | Exploratory Factor Analysis                                   |
| <b>FB</b>      | Facebook  |
| <b>FBBE</b>    | Firm Based brand equity                                       |
| <b>IMM</b>     | Institute of Marketing Management                             |
| <b>IPC</b>     | Industrial Psychology Consultants                             |
| <b>POTRAZ</b>  | Postal and Telecommunication Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe |
| <b>RMSEA</b>   | Root mean square error of approximation                       |
| <b>SM</b>      | Social Media  |
| <b>SPSS</b>    | Statistical Package for Social Sciences                       |
| <b>SRMR</b>    | Standardised Root Mean Square Residual                        |
| <b>TLI</b>     | Tucker-Lewis Index  |
| <b>ZIMSTAT</b> | Zimbabwe National Statistical Agency                          |
| <b>Z\$</b>     | Zimbabwe Dollar   |

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an important element in individual's lives as it is used to communicate and interact with each other, to shop, to find reviews, to stay in touch with world news and to conduct business (Marketing Land, 2018:2; Jokinen, 2016:20). Aichner, Grünfelder, Maurer and Jegeni (2021:215) and Madziwa and Sibanda (2018:249) argue that worldwide, social media has become popular and has transformed several aspects of human and business life, such as the way in which people and businesses communicate with each other. Social media is a term that has been used to describe internet-based interactions that include blogs, microblogs, social networking sites and content sharing platforms (Fuchs, 2017:8). According to Godey (2016:8), consumers expect that a brand presence (extent to which customer is able to identify a brand, recall it and recognise the brand) on social media platforms and businesses must not only be present, but active on at least one social media platform. Social media has connected businesses and consumers worldwide and is now widely used to promote businesses, their products, and services (Institute of Marketing Management (IMM), 2020:156). Social media is credited for creating dialogue and linking businesses, their products and services to consumers and brands (Khalid, 2016:5). There are various social media platforms that can be used for dialogue in business and these include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Pinterest, to mention but a few (Statistica, 2021:1)

In Zimbabwe, videos as well as live stream pop-ups (real-time video's that are posted on Facebook) are now trending on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and are becoming more and more popular (Mugari & Cheng, 2020:4; Taderera, 2017:1). According to statistics provided by GlobalStats (2021:1), there are 1.30 million social media users in Zimbabwe. The bulk of these social media users in Zimbabwe (43.2%) are on Facebook, 31.73% on Twitter, 15.7% on Pinterest, 4.91% on YouTube, while, 1.51% are on Tumblr and 2.13% are on Instagram (Statistica, 2021:1). Most Zimbabweans have become reliant on social media for news, updates, advertisements, socialisation, and engagements in business and political activism (Dzamara. 2018:2). Study results from a survey conducted by the Industrial Psychology Consultants (IPC) in Zimbabwe revealed that the economically active people in Zimbabwe spend most of their time on social media doing personal activities such as discussing

businesses, religion, as well as politics (Mbendera, 2017:2; Kuwaza, 2017:1). Businesses in Zimbabwe cannot ignore social media popularity as a tool to engage with customers and the timely content creation and sharing (Taderera, 2017:1). With more people in Zimbabwe spending more time on social media because of affordability for sharing content, images, audio, videos and calling, businesses are presented with an opportunity to reconsider their marketing approach and not only rely on the traditional marketing methods (Mangudhla, 2016:2).

As is the case with all marketing actions, social media will also impact on the brand of an organisation, maybe even more so due to the interactive nature of social media (Bashir, Ayub & Jalees, 2017:74). Brand equity is referred to as a set of brand assets and liabilities associated with a brand name and symbol that increases or decreases the value given by a product or service (Poerwedi, Sunyato, Hidayat, Purwadi & Mustafa, 2019:26). Brand equity is important in business since it determines aspects of the business, such as perceived value by consumers, awareness, market share, loyalty and association with a particular brand (IMM, 2020:41).

The study sought to establish the social media factors that influence brand equity in the mobile network industry in Zimbabwe. The chapter provides a background to the study. Brand equity, elements that make up brand equity, the measurement of brand equity and the importance of brand equity to the business are discussed. The impact of social media on brand equity is highlighted and the mobile network industry in Zimbabwe is discussed, as well. The problem statement is discussed, followed by the research objectives. The research methodology, ethical considerations and the limitations are stated. The chapter outline that follows concludes the chapter.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND**

The background of the study provides a description of social media, followed by a discussion of the various social media platforms and the impact of social media on brands worldwide. Social media

According to Aichner et al. (2021:216), social media refers to internet-based communication platforms meant for social connections and people to contact each other, share news, content and information. Sonmez and Cakir (2021:108) and the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC), (2016a) define social media as web-based services that allow users to create content, share content and interact with other people. In other words, social media describes online technologies that are essential in the communication of users that facilitate sharing, search

and discussion between users who can be in different geographical locations around the world. Mugari and Cheng (2020:2), in agreement with Putter (2017:8), posit that social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, to mention but a few.

Social media relies on internet connectivity to provide continuous interaction, exchange and modification of content by users and provides real time communication (Sonmez & Cakir, 2021:108; Momany & Alshboul, 2016:33). Social media allow people to connect and interact, create, and share content through collaborative platforms, social network sites and forming virtual content communities (Villamediana, Kuster & Vila, 2019; Aydin, Uray & Silaharoglu, 2021:768; Gorgani, 2016:240). People create online communities to share content on businesses, products and services, brands, image, and value (Lai & Liu, 2020:2; Schivinski, Christodoulides & Dabrowski, 2016:1). In business, social media platforms allow people to share, dialogue, network, buy or sell a product (Dolan, Conduit, Frethey-Bentham, Fahy & Goodman, 2019:2213; Momany & Alshboul, 2016:33).

### **1.2.1 Social media factors**

Social media factors refer to the elements that motivate and drive the increase in the number of social media users, patterns of use and frequency of use of the various social media platforms (Sanmamed, Carril & Satomayor, 2017:204). The social media factors are responsible for influencing the uptake of social media platforms for conducting business, communication and influencing consumer buying behaviour (Ebrahim, 2020:288). The social media factors include engagement, influence, trust, exposure, cost effectiveness, ease of use, subjective norms, and perceived usefulness. The factors, as well as the measurement for each of the factors, are discussed in table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Factors affecting social media users' behaviour intention to use social media**

| <b>Social media factor</b> | <b>Discussion</b>  | <b>Measurement of the factor</b>                                     |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Engagement                 | Allows for active interaction of the individuals and businesses with their consumers. Satisfied consumers tend to spread good messages about a social media platform and unsatisfied consumers spread negative word of mouth about the social media platform and its features (Qin, 2020:340; McClure & Seock, 2020; Abdullar & Siraj, 2016:38). | Consumer clicks, retweets, shares, replies, comments, and wall posts |
| Influence                  | Social media platforms allow users to connect to many other users, complement the needs of the users, allowing users to like, comment, share, review and recommend products to others on   | Share, sentiment, report   |

|                      |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|
|                      | social media (Mohd-Sulaiman & Hingun, 2020:540).  |   |
| Trustworthiness      | When users trust the social media platform, they may be impressed by the social media content, make inquiries, and make conversions (Sanmamed et al., 2017:204). Also, when social media users trust the social media platform based on comments and reviews, they get from trusted individuals and family, they are bound to act according to the comments they get (Abdullar & Siraj, 2016:41). But when the trust is low, social media users' attitude will also mean lack of trust in the business. | Leads, sales, conversions, inquiries, impressions           |
| Exposure             | Exposure as a social media factor can cut across the demographic variables like age, gender and sex which can allow social users to be exposed to content that connects them and allows sharing of emotional responses (Ebrahim, 2020:288; Alotaibi, Ramachandran, Kor & Hasseinian-Far, 2016:62).  | Visits, views, followers, fans, subscribers, brand mentions |
| Cost effectiveness   | The cost effectiveness factor refers to the cost of using the platform, its extent of reach and leads the platform is capable of generating (Sanmamed et al. 2017:204). Users tend to prefer a social media platform that allows them to perform desired actions affordably.  | Cheap, reach, content display, leads, sales                 |
| Ease of use          | Users tend to like a platform that offers a variety of functions but allowing those functions to be carried out easily without technical hurdles (Matikiti, Mpinganjira & Roberts-Lombard, 2017:3).   | Performance, videos, images, comfortability                 |
| Subjective norms     | Sometimes social expectations, beliefs, values may force users to conform to specific social behaviours that may influence the use, choice, frequency of use and adoption of social media platforms.  | Social expectations, beliefs, values, conformity            |
| Perceived usefulness | Perceived usefulness implies that the social media is judged on its worth in society in terms of the functions that it allows the society to perform (Matikiti et al., 2017:3). The more functional a social platform is, the more useful it can become in society.   | Relevance, connect users, online sales, phone sales         |

**Source:** Ebrahim (2020:288); Matikiti, Mpinganjira and Roberts-Lombard (2017:3); Sanmamed et al. (2017:204).

There are a number of social media factors that do impact on brand equity, as indicated in table 1.1.

### **1.2.2 Growth of social media**

Worldwide, the number of social media active accounts and the number of user accounts has been increasing rapidly every year (Chaffey, 2021:2). More than one million people are signing

up to new social media accounts for the first time every year (Kemp, 2021:2). The global average social media penetration rate as of January 2021 stood at 53.6% (Statistica, 2021:1). Statistics show an increased global growth of social media users and table 1.2 illustrates the global growth of social media users since 2016.

**Table 1.2: Global growth of social media users**

| Year | % Social media growth rate |
|------|----------------------------|
| 2016 | 31.3%                      |
| 2017 | 40.2%                      |
| 2018 | 42.2%                      |
| 2019 | 45.5%                      |
| 2020 | 48.6%                      |
| 2021 | 53.6%                      |

**Source:** Statistica (2021:1); Tarankova (2016:3)

The growth of social media as indicated in table 1.2 shows that many individuals are using social media networks and platforms to communicate and connect worldwide (Statistica, 2021:1).

### ***1.2.3 The impact of social media on brands worldwide***

Social media is credited with influencing consumer perceptions about a brand through consumers' interactions with firm-created content and social media has also influenced user (consumer) online content generation and exchange (Wu et al., 2019:692; Miranda, Kim & Summers, 2015:592). Firm-created content refers to communication of the business, its products, and services, generated by the businesses to create knowledge in consumers' minds (Makudza, Mugarisanwa & Siziba, 2020:3; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015:33). User-created content is generated by the consumers to share content related to the business, its products, and services (Meire, Hewett, Ballings, Kumar & Van den Poel, 2019:25; Bashir, Ayub & Jalees, 2017:746). Firm created content is used by the business to tell its story and engage its customers through official social media platforms such as "Share a coke" campaign by Coca Cola (Siu, 2018:4). In the "Share a coke" campaign, Coca Cola came up with bottles with customer names and encouraged customers to share such messages via Twitter and this increased sales by 2% in the United States of America (USA) (Sui, 2018:6).

An example of user generated content that is used by the business is of the communication app Zoom, who became popular in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic which compelled many people and businesses to work from home (Chen, 2021:1). Zoom seized the opportunity and held contests on social media in which users were encouraged to design and share their own interesting and unique virtual backgrounds. Zoom created a dedicated landing page for

contest submissions as well as a separate Twitter account to showcase some of the finest virtual backgrounds. Zoom's users were also educated on the virtual background capability and encouraged to use the software.

The popular potato chip brand Pringles also made use of user generated content and created a campaign around content that social media site TikTok users were creating (Chen, 2021:2). The *#PlayWithPringles* campaign started in Europe and was based on TikTok content already available (Chen, 2021:2). Pringles noticed TikTok users making social media content with their cans and devised a challenge to transform it into an advertising campaign. The Pringles brand campaign on TikTok promoted video creation and sharing by users to promote brand awareness through funny dialogue. Pringles also worked with influences to further promote the *#PlayWithPringles* challenge on TikTok. The promotion resulted in increased dialogue, user generated content and increased customer exposure to Pringles with over 278 million video views from more than 343 thousand user generated content.

According to Tafesse, Wien and Wright (2017:2), conversations on social media each day make reference to a business, brand, product or service. Due to this dialogue more companies are investing in social media campaigns to link the business, its products, and services with the consumers (Meire et al., 2019:26; Takawira, 2018:1). As can be seen in the examples of user generated and business generated content discussed above, brands and businesses are using social media platforms for marketing and interacting with customers and as a result, achieve vital customer ratings, comments and opinions about their business, its products and services (Godey et al., 2016:8). Table 1.4 shows the impact that the social media efforts of businesses have had on brands.

**Table 1.3: Examples of the impact of social media use of some big brands**

| Brand  | Social media used                            | How it was used  | Impact on the brand  |
|--|--|--|--|
| Dove   | Twitter<br>Facebook<br>YouTube               | The Dove brand capitalised on social media to promote self-esteem in ladies. Dove created video content that was posted on its social media pages.<br>-Posted videos on YouTube to promote its messages.<br>-Hashtag # was used on Twitter to share images and videos. | -Dove brand became popular, gained good reputation, sales and engagement increased.<br>-There were a lot of likes, views and sharing of the videos and images and Dove target 40million views by 2020. |
| Burberry, a fashion retailer in the United Kingdom | Facebook<br>Twitter<br>Instagram<br>Snapchat | Burberry has around 40 million followers on its over twenty different social media platforms and sees itself being more of a social media content company since it posts   | -Increased sales volume<br>The retailer seems to be realising more sales volume from social media platforms like Instagram, Snapchat feeds and Facebook  |



|                                     |   |  |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|
|                                     |   | pictures and videos of products on Instagram and Snapchat feeds as well as live stream where people can click and buy (Hope, 2016:2)   | live streams where people click and buy and believes that though many people shop in-store, the influence to buy may be coming from what they see, do and hear on social media platforms (Hope, 2016:2).  |
| Online Woolworths                   | Facebook<br>Twitter<br>Pinterest<br>Instagram<br>YouTube<br>Google+ | Woolworths has over 400 shops, it is data driven and is found on Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube and Google+ and it posts content on all platforms to maintain interaction with customers (Wilson, 2018:2). | Hillock, head of online Woolworths, revealed that a significant share of its sales arose from social media influence since they believed that a greater number of Woolworths customers discover their goods on social media, browse them online and sometimes purchase in the shop, hence they witnessed sales growths in clothing, homeware, children and baby categories (Brown, 2017:1). |
| Evan Mawarire, a Pastor in Zimbabwe | Facebook<br>Twitter<br>Instagram                                    | The power of social media was observed in Zimbabwe when Pastor Evan Mawarire sparked a <b>#ThisFlag</b> movement in 2016.  | <b>#ThisFlag</b> movement led to several demonstrations against the government across the country (Nyoni, 2017:2).  |
| Steward bank in Zimbabwe            | Facebook  | Steward bank launched a Facebook page –square talk in 2017 which was a version of a talk show to broadcast live.   | The bank shared trending content with customers and improved its brand image and popularity of brand (Gambanga, 2017:1).  |
| CBZ Bank                            | Facebook<br>Twitter   | According to Pembere (2017:2), CBZ Holdings (a financial service conglomerate in Zimbabwe) promoted its brand through social media platforms.  | Advertising budget was reduced by more than half when CBZ started promoting its brand through social media platforms.   |

Table 1.4 shows that established brands like Dove, Burberry and Woolworths have benefited from their social media presence as this has impacted positively on their reputation, sales, and engagements.

Whilst the examples mentioned in table 1.4 may show some positive impact derived from the social media, a brand's reputation can also be tarnished and damaged through social media, for example, Ford South Africa's reputation was tattered after its bad approach to handling the Kuga car (2012-2014 models) issue (Cristel, 2017:2). After recalling Kuga cars because of fire explosions and deaths, the company was criticised on social media and this negatively affected its reputation (Moerdyk, 2017:2). Although Ford continued to advertise and promote brands on social media and ignored the Kuga crisis, the negative comments from dissatisfied

clients and social media users affected its business (Moerdyk, 2017:2). Another example of a brand that was negatively impacted by social media is the Mazoe brand (a popular and well-known orange juice drink in Zimbabwe) who suffered resistance from consumers and sales, as well as, brand loyalty were negatively affected after social media messages went viral alleging that the brand had added another ingredient that was harmful to consumers (Tsiko, 2018:2).

Social media can be used for customer rating of products and brands to use, develop preferences, and create relationships between the consumers and the brand and company (Zhu & Chen, 2015:338). The power of social media has shown that social media can help brands to improve customer awareness, to attain high global recognition and improve brand image and this may lead to positive brand equity (Godey et al., 2016:3). Examples of how social media has impacted on brand equity are provided in the next discussion on brand equity. The following discussion focuses on brand equity.

### **1.3 BRAND EQUITY**

Consumers' associations, impressions, attitudes, and preferences, as well as the sum of the value attributed to a product, service, or organisation, or a mix of all of these, are referred to as brand equity (Poerwadi et al., 2019:8). Brand equity cannot be easily estimated because, although there are some tangible elements like profit, revenue and sales figure, in some instances, intangible elements like consumer awareness, goodwill and perceptions are difficult to measure (Neilpatel, 2018:2; Pahwa, 2017:2). Brand equity, which is defined by brand awareness, reputation, and recognition, is the monetary worth derived from a consumer's impression of a product or service's brand or brand name, and it often correlates to financial success and brand preference (Godey et al., 2016:3). The image and meaning of a brand can influence brand equity creation because it can attract customers to a product or brand, remind them of it, and create an emotional bond between the consumer and the brand (Akgun, 2020:4214; Abu-Rumman Alhadid, 2014:337). Muqaddas and Ahmad (2016:556) argue that perceptions of consumers of the brand name, awareness, quality and associations influence brand equity development. Muqaddas and Ahmad (2016:558) concluded that more focus on promoting brands creates brand associations which in turn, creates brand awareness and the awareness may influence quality perception and consumer preferences of the brand which leads to consumer loyalty and more loyal consumers creates brand equity. Jensen (2014:18) argues that product quality, awareness, attention, brand credibility and engagement with a brand all drive brand equity creation.

Akgun (2020:4212), Lim, Pham and Heinrichs (2020:928), in agreement with Khoso, Ahmedani, Subhankuzi, Ahmed, Khan and Shaikh (2016:178) argue that stronger brand equity influences brand preferences, consumer willingness to pay the highest price for a brand and customer loyalty to a brand. Sehar, Ashraf and Azam (2019:31) and Khan, Rizwan, Islam, Aabdeen and Rehman (2016:7) argue that future purchases and purchasing habits, behaviour and preferences are influenced by brand equity and that brand equity today is being built from social media activities in which customers engage.

### **1.3.1 Elements of brand equity**

Brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty are all factors that influence brand equity (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020:16; Pahwa, 2017:2; Godey et al., 2016:3). The following are the elements of brand equity, and this study makes use of them to measure brand equity in the mobile network industry in Zimbabwe:

#### **1.3.1.1 Brand awareness**

When customers are exposed to a brand, their capacity to recall and recognise it, as well as identify it by its name, logo, symbol, and the associations they have with it, is known as brand awareness (Emami, 2018:2). As a result, brand awareness is the consumer's perception of the brand's strength. If consumers are familiar with a brand, they may quickly recall and recognise it (Pahwa, 2017:2).

#### **1.3.1.2 Perceived quality**

According to Emami (2018:2), perceived quality is the value attributed to a product or service brand that qualifies it for the purpose for which it was designed. Consumers compare products and services from many providers, as such, a brand must be able to meet customer satisfaction by fulfilling its stated use and promise in order to build strong brand equity (Pahwa, 2017:2). Colour, flavour, brand appearance, store name, product packaging, and product attributes can all be considered quality.

#### **1.3.1.3 Brand association**

Brand association relates to what the consumer's think and feel about the brand and the associations that are formed through consumer interactions and experiences with the brand (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020:16; Pahwa, 2017:2; Carter, 2016:17). Brand associations can be formed in the minds of consumers through carrying out advertisements to create public awareness of a product or service, viral marketing by word-of-mouth publicity and reasonable pricing attached to a brand (Kaira, 2015:14). Brand association enhances consumer memory of the brand (Muqaddas & Ahmad, 2016:558).

#### **1.3.1.4 Brand loyalty**

Consumers who buy the same product or brand from the same supplier rather than from multiple suppliers who provide a similar product or service are said to have brand loyalty (Lim et al., 2020:930; Khan et al., 2016:2). Loyal customers disseminate accurate information and a positive image of the company, its products, and services, and they frequently suggest the brand to others, raising brand value and recognition (Carter, 2016:5).

#### **1.3.2 Impact of social media on brand equity**

Social media drives people to recommend a brand when it has satisfied them (Stojanovic et al., 2018:94). In fact, consumers tend to share experiences on social media and the social media platforms create emotional attachment between the brand and social media users (Jackson, 2018:1). Furthermore, consumers who get the recommendation from the satisfied social media users to try the brand are tempted to try the product and this increases the chances of buying the product (Dassun, 2017:2). Khoso et al. (2016:175) argue that consumers get information about brands through social media, and this increases the number of customers, creates customer loyalty, and increases customer knowledge of a product. The knowledge about a brand evokes consumer feelings, thoughts, experiences, image, belief, and association with a product which help in creating awareness of a brand, association with a brand and perceived quality which in turn, makes it easier for consumers to choose a brand, based on quality and satisfaction (Khoso et al., 2016:175).

According to Goi, Ngu and Chieng (2015:60), a strong relationship exists between social media and brand equity as it cements the relationships between the business and consumers and allows for the exchange of information about the brand. Stojanovic (2018:94) indicates that social media helps users to identify and know the brand and provides user generated content that can circulate on social media which can impact the brand equity. Social media users can add, edit, share, and participate in brand building processes; hence, social media users take a marketing role and they also become sub-creators of brand and value (Goi, Ngu & Chieng, 2015:60). Social media creates opportunities for consumers to exchange, build preferences and choices and relay brand related content quickly since consumers rely on such information as product feature, uses and quality before procuring one (Ahmed & Zahid, 2014:534).

Akgun (2020:4218) carried out research to establish the impact of social media marketing activities of fast fashion brands on brand equity, customer response and purchase intention. At the same time, determining the effect of brand equity on customer response and customer response on purchase intention was included in the study as another objective. The study

revealed that Instagram was determined as the social media platform most preferred by the participants. The LCW brand was found to be trendy and allowed dialogue between the business and customers. The results of the study showed that social media marketing activities had a strong relationship and impact on customer-based brand equity in line with previous studies (Kim & Ko, 2012; Seo & Park, 2018; Bilgin, 2018; Sehar et al., 2019). The study showed that social media positively influenced customers' purchase intention. Furthermore, the results of the study showed that social media plays a critical role in creating a place in the minds of customers and positioning brands separately from other brands.

Another study by Ebrahim (2020:288) sought to establish the effect of social media marketing activities on brand loyalty and trust. The study carried out an online survey of 287 of customers who follow telecommunications firms on social media in Egypt. The results of the study revealed that social media activities are made up of three elements that are trendiness, customisation, and word-of-mouth. The conclusion made was that social media marketing activities positively influence customer brand loyalty and increase brand trust.

Firms stand a better chance of enhancing brand awareness, strengthening brand positioning and signs of recognition, and enhancing brand equity by using social media (Gurhan-Canii, Hagan & Sarial-Abi, 2016). Table 1.5 indicates examples of brands and businesses whose brand equity has been affected by social media.

**Table 1.4: Brands and businesses whose brand equity has been affected by social media**

| <b>Brand name</b> | <b>Social media influence on brand equity</b>   |
|-------------------|---|
| Nike              | According to Dassun (2017:3), Nike is an apparel brand that is available on several social media platforms. With this social media presence, Nike increased its brand awareness and attracted more customers (Ravi, 2018:2). Nike developed Nike Run through social media where people shared experiences and encouraged running habits. In 2016, Nike earned \$9.2 million from Facebook, \$6.8 from Twitter and \$3.5 from Pinterest (Ravi, 2018:2). Social media has cemented Nike's pole position in the apparel industry through its engagements on social media which have created customer loyalty, trust and emotional attachment to Nike (Dassum, 2017:3). |
| Razer             | Razer is a business that deals with gamers' components that include hardware for gamers, controllers, keyboards and phones (Jackson, 2018:2). Razer with 8 million Facebook followers, 3 million Twitter followers and 2 million Instagram followers worldwide has enjoyed loyal fans whose emotional attachment to the brand influenced consumers' recommendation of products via social media (Jackson, 2018:2).  |
| Mailchimp         | Mailchimp, a software company, came up with fun graphics, engaging video material, and informative articles on social media as well. Mailchimp provide a variety and diversity to their customer base, advice, inspiration, reports, gifs, artwork, films, and more are all shared on Instagram by the organisation. They even provide short films and podcasts to help entrepreneurs and enterprises   |

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
|                     | become more engaged and educated. Their unique approaches increased the number of social media followers of their business, with nearly 140,000 followers on Instagram.  |
| Starbucks           | Starbucks' social media platforms are brimming with vibrant images of drinks and individuals throughout the world who are enjoying the joy and happiness that comes with consuming these drinks. Their tagline, "To inspire and nurture the human spirit, one person, one cup, and one community at a time," has been successful, with more than 35 million Facebook fans, over 18 million Instagram followers, and more than 10 million Twitter followers. Starbucks engages with customers on social media frequently, answering questions and addressing problems to show that they are noticed and cared about. The company also knows how to influence customers through social media. The firm goes beyond the box to capture customers' attention, as evidenced by their <b>#ExtraShotOfPride</b> campaign, which was launched in June 2019 to commemorate Pride Month. |
| Spotify             | Spotify's social media marketing takes an unconventional approach. For example, their "2018 Goals" initiative (Brenner, 2021). Spotify successfully used social media and their consumers' experiences and the campaign gained a lot of social media attention. The attention increased the awareness of the commercials by developing funny advertisements and putting them on social media platforms, the artists who used the advertising to take selfies, as well as Spotify customers who did the same, enhanced Spotify social media online visibility and engagement.   |
| National Geographic | National Geographic has made excellent use of their social media platforms, posting beautiful photos and useful information (Sikder, 2021). The Instagram account has 122 million followers and is very active. National Geographic excel at utilising user-generated content through the picture community, in addition to their own spectacular original stuff. Photographers from all over the world submit their work in the hopes of being featured on their Instagram account. The result has been increased consumer awareness of National Geographic and more visits.  |
| Wendy's             | Wendy's social media campaign has a lot of supporters. People are following them and eagerly anticipating what they will say next because of their sassy tweets, roastings, and jokes. They even came in first place in the Social Media Category of Fast Company's 2019 Most Innovative Companies list.   |
| GoPro               | GoPro has 16.2 million Instagram followers, 2.23 million Twitter followers, over 10.7 million Facebook fans, and a frequently used hashtag ( <b>#GoPro</b> ). By providing value, marketing items, and communicating with customers, this company makes excellent use of its social media platforms (Brenner, 2021). GoPro can be found on a variety of platforms, but they use each one in a unique way. They use Facebook, for example, to market their business, reach out to new customers, and stay in touch with old ones. Instagram is their preferred channel for promoting user-generated content and showing the quality of their cameras. Twitter is mostly utilised for product announcements as well as consumer communication. Their YouTube channel is dedicated to video tutorials and recommendations on how to use their items.                              |

**Source:** Brenner, (2021); Chen (2021); Sikder (2021)

Social media is important in the development of brand equity. Brand equity is important in business because increased competition in business has forced consumers to focus on brands during their buying decision making process and in response, the businesses have crafted ways to create strong positive brand equity (Pahwa, 2017:2). Brand equity shapes the way the consumers see, feel and act towards a business, its products, and services (Carter,

2016:3). Brand equity can be derived from the quality, performance, or other aspects of value of a product or service, all of which can influence consumers' decisions among competing items (Fatterson, 2017:2). Brand equity is important in improving the identity of the business organisation, and also influences brand performance, judgement and consumer feelings, as well as actions towards a particular product or service (Yousaf, Amin & Gupta, 2017:122). Strong positive brand equity increases market share, increases brand value on the market, allows for the charging of premium prices for the brand (Pahwa, 2017:3). Through positive brand equity, product range and depth can be widened because the consumers trust and value the products or services (Carter, 2016:5). The following discussion focuses on the mobile network industry in Zimbabwe.

## **1.4 THE MOBILE NETWORK INDUSTRY IN ZIMBABWE**

The following discussion focuses on the structure of the mobile network industry in Zimbabwe and starts off by discussing the overall size of the industry, the number of users and then the population profile of Zimbabwe from which the consumers of the mobile operators come.

### ***1.4.1 Structure of the mobile network industry in Zimbabwe***

Despite several years of poor economic performance in Zimbabwe, the mobile network industry continues to grow, both in terms of customer base and revenue inflows and the level of competition is very tough (POTRAZ, 2017:6). As a result of the competition, the operators in the industry have started using social media as a marketing tool to differentiate themselves from the competition and make efforts to influence consumers to switch to their services (Kaduwo, 2017:1; Hwambo, Shamhuyenhanzva & Sibanda, 2017:108). The mobile network operators' industry in Zimbabwe, regulated by the Postal and Telecommunication Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), is made up of three licensed, operators namely Telecel Zimbabwe, Econet Wireless and NetOne (POTRAZ, 2017:6). The mobile penetration rate, as of 2021, stands at 87.8%, indicating a 17% decrease from 90.5% in 2020 (POTRAZ, 2021:7). Mobile penetration rate refers to the number of active mobile phone users (simcard owners connected to a mobile service operator) per 100 individuals in a given population (Elliott, 2019:1). Table 1.6 shows the mobile subscription and market share, according to operators in Zimbabwe. The results are divided into four quarters in a year with the final quarter being the end of the year.

**Table 1.5: Mobile subscription and market share according to operator in Zimbabwe**

| <b>Mobile operator</b> | <b>Year 2021 (1<sup>st</sup> quarter results)</b> | <b>Year 2020 (4<sup>th</sup> quarter results)</b> | <b>Year 2019 (4<sup>th</sup> quarter results)</b> | <b>Year 2018 (4<sup>th</sup> quarter results)</b> |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|

|              | Active mobile subscribers in millions | Market share (%) | Active mobile subscribers in millions | Market share (%) | Active mobile subscribers in millions | Market share (%) | Active mobile subscribers in millions | Market share (%) |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Econet       | 8 668 095                             | 66.8             | 8 773 300                             | 66.5             | 9 117 826                             | 69.1             | 8 552 289                             | 66.3             |
| Telecel      | 581 104                               | 4.5              | 727 094                               | 5.5              | 910 677                               | 6.9              | 1 100 111                             | 8.5              |
| NetOne       | 3 691 314                             | 28.7             | 3 721 416                             | 28.0             | 3 167 399                             | 24.0             | 3 256 592                             | 25.2             |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>12 970 615</b>                     | <b>100</b>       | <b>13 191 708</b>                     | <b>100</b>       | <b>13 195 902</b>                     | <b>100</b>       | <b>12 908 992</b>                     | <b>100</b>       |

**Source:** POTRAZ, Operator returns 2021; 2020; 2019.

According to Table 1.6, the mobile network industry in Zimbabwe is growing at a steady pace with a substantial increase of active mobile subscribers between 2018 and 2019. Compared to the population size of Zimbabwe of 15,146,386 (Worldometers, 2021:1), the total mobile subscribers' figure for 2021 in table 1.6 indicates 12 970 615 active subscribers, indicating that most of the population (87.8%) have a mobile phone subscription in Zimbabwe. However, great variance exist in terms of the mobile operators' market share where some enjoy a big stake in the market, whilst others only have a small portion. Active mobile subscriptions relate to a simcard that has been used to make or receive calls, texts or internet services whilst market share indicates the level of demand for a mobile product or service in the market (Muringisi, 2016:1). Statistics in Table 1.6 shows that there has been a steady decline in active mobile subscriptions in Zimbabwe from 2018 up to 2021 and Econet and Netone subscriptions and market share have been steadily increasing during the same period whilst that of Telecel has been continually decreasing. The competition in the mobile industry may require the mobile operators to make efforts to try and convince consumers to switch to their services, as shown by some changes in the active mobile subscriptions and market share that increased and decreased for some operators (Kaduwo, 2017:1). Table 1.7 shows the products and services provided by the three largest mobile operators in Zimbabwe.

**Table 1.6: Mobile networks' brands, their products, and social media they use**

| Mobile network brand | The products offered   | Social media they use             |
|----------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| NetOne               | -Khuluma 24/7, News on one, OneMusic, OneGlobal, One Cover and One Fusion, One Money, One-Fi, Easy credit  | -Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram |
| Telecel              | -Telecash, Telecel go, Teletunes, telecare, telecel business, sms bundles, telecel red and broadband plus  | -Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram |
| Econet               | - buddies, ecocash, ecosure, ecofarmer, ecoschool, ecohealth, ownai and ruzivo, Cassava, Elevate, YoPlay, YoMix, Higherlife, Connecte lifestyle. | -Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram |

**Source:** NetOne, 2021; Telecel, 2021:1; Econet Wireless, 2021:1



Table 1.7 shows that firms in the mobile network industry in Zimbabwe compete in a variety of products and services. The different brands offered by the mobile operators are fighting for space in consumers' minds and this influences consumers' purchasing of mobile network products which can be motivated by the firm's network coverage, product range and loyalty (Jokinen, 2016:13). The experiences of consumers with the product, perceived product quality, loyalty and brand awareness create brand equity and when the customers' experiences are positive, the brand is valued (Jokinen, 2016:13). The mobile network operators have already begun using social media in their business and are active on social media but what remains unknown is the influence of the social media factors on brand equity in the mobile network industry.

The mobile network industry is important to the study because the mobile operators are competing to influence consumer preferences and consumption of the firms' products and services. Since the mobile network sector is a customer-interactive sector that relies on dialogue, firms in this sector in Zimbabwe are competing to use social media for business purposes and there is heated competition in the sector to secure regular customers. Since the competing network operators differentiate brands (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020:16), the success of the businesses, their products and services rely on consumers' awareness and quality of the brands (Khan et al., 2016:2). Mobile operators in the industry enjoy different market share, as shown by the uptake of their products and this may be a result of different brand images in the minds of the consumers, brand awareness, perceived quality and loyalty. Hence the need to determine the social media factors that influences consumer awareness, perceived quality and loyalty to a mobile operator, its products, and services. In the following section, the structure of the population of Zimbabwe is discussed and is further related to the mobile subscription rate and mobile operator market share in the country.

#### **1.4.2 Structure of the population of Zimbabwe**

The population profile of Zimbabwe is shown in table 1.8:

**Table 1.7: Population profile of Zimbabwe**

| <b>Age group (years)</b> | <b>Percentage of the total population</b> |
|--------------------------|---|
| 0 – 14                   | 41.91%                                    |
| 15 – 64                  | 55.07%                                    |
| 65 and above             | 3.02%                                     |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>100%</b>                               |

**Source:** Statistica, 2020:1

The population of Zimbabwe, according to the latest census figures is 15,146,386 (Worldometers, 2021:1). From the figures in Table 1.8, it can be observed that more than 50%

of the population is between 15 years and 64 years and this shows that Zimbabwe's population is youthful (Statistica, 2020:1). According to research conducted by Shumba (2018:2) and Vadwa, Stiehler and Mashaba (2016:15), the age groups that most commonly use social media are between the ages of 18-64, which is also the age group that makes up the largest portion of the Zimbabwean population. A young population is more likely to actively use social media for various purposes, including socialisation, news updates and business, as well as politics (Smith & Anderson, 2018:1). It is against this background that social media factors are being explored to determine the social media factors that have an influence on consumer awareness, loyalty and perceived quality of the brands provided by the different mobile operators in Zimbabwe (Nyoni, 2017:2).

The mobile active subscription rate (in Table 1.6) and the population profile of Zimbabwe (Table 1.8) shows a high chance of multiple mobile sim ownership since the active subscription figure of 12 970 615 in 2021 is 87.5% of the total population whilst the age group of 0 to 14 that make up 41.9% of the total population may not have mobile phones (POTRAZ, 2021:7; Kaduwo, 2017:1). Some users may be using more than one service provider to maximise service value and enjoy promotions from all service providers (POTRAZ, 2020:2). The problem statement is discussed in the next section.

## **1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Almestarihi, Al-Gasawneh, Al-jabali, Gharaibeh, Nawras and Nusaira (2021:2) argue that the use of social media in business influences consumer-based brand equity by creating consumer brand awareness, perceived quality, association, and loyalty. Lim, Pham and Heinrichs (2020:928) studied social media activity results and showed that social media dialogue can increase customer brand awareness and loyalty. A study by Majeed, Owusu-Ansah and Ashmond (2021) sought to establish the influence of social media on purchase intention within Ghana's fashion industry. Abdullar and Siraj (2016:40) highlighted that most previous studies on brand equity creation focused on traditional media and a few on social media. Whilst the tremendous global adoption of social media has received significant research attention (Swaminathan, 2016:34; Matikiti, Kruger & Saayman, 2016:740), more of the previous studies focused on developed countries and only a few studies focused on the development of brand equity through social media in developing countries, such as Zimbabwe (Matikiti, Kruger & Saayman, 2016:741). A study by Hudson, Huang, Roth and Madden (2015) focused on the influence of social media on consumer-brand interactions and used a cross-country survey and experimental data, while Grubor, Djokic and Milovanov (2017) argued that research on social media and brand equity is still scarce and their study looked into the influence of social media communications on brand equity. A survey of fast-food consumers

undertaken using questionnaires in Malaysia by Hanaysha (2016) offered another dimension to brand equity through studying the effect of social media advertising on brand equity. Another study by Abdullar and Siraj (2016) focused on brand equity development through customer engagements on social media. The previous research discussed showed the importance of social media in business and creating brand equity, but none has focused on establishing the social media factors that influence brand equity.

In Zimbabwe, previous studies done by Makura and Nyoni (2017) focused on the impact of social media marketing on Netone's revenue. Another study by Madziva and Sibanda (2018) focused on the impact of social media in the financial services sector whilst a study on social media and brand equity by Chigora (2016) focused on Small to Medium Enterprises in the Zimbabwe tourism industry and obtained data from the operators in the tourism industry. Studies have been done in other fields but there is a lack of research on the specific topic. Several studies have been undertaken in the mobile industry. For example, a study by Makudza, Mugarisanwa and Siziba (2020) focused on the relationship between social media and consumer purchasing behaviour in the mobile industry in Zimbabwe. The study indicated that social media influences consumer purchase intention. Another study by Makaro (2020) investigated the use of social media marketing in a telecommunication business, a case study of Econet Wireless Limited. The study indicated that Econet Wireless Limited is using social media marketing to communicate with its customers, for their brand to be visible.

Examples of studies indicated above shows that various businesses are using social media factors for marketing purposes and to influence brand equity. However, no study has been undertaken, to the researcher's knowledge, to determine the social media factors that influence brand equity in the Zimbabwean context. There is a lack of empirical studies to determine the influence of social media factors on brand equity in the industry. To close this gap, it was necessary to undertake a research study using the perspectives of the consumers of the mobile operators' products and services to determine the social media factors that influence the brand equity in term of awareness, brand loyalty, association and perceived quality of the mobile operators, their products, and services. The problem statement of this study was that there is an increased usage of social media by mobile network providers in Zimbabwe, yet not much is known regarding the social media factors that influence the brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe.

The following section focuses on the research objectives.

## **1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The following section focuses on the objectives of the research study.

### **1.6.1 Primary research objective**

The primary objective for this study was as follows:

- To determine the social media factors that influence the brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe.

### **1.6.2 Secondary research objectives**

The secondary objectives of the study were:

- To determine if social media **engagement** influences brand equity of mobile network operators.
- To determine if social **media influence** influences brand equity of mobile network operators.
- To determine if social media **trustworthiness** influences brand equity of mobile network operators.
- To determine if social **media exposure** influences brand equity of mobile network operators.
- To determine if social media **cost-effectiveness** influences brand equity of mobile network operators.
- To determine if social media **perceived usefulness** influences brand equity of mobile network operators.
- To determine if social media **subjective norms** influence brand equity of mobile network operators.
- To determine if social media **ease of use** influences brand equity of mobile network operators.
- To determine if there are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of selected social media attributes across categories of various demographic variables.
- To identify future areas of research.

The research methodology is discussed in the next section.

## **1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.7.1 Information types**

The study made use of both primary and secondary data sources which were used to supplement each other in the data collection procedure. **Primary data sources** allowed the researcher to obtain first-hand facts and opinions from the people who use social media and the consumers who follow the mobile network operators on various social media platforms

**Secondary data sources** such as books, journals, and other publications, were used to obtain statistics on the social media platforms the mobile network operators use for business and the statistics on the number of followers each mobile operator has on any social media platform. In the next section, the research design is discussed.

### ***1.7.2 Research design***

A **descriptive research** design was used in this study. A descriptive research design was appropriate for this study because it assisted in understanding and confirming the factors of social media that influence brand equity. The analyses of the data described the consumer and the social media factors that influence consumer perceptions of brand equity (value) of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe. The descriptive research contributed to the objectives of the study by revealing the social media factors that influence brand equity.

The current study followed a quantitative research approach. A quantitative approach was appropriate for this study as it provided empirical data that assisted in achieving the objectives of the study.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, survey research was used. A survey allowed the collection of information, attitude, opinions, and behaviour from a sample of participants by asking them several questions relating to the study to answer the research questions. Information obtained from the mobile network consumers helped to determine the social media factors that influence the brand equity of the mobile network operators involved in the study. A self-administered face-to-face personal survey was used to collect data from the consumers (data was collected in February 2021 before Covid-19 lockdown and restrictions in Zimbabwe) and the response rate increased and obtained as much information as possible from the target group of individuals. In the next section, sampling is discussed.

### ***1.7.3 Sampling***

#### ***1.7.3.1 Target population***

The population in this study was made up of both male and female mobile consumers of the mobile network providers, Econet, NetOne, and Telecel in Harare Province, aged between 18 and 64 years. Harare province has a population size of 1 542 813 (World Population Review, 2021:2). According to the population profile of Zimbabwe, 55% of the population is within the 18 to 64 age group. Since this study targeted male and females in the 18 to 64 age group that make up 55% of the population, 848 548 mobile consumers that reside in Harare were the target population in this study. The 18 to 64 age group was targeted in this study because this is the group that commonly uses social media for communication purposes (Smith &

Anderson, 2018:1; Stiehler & Mashaba, 2016:15). Harare province was chosen because it is the location of the capital city of Zimbabwe, it has the highest population size compared to the other ten provinces and has the highest percentage of the mobile users in Zimbabwe compared to the other ten provinces (POTRAZ, 2021:4; Zimstat, 2018:14). Harare is also the business hub of the country and has a high concentration of mobile network operator outlets and consumers of all the three mobile network operators. Of the 12 970 615 active mobile subscriptions in Zimbabwe, 35% of the active subscriptions are in Harare. This means that there are 4 539 715 active mobile subscriptions in Harare (POTRAZ, 2021:6; Zimstat, 2018:14).

### **1.7.3.2 Sampling frame**

A sample frame is defined by Leedy and Ormrod (2019:158) as an up-to-date and accurate complete list of study subjects from whom data will be collected and study findings can be generalised. Because there was no list of mobile users' names that could be obtained for confidentiality reasons, determining the sampling frame was problematic in this study. The list of consumers was not easy to get from the mobile operator stores because this is confidential information which cannot be released by the mobile operators. The researcher approached customers he conveniently met in the streets of Harare to be part of the study and those that agreed to participate in the reserach were added to the sample frame.

### **1.7.3.3 Unit of analysis**

Consumers of each mobile network operator in Harare (NetOne, Telecel, and Econet) were used as the study's unit of analysis since they were regarded as rich sources of information and had extensive understanding of the problem. Table 1.9 shows the unit of analysis for the study.

**Table 1.8: Unit of analysis of respondents**

| <b>Mobile operator</b>        | <b>Number of participants</b> |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Econet subscribers in Harare  | 566 830                       |
| Telecel subscribers in Harare | 38 184                        |
| NetOne subscribers in Harare  | 243 534                       |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>848 548</b>                |

Table 1.9 shows the number of subscribers each mobile operator has in Harare and all these mobile network subscribers are part of the population.

#### **1.7.3.4 Sampling method**

**Convenience sampling technique**, which is non-probability sampling method, was used to select the mobile network consumers to participate in the study drawn from the three mobile operators. Convenience sampling required any mobile network consumer who is available and ready and willing to participate in the study. Consumers of mobile network operators' goods and services who were readily available were chosen to participate in study. A convenience sampling method was applied by approaching random people on the street in the city of Harare, greeting them, introducing oneself and displaying the personal ID and then asking them if they were willing to take part in the study. Individuals who agreed to participate in the study were added to the list of the sample frame. The researcher explained in detail, the nature, and objectives of the study to the participants who were then asked to sign the consent form. As such, the first available participants were targeted.

#### **1.7.3.5 Sample size**

The sample size calculator of the survey system (2012) was used to calculate the sample size in this study because it makes use of a formula that calculates the sample size based on the population, confidence level and confidence interval (Creative Research Systems, 2012:2). According to <https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>, which is a website that contains the survey system sample size calculator, for the population (848 548) and a confidence interval of 5% with a confidence level of 95%, 384 respondents were required for this study to be valid. The survey system gives a sensible result, providing a manageable sample size. The calculator is accessed freely on <https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>.

#### **1.7.3.6 Data collection**

The contact of study participants was done face-to-face in February 2020 before Covid-19 restrictions and lockdown in Zimbabwe that began in March 2020. A research assistant assisted the researcher in the collection of the data. There was no pre-screening of consumers before the distribution of questionnaires. The researcher and assistant did not verbally ask any questions to the recruited individuals since the questionnaire included qualifying questions on age of respondents, ownership of a mobile phone and having access to social media through a mobile network provider. Questionnaires were distributed to the identified consumers and upon completion, the researcher and the research assistant physically collected the questionnaires to categorise responses in preparation for data analysis.

### **1.7.3.7 Measurement instrument**

The measuring instrument that was used for this study was a structured **closed-ended questionnaire**. A structured questionnaire was used because it is quick, less biased, and straightforward to code respondents' responses and opinions, Likert-type scales requiring respondents to assess their level of agreement or disagreement with a statement were utilised.

### **1.7.3.8 Pre-testing**

In line with suggestions of pre-testing research instruments in a small group of consumers that has similar characteristics, the questionnaire was distributed to fifteen mobile consumers in Harare who were not part of the sample, to evaluate their understanding of items in the questionnaire to ensure that the questions were clear and could bring out the desired information. The questionnaire was then adjusted according to the pre-test results before actual administration in the sample. In the next section, data analysis is discussed.

### **1.7.3.9 Data analysis**

All data gathered in this study was analysed using computer statistical software called Statistical Package for Social Sciences 19 (SPSS). Data was interpreted in line with the research question and objectives. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarise the findings by simply describing the information gathered. Inferential statistics were used to see if there were any statistically significant differences in the means of continuous variables across distinct nominal groupings, as well as whether there were any links between them. Data obtained from the mobile network operators' consumers was then presented in the form of graphs and tables to show important findings. To give information on the sample, bivariate descriptions were done, t-tests and factor analysis were used. In the next section, the limitations of the study are discussed. Factor analysis was done to ensure validity of scales. For the current study, **confirmatory factor analysis** (CFA) was done. The common factor analysis model was used to identify the underlying constructs on the social media factors and account for the common factors in the scales. The fitness of the CFA model was assessed using the following indices: Chi-square statistic, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis's index (TLI) and standardised root mean square residual (SRMR). A Chi-square goodness of fit test was performed to establish if the CFA model fits the data adequately.

### **1.7.3.10 Reliability and validity**

The Cronbach's alpha scale, which ranges from 0 to 1, was employed to assure reliability. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of a test's internal consistency. If the test score is more than



0.7, it is regarded reliable; thus, the higher the test score, the more reliable the test. To ensure validity, the exploratory factor analysis was done to ensure validity of the scale. This ensured that the social media factors influencing consumer brand equity perceptions identified were valid. Confirmatory factor analysis was then used to confirm the social media factors that influence brand equity that had been identified in the literature.

#### **1.7.3.11 Ethical implications**

Ethical issues in research and data collection were observed. Ethical clearance and permission (attached in the appendix) was sought from the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Marketing and Retail Management at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Gaining consent from the respondent is vital and as such, respondents were provided with all the relevant information and were asked to consent to participate in the study (Cohen et al., 2018:129). Prior notification of the participating consumers of the mobile network operator products and services on the nature of the research was done before administering the questionnaire in observation of the principle of informed consent (Greener & Martelli, 2018:52). Participants were informed that their privacy would be respected, that they had the option to participate or not, that they could withdraw from the study at any time, that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained, and that the study would be conducted in accordance with Sekeran and Bougie's (2019:159) recommendations.

## 1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Within this study the following limitations were found:

- Non-probability convenience sampling was employed for this study. The sampling technique made it difficult to find the right person to talk to and some individuals were unwilling to be involved in the survey. As the convenience sampling technique relies on consumers' availability and willingness to participate, it was time consuming to obtain the adequate sample size.
- The research design was descriptive. The absence of variables measuring brand equity in the survey instrument made it impossible to test the relationship between brand equity and each of the social media (correlation analysis) and also to test the influence of the social media factors on brand equity (regression analysis). Further studies can be done using correlation analysis and regression analysis to cover this gap in the current study.
- Furthermore, respondents from Zimbabwe's other nine provinces, excluding Harare, did not participate in the study, making it geographically unrepresentative of the country. Furthermore, there were no respondents under the age of 18 or over the age of 65, therefore respondents were not representative of the various age groups. People in those age categories were not included in the survey, but they do communicate with mobile network carriers through social media.
- The study did not account for mobile network users who are not on social media platforms but could still influence the brand equity of the mobile network operators in Zimbabwe.

In the next section, the orientation of the study is provided.

## 1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINES

This section provides the orientation of the study.

**Chapter 1:** In this chapter the introduction, background to the study, the problem statement and the research objectives are discussed.

**Chapter 2:** This chapter provides a detailed discussion on social media, the various social media platforms, as well as how social media has impacted business.

**Chapter 3.** In this chapter, brand equity and the various elements for brand equity are discussed.

**Chapter 4:** In this chapter, the research methodology that was used for this study is discussed.

**Chapter 5:** In this chapter, the research findings of the study are presented.

**Chapter 6:** In this chapter, the conclusions and recommendations are provided.

## **1.10 SUMMARY**

The chapter introduced the study and discussed the background of the problem, outlined the problem statement, and indicated the research objectives. The problem statement of this study was that there is an increased usage of social media by mobile network providers in Zimbabwe, yet not much is known regarding the social media factors that influence brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe. Social media was found to be an important web-based application that allow user to connect and communicate with each other, as well as the exchange of content between users. Literature revealed that most businesses are interacting with their consumers on at least one social media platform and some have enjoyed the benefits whilst other businesses and brands have been damaged by the social media communications. Social media was found to be a useful tool in influencing the way consumers see, feel and act towards business, products and services since consumers tend to share experiences on the social media platforms. The way consumers see, feel and act towards business, products and services creates the brand equity which is made up of elements such as brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations. The study adopted a quantitative research approach which is descriptive in nature to establish and understand the social media factors that influence brand equity of the mobile operators. The target population of the study consisted of the mobile network consumers in Harare Province. A survey approach was used to target the consumers and a face-to-face administered structured closed-ended questionnaire was used as the research instrument to collect data in the field. Ethical considerations and the limitations of the study were stated. The chapter outline of the chapters of the study that follows after chapter 1 concluded the chapter.

In the next chapter, social media is discussed.

## **CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

New forms of information and communication media channels have arisen in recent years, influencing both business activities and decisions, as well as consumer decision-making (Gorgani, 2016:239; Khoso, et al., 2016:175). Many individuals nowadays utilise social media platforms to communicate with one another, exchange information, conduct business, and socialise (IMM, 2020:156; Akman & Turhan, 2016:52). As a result, many businesses may make use of social media's power to improve their image, market their company, and generate brand equity (Nadeem, Andreini, Salo & Laukkanen, 2015:6). The extensive use of communication technology has altered information exchange speed, duration, and lessened the impact of geographical borders (Tichafa & Nyoni, 2017:128). With the rapid advance of information and communication technologies, social media has emerged as a critical enabler of business marketing efforts and has expanded commercial potential (Gorgani, 2016:239).

The chapter provides a definition of social media, a discussion of the global social media landscape and highlights the social media characteristics and the types of social media. The chapter also discusses the social media marketing tools, factors influencing social media use and the business and consumer usage of the social media.

In the next section, social media is defined and described.

### **2.2 SOCIAL MEDIA DEFINED**

Social media (SM), according to the Institute of Marketing Management (IMM) (2020:156), is referred to as communication carried out through a website or online medium usually meant for social purposes. Social media, according to Kapoor, Tamilmani, Rana, Patil, Dwivedi and Nerur (2017:533) is made up of websites that allow users to form social relationships through sharing huge amounts of information. Social media, according to Schlagweni and Hu (2016:196), consists of internet-based communication channels for information dissemination. According to Wakefield and Wakefield (2016:144), social media are internet-based platforms that allow users to create profiles, access digital material, and improve their chances of forming social links and viewing their relationships. Miranda, Kim and Summers (2015:592) describe social media as channels that allow people to form social networks to share content they generate and content that is generated by others. Spagnoletti, Resca and Saebo (2015:129) define social media as internet-based technology that allow users to create, modify, update and exchange online content and develop social relationships. Increased

internet access, development of effective software tools, large number of social media platforms, and the introduction of mobile smart computers and smart phones have all fueled the use of social networking sites and media sharing sites to engage with stakeholders (Tichafa & Nyoni, 2017:128). Social media uses public websites, connectivity, and networks to connect people, trade photographs, and video content, and provide for more cost-effective engagement between businesses and customers than any other marketing channel (Gorgani, 2016:239).

There are a number of common elements in defining social media that stretches across all the definitions. People (users) play a critical role in the development and dissemination of content, and technology (Web 2.0 technologies and applications) plays a vital part in the transmission of information and material from one person to another via social media are all common elements. In the current study, social media is defined as internet-based communication tools and applications that connect individuals and promote the interchange of varied material, taking into account the definitions as well as the common aspects identified from the definition.

In the next section, the global social media landscape is discussed.

## **2.3 THE GLOBAL SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE**

The influence of Web 2.0 technology has caused a rapid upsurge in the uptake of social media worldwide, driven by users' access to various electronic devices connected to the Internet (Gorgani, 2016:240; Otugo, 2015:440). Global social media use is increasing every year and by January 2021, there were approximately 4.2 billion active social media account users on all social media platforms with a 53.6% penetration rate (rate of users) (Statistica, 2021:1; Kemp, 2021). In fact, more than one million people are creating new social media accounts for the first time every day (Kemp, 2021:2). The global average social media penetration rate as at January 2021 for Africa was 76%, Northern America, 70%, Southern America, 65%, Asia, 72%, and Europe, 77%, Oceania, 70% (Statcounter, 2021:1). Social media penetration rate refers to the proportion of the total population that uses social media (IGI Global, 2019:1). Social media use is common in countries like the USA, Russia, Germany, and the United Kingdom, whilst countries like India, Indonesia and China are experiencing a huge increase in social media usage (Williams, 2017:2). According to Statcounter (2021:1), as at August 2021, social media user statistics worldwide showed that Facebook was the most popular social media platform with 73.27% of all social media users making use of the platform. Social media platform Pinterest had 7.22% of all social media users, YouTube had 4.73% of all social media users, Twitter, 8.93% of all social media users, Instagram, 3.4% of all social media users and Tumblr, 1.39% of all social media users (Statcounter, 2021:1).

Worldwide, most people visit various social media sites several times a day for a number of reasons, including to relieve stress, talk politics and business, among other issues (Datareportal, 2021:6; Pew Research Center, 2018:2). On average, social media users spend approximately two hours daily sharing, liking and updating content on social media platforms (Statistica, 2021:2; Brown, 2018:2). In Zimbabwe, 1.30 million people are social media users and most of the people use social media for news, updates, advertisements, socialisation and engagements on business and political activism (Datareportal, 2021:6; Technomag, 2018:1; Dzamara, 2018:2). Globally, businesses have been found to use social media to market products, promote brands, interact with customers and create new business whilst customers are using social media to share with a business and other customer about their experiences with a business, products and services (TechTarget, 2018:2). Table 2.1 illustrates the popular global social media, their number of monthly and daily users and the videos and images uploaded daily).

**Table 2.1: The top 10 popular social media worldwide**

| <b>Social media platform</b> | <b>Rank</b> | <b>Year founded</b> | <b>No. of monthly active users July 2021</b> | <b>Daily active users</b>  | <b>Photos uploaded daily</b>  | <b>Videos views daily</b>    |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Facebook                     | 1           | 2004                | 2.853 billion                                | 1.4 billion                | 300 million                   | 8 billion                    |
| YouTube                      | 2           | 2005                | 2.291 billion                                | 30 million                 | 5 billion video views         | 40 Mins average visit length |
| Instagram                    | 3           | 2010                | 1.386 billion                                | 500 million                | 95 million photos             | 250 million stories daily    |
| Google+                      | 4           | 2011                | 395 million registered users                 | 2 Billion registered users |                               |                              |
| Twitter                      | 5           | 2006                | 397 million                                  | 100 million                | 140 million tweets            | 460 new accounts daily       |
| Snapchat                     | 6           | 2011                | 514 million                                  | 178 million                | 3 Billion snaps created daily | 10 million video views       |

|           |    |      |                   |                              |                           |                                |
|-----------|----|------|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Reddit    | 7  | 2005 | 430 million       | 330 million users            | 25 million votes daily    | 50 000 active communities      |
| LinkedIn  | 8  | 2002 | 478 million       | 546 million registered users | 5.26 new accounts monthly | 20 million company page        |
| Pinterest | 9  | 2010 | 478 million       |                              | 1 billion                 | 100 billion total pins created |
| Tumblr    | 10 | 2007 | 396 million blogs | 7.2 million new blogs        | 158 billion total blogs   | 1.1 billion monthly posts      |

**Source:** Stout, 2019; Statistica, 2021

Table 2.1 shows that the global social media landscape consists of a variety of social media sites that have millions and even billions of active users. It is clear from table 2.1 that social media, as a means of communicating, has been adopted by many people and businesses can tap into this development to market their products, build and maintain relationships with customers and engage interactively with customers.

In the next section, the characteristics of social media and how the characteristics can be used by businesses to enhance brand equity are discussed.

## **2.4 SOCIAL MEDIA CHARACTERISTICS**

Social media has several important characteristics and businesses should be aware of these characteristics if they are to exploit the opportunities presented by social media. The qualities of social media not only distinguish it from other forms of media or internet applications, but they also indicate how businesses may leverage them to boost brand equity (Makudza et al., 2020:4). Businesses may affect their customers' brand recognition, affiliation, loyalty, and perceived quality by sharing material and experiences on social media. Community, connectivity, relationships, openness, emotion over content, accessibility, involvement, and real-time communication are among the features of social media that have been highlighted in the research.

### **2.4.1 Community**

One of the characteristics of social media is community, which refers to the potential of social media to bring individuals together, particularly those with common interests, needs, and views (Dube, 2019:1). Social media is, in many instances, community driven since it is established and sustained by the community of people who join the platform (Kern, 2019:1). Furthermore,

social media is formed on community common beliefs and hobbies that connect people and reconnects communities, as well (Dube, 2019:1). A study by Hanninen and Karjaluoto (2017:460) revealed that Twitter was efficient for promoting events, recognising people in the network, and growing the brand of individuals and companies. The study also showed that, on Twitter, reciprocal interests and ideas formed relationships that could lead to new business prospects. As a result, the study concluded that Twitter should be utilised for informing and engaging customers and peers in their network on broader subjects rather than for direct product and service promotion.

Social media enhances the consumer community as it allows consumers to review, promote brands to family and friends through appraisals and make recommendations to others. However, dissatisfied consumers may spread bad publicity through the social media (IMM, 2020:156). Through the social media, collective opinion is developed about a business, product or brand and this influences customer perceptions of the brand value, as well as the image (Kern, 2019:1). In most cases, social media brings the business and the people closer together because customers talk to the business about the products and brands and the businesses also listen to the feedback from customers.

#### **2.4.2 Connectedness**

Another characteristic of social media is that it connects and allows interactions between people in various locations on various platforms (Dube, 2019:1). Online links posted by communities trending on various social media platforms are used to create a sense of connectedness. Social media brings people from diverse backgrounds and in different geographical locations together. The interconnectedness brought about by social media enables businesses and customers to share information, ideas and preferences that help to build value for the business, good relationships, and reputation (Segal, 2019:1). Social media also allows direct communication between the business, brand and consumers and this increases the brand presence in consumers which creates consumer awareness of the products (Khoso, Ahmedani, Subhankazi, Ahmed & Shaikh, 2016:175).

The following are examples of studies to show how social media increases connectedness of users. Tariq, Saez, and Khan (2021) carried out a study on the relationship between social media use and family connectedness. The study revealed that despite the widespread usage of social media platforms by people of all ages, a synthesis of information on the impact of social media on family connectedness was lacking. The study showed that certain parts of social media are used to strengthen family bonds while others harm meaningful relationships within families. With no agreement on how to evaluate family connectedness in the context of social media use, the study highlights the difficult nature of this study subject.



A study by Winstone, Mars and Haworth (2021) provides another illustration of how social media promotes connectivity. The study looked into the usage of social media and social connectivity among adolescents in the United Kingdom, with a focus on displacement and stimulation. The study showed that sharing online experiences promotes social connectivity, based on data gathered through interviews. The role of social media in increasing peer connectedness may be enhanced by providing support in online interactions and availability in peer relationships.

### **2.4.3 Relationships**

Another characteristic of social media is the fact that social media use is sustained by the relationships of the social media users. Strong relationships and trust between the individual users on social media create strong attachment on the network (Butler & Matook, 2015:2). As a result, conversations and content spread rapidly through the connected individuals on social media (Dube, 2019:1). This means that social media allows people's voices to be heard through the connections and relationships that are established on the social media. As such, businesses can carry out public relations campaigns on social media and such campaigns may help to promote brand reputation, manage relationships, and improve brand relationships (Kent & Li, 2019:5). These activities add value to the business, its products, and brands.

The following examples show studies carried out that demonstrate how social media is used to sustain relationships. A study by Kent and Li (2019) argues that social media could be the most significant social innovation and revolution in communication history, profoundly transforming how people communicate, as well as the profession of public relations, journalism, advertising, marketing, and business. The study showed that dialogue, engagement, identification, social presence, uses and gratifications and conversational human voice, all play a role in social media. The study concluded that social media represent a new communication paradigm.

Another study to show the effect of social media building relationships was undertaken by Yuan and Lou (2020). The study focused on how social media influencers foster relationships with followers in the article: *The roles of source credibility and fairness in parasocial relationship and product interest*. According to the findings of the online survey, followers' perceptions of influencer attractiveness, similarity to influencers, procedural fairness, and interpersonal fairness of their interactions with influencers are all positively related to the strength of their parasocial relationship with influencers and followers' interest in influencer-promoted products. The findings of this study explain how influencers build relationships with their followers and offer practical advice on how to run smart influencer campaigns.

#### **2.4.4 Openness**

The other characteristic of social media is openness, which refers to the fact that membership is not restricted to selected participants only. Allowing users to join social media platforms voluntarily, and to willingly participate in information sharing, means that all users have the option to create, modify, communicate, and comment on content and creates openness (WebFX, 2019:1). Openness of a SM platform builds trust among the social media users. Openness also enables the business and the customers to share, reveal, find information, and facilitates the raising of business, product, and brand issues (O'Brien, 2019:1). This openness can benefit the business and brand if the information shared is true and builds the brand. However, when bad information is shared, it may harm the reputation and image of the business and brand.

#### **2.4.5 Emotion over content**

Another characteristic of social media is that of emotion over content. Social media fosters an emotional connection between the users, unlike websites that focus on only providing information. People tend to share emotions with friends, colleagues, and family easily and quickly (Dube, 2019:2). At times, emotional factors provide support to family, friends and colleagues, in times of need. Businesses can identify the emotions of users of their products and brands and design social media content that considers customers' emotions (Kern, 2019:1). Emotions may influence customers' likes, posts, trends of sharing content and comments of businesses, products, and brands. It may therefore be critical to understand such emotions such as adoration, admiration, boredom, craving, excitement, and interest in the business, products, and brands (O'Brien, 2019:1). Emojis that are icons, symbols or picture characters are used to show emotions, feelings, attitude, and ideas that connect to the customers' emotions can be used by the business to lure customers and improve the relationships (Forsey, 2018:2).

A study by Barreda, Nusair, Wang, Okumus and Bilgihan (2020) is an example to show that social media fosters emotional connections between users. The study focused on the impact of social media activities on brand image and emotional attachment: A case in the travel context. The authors collect empirical data from 236 respondents via a Web-based questionnaire. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling were used to test the proposed theory-driven model. According to the research, social media rewards and advantages have an impact on consumers' brand loyalty. Interactivity and rewards on social media aid in the development of a stronger brand image. Brand loyalty and image, in turn, have a beneficial impact on emotional attachment. The study concluded that support in online interactions and availability in peer relationships might help people feel more connected.

### **2.4.6 Accessibility**

Another characteristic of social media is that social media users can access social media from a number of electronic handheld devices, allowing them to access it from anywhere in the world as long as they have an internet connection (Gorgani, 2016:240). Social media is user-based, meaning that it allows users to initiate dialogue, unlike websites where content creators update the content and visitors only read the content (Segal, 2019:1). In some way, on social media, anyone in the network can initiate conversation. This makes social media flexible and fascinating to users. Accessibility allows businesses to use many tools that enhance the exchange of audio, text, images, and video content that brings information about a business, its products, and brands closer to the users (Kim et al., 2015:323).

A study by Gleason et al. (2019:2) showed that social media platforms are strongly embedded in society and provide a variety of channels for individuals to interact with one another. Most people are able to fully participate in these spaces due to accessibility issues. Social media platforms have quickly progressed from small online gathering spaces to thriving public venues for all types of debate. Gleason et al. (2019:2) argue that social media platforms provide particular issues for accessibility and feature crucial discussions about business, news, products, events and action. The study also showed that because of the great frequency of user-generated content, making images and videos accessible to individuals has become easy and social media has brought more interfaces than many ordinary websites, making them easy to use for many people.

### **2.4.7 Participation**

Another characteristic of social media is the ability of social media to allow active user interaction, input, and comment on material via social media. Everyone who uses social media can become a content creator, communicator, reader, or consumer. Users can share their thoughts, stories, and content on social media, as well as provide links to other users, such as on a company's Facebook page (Momany & Alshboul, 2016:33). Social media makes users active participants and content creators in the interaction process, and this may impact on the business image and brand recognition (O'Brien, 2019:1). Customers become more engaged with the business, products, and brands because the information exchange becomes two-way. In fact, social media provides opportunities for users to invite others to like similar content, exchange information, share experiences, tag other users and allows them to comment on products and brands uploaded on the platforms (Segal, 2019:1). Such activities can promote brands, improve brand awareness, improve customer trust in particular businesses and products. Furthermore, social media users enjoy communicating with others in interactive communities (Kapoor, Tamilmani, Rana, Patil, Dwivedi & Nerur, 2017:535).

### **2.4.8 Real time communication**

The other characteristic of social media is the strength of social media in its ability to promote rapid transmission and exchange of information that is not constrained by geography. Instant communication is possible with social media since it is instantaneous. People on social media exchange information in real-time, as and when they receive it, allowing knowledge to spread quickly (Makura & Nyoni, 2017:128). Social media enables real-time marketing, dialogue, regular updates, and involvement with stakeholders, as well as the ability to hear consumers' voices, create online communities, and share material (Momany & Alshboul, 2016:33). Social media provides for simultaneous conversation and fast feedback between a large number of people. The real-time interaction initiates active dialogue and participation among users. Instant communication provided by the social media help customers not to wait for long for scheduled product promotions to get product information (WebFX, 2019:1). Instead, a business can bring the information directly to customers through the social media platform in real time. Instant communication improves business-customer relationships, and it enhances the brand image and reputation (Kern, 2019:1).

The following section focuses on the types of social media that exist in the communities.

## **2.5 TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

There are various types of social media categories that are available. The different social media categories tend to overlap in that they have certain common connections and elements (Madziwa & Sibanda, 2018:251). The various types of social media and how they can be used by businesses to create brand equity are discussed below.

### **2.5.1 Blogs**

Blogs are web browsers that are used to view online content, such as text, images, videos, and audio that has been captured and produced electronically (Freeman, 2017:2). Blogs are personal websites that allow users to create and follow links, as well as comment on and share personal information. Blog users create stuff, search for it, and leave comments on it (Biteable, 2019:2). Users can share their emotions, thoughts, tales, articles, and links with others. In fact, blogs allow people to express themselves. Blogs increases business visibility online and create consumer awareness of the business and its products and services (Sproutsocial, 2019:2). Furthermore, blogs facilitate content marketing (the creating and sharing of content that is intended to generate interest in the brand) and helps a business to communicate with its customers which can enhance sales as well as increase and build brands (Zou & Hylands, 2019).

A study of 250 000 brand posts on 70 blog accounts on Sina Weib in China was carried out by Chu, Liu, Chen, Ding and Tao (2020:589). The results of the study showed that brand posts related to consumer engagement, such as photos and videos, elicited consumer dialogue in the form of likes, sharing and commenting, thereby increasing the brand strength.

Individuals also make use of microblog sites, such as Twitter, to post short pieces of content. Microblogs are social media platforms that blend quick messaging with online interaction and networking (Techopedia, 2019:2). Messages can be sent through a variety of platforms however the length of the content is limited (Sproutsocial, 2019:2). To enhance the speed of the uploads, short messages similar to texts are created, shared and uploaded. Direct messages can be sent, and even public messages can be posted on the user's content. A micro blogger can send content quickly and this allows people to share thoughts (Sproutsocial, 2019:2). Microblogs can allow for instant news update and information with even eye-witness accounts being shared, for example, through real-time tweets. In business, microblogs allow businesses and customers to share product information, lure customers, create new users of product and even remind users of the business and its products (Techopedia, 2019:2). Microblogs also increases consumer awareness of creating businesses, products, and services.

Mobile network operators in Zimbabwe can use blogs to foster brand equity. Blogs can be used to increase the visibility of the mobile network operators, their products, and brands (McGeorge, 2019:1). Content relating to products and brands can be shared on blogs and this can be done through many social media platforms that can be used to create customer awareness. Blogs create a strong web presence of the business, and this helps mobile network operators to regularly actively engage and interact with their customers on issues pertaining to the business, products, services, and brands (Secrist, 2017:2). By disseminating content on blogs regularly, more brand enquiries and requests may be gained by the businesses, and these may eventually be converted to actual product sales (Bizzuka, 2019:1). Blogs can be used by businesses to engage, connect, and dialogue with customers and this interaction builds consumers' trust of the business, its products and brands. Customers' responses and feedback on blog content uploaded by businesses can be acted upon by the businesses and this builds products and brand relationships (Wainwright, 2019:1). Blogs can be used to lure customers to sites through links that are posted on the blog post. This can assist in attracting customers to business sites and this helps to spread awareness of the brand. The customers can also share the business blog links and this promotes the viral spread of brand information which exposes more customers to the products and brands.

Also, the businesses' blog website can appear on the results of the search engine when customers are looking for information. Customers gain useful information about the company and its products through the company's blog posts. The customer can then make informed decisions regarding the company and its products (McGeorge, 2019:1).

### **2.5.2 Social networking sites**

People can create their own online pages and web material to share with other individuals or groups through social networking sites (Biteable, 2019:2). As a result, people who converse on social networking sites may know each other in real life (Thompson, 2019:1). Social networking sites connect people online and allow the exchange of personal content and communication (Foreman, 2017:2). Thompson (2019:2) states that social network sites are socialisation vehicles for friends, classmates, and colleagues. Through social networking sites, such as Facebook and MySpace, and even professionals who network and share ideas in their fields through LinkedIn, are able to socialise at any time or place.

Social networking sites link similar minded users to get real time information, ideas and news updates on what colleagues, friends and family are up to in real life. Social networking sites can be useful in business to conduct market research activities, raise brand awareness, to share information online and build and maintain customer relationships (Foreman, 2017:3). Brand reach is also enhanced through the social networking sites because the site can be used for advertising purposes (Ismail, 2017:130). Business profiles can be displayed on the sites, and this may influence customer perceived business and brand quality, trust, and recognition (Marzouk, 2016:210). Business can dialogue with the potential customers, connect, and engage customers on social networking sites. Business, product and brand related information can be disseminated through the various social networking sites, and this promotes and creates awareness of the business and brands (Thompson, 2019:2). The dissemination of information creates a bond between the business and customers and builds a reputation for a business and the brand.

### **2.5.3 Multimedia sharing**

Multimedia sharing refers to multimedia communities that enable anyone to create their own websites, content, and distribute it in digital formats like YouTube and Instagram (Thompson, 2019:1). Video or photo sharing sites are examples of multimedia sharing websites (Agrawal, 2016:1). Video sharing sites, such as YouTube, enable social media users to produce and share video content. Instagram and Pinterest, for example, are photo-sharing services that allow users to create and share digital images, pictures, and photographs. Multimedia is useful in discovering, streaming, and sharing visual content in the form of pictures, photographs,

videos, and music online (Thompson, 2019:1). Visuals are responsible for initiating all the other dialogue that happens on the network (Foreman, 2017:2). Conversations start with a post and then comments follow and users can add more captions on the posted visuals.

Multimedia sharing is captivating to users, and this increases the chances of sharing. In business, multimedia sharing helps in customer engagement, to get customer feedback and in creating brand awareness (Agius, 2015:1). A business can upload and share videos and images of its products and create a hashtag which will allow the uploaded content to be indexed by the social network site and this makes it searchable by other users. Videos and photos captivate consumers, engages them, and influences their sharing and resharing of the content thereby increasing people's awareness of a business and its products (Decker, 2019:1).

Businesses can upload profiles and ideas which engage and attract the attention of users. The video and photo uploads may be provided with accompanying product information and detail. Since the content that is uploaded promotes active interaction, the content may receive increased interest from current and potential clients (Agrawal, 2016:1). Customers can then identify videos and images of products they like and can recommend them to others. Posting of brand images and videos act as a way of cementing brand presence in customers' minds (Agius, 2015:1). By posting online videos and photographs of products and brands, businesses create a platform for customers to assess and evaluate the business and its products, services, and brands (Decker, 2019:1). Testimonials of customer feedback can be posted on the multimedia sharing platforms to entice other customers, and this helps to build trust in the brand values and promotes more customer views and recommendations (Business Government, 2016:2).

Agrawal (2016:1) argues that customers' views of the posted content create value for the business because when customers view the products' images and videos, they may easily recognise the business, its products, and brands. Video and photo sharing sites allow customers to interact among themselves and with the business, for example, through posting of product comments, questions, opinions and answering these creates trust and builds business and brand image (Agius, 2015:1).

#### **2.5.4 Forums**

Forums are virtual bulletin boards where a group of people with similar needs, interests, tastes, and preferences gather to discuss topics of mutual interest (Djuraskovic, 2019:1). As the facilitator, one administrator chairs the meeting, and members can bring up topics for debate. An example of a forum is Reddit where people ask questions, discuss specific topics like

entrepreneurship and they also share information and experiences (Wood, 2019:6). The Women in Business Network in the United Kingdom is another example of a forum. Women in Business Network is a forum of ladies who are involved in entrepreneurship activities. In the forum, the ladies engage in group meetings and members share experiences, successes, failures, and many other issues (Wood, 2019:5). Users are able to ask questions and post statements that can lure other users and start a conversation (Duermyer, 2018:2). In most cases, users join specific groups, for example, soccer forum, business forum, farmers' forum that meet their interests and where specific topics are discussed (Foreman, 2017:2).

Forums facilitates the rapid spread of messages and allows users to interact and exchange information, news and different opinions (Djuraskovic, 2019:1). In business, such forums can be a powerful way of spreading messages about a business, products and services, conducting market research, creating customer awareness of products through advertising and improving brand image. By allowing users to ask questions, forums are good for marketing since the feedback obtained from the users can be a useful tool in crafting marketing strategies and also, a way of responding to customer queries and issues (Duermyer, 2018:2).

Engagements on forums help both businesses and customers destroy geographical barriers and the creation of online communities that facilitate the sharing of products, brands, and preferences online (Karydes, 2019:1; Halmstad, 2016:1). Customers also find information on the business on the forum and may even browse other people's comments on the business and its products. Zorzini (2018:1) argues that the interaction of existing and potential customers on products creates value for the business as more customer awareness of the business, products and brands is created. In some instances, a business may use forums to introduce a topic, product, issue, or brand (Inc, 2019:1). On this forum, customers may be allowed to ask questions and the business uses the forum to answer the questions. This interaction helps to improve the relationship between the business and its customers, builds the business's image and creates customer trust of the business, its products and brands (Zorzini, 2018:1).

### **2.5.5 Wikis**

Wikis are open-source websites that allow customers to add, change, or remove content in collaboration with other users (LeBar, 2017:2). All activities and adjustments that occur on the site are tracked by the databases that record the information (Nations, 2018:1). Wikipedia is a good example. Businesses can use Wikis as an easy and fast way of disseminating information on the products and brands (Blogin, 2019:1). Wikis can also be used as online catalogues that provide customers with the range of products and brands that a business offers (Kalonatchi, 2018:1). The online catalogue created on the wiki site can be used to post



about the business and its brands, create and edit business information, provide updates on the business, etc. The wiki site can assist in creating a good image for the business as well as foster trust with the consumer (Swamy, 2018:1). Customer trust of these wikis builds customer trustworthiness of the business and also, builds a good reputation for the business, its products and brands (Kalonatchi, 2018:1). Blogin (2019:1) argues that the links provided on the Wikis help to link with other pages like business websites and this can make the business more visible through the search engines. The connection of many people to the business and its products that happens on Wikis helps to create and maintain online reputation (Kalonatchi, 2018:1). Furthermore, the discussions that happen on Wikis attract customers to the business and influence sales (LeBar, 2017:2).

Table 2.2 provides a summary of the types of social media and the tools applicable in each social media.

**Table 2.2: Summary of the types of social media and their tools**

| Type of social media | Examples of the social media tools     |
|----------------------|--|
| Social networks      | Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+         |
| Blogs and microblogs | WordPress, Blogger Twitter and Tumblr  |
| Multimedia sharing   | YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat and Vimeo |
| Forums               | Reddit and Quora                       |
| Wikis                | Wikipedia                              |

As depicted in table 2.2, there are several types of social media that businesses can use, and each social media has several tools. This presents businesses and users with unlimited options of exchanging information, creating, and maintaining relationships as well as developing and sharing of content.

The following discussion focuses on the social media marketing tools and their impact in business.

## **2.6 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TOOLS**

Social media has spread worldwide with both businesses and consumers becoming active users of social media to connect and engage (Madziwa & Sibanda, 2018:249). All across the globe, social media has become a powerful tool in connecting businesses and customers and capitalising on the 4.2 billion active social media account users (Statistica, 2021:1). It is therefore not surprising that the majority (73%) of marketers believe that social media is an important tool for marketing purposes in business (Buffer, 2019:1).

In Zimbabwe, the use of social media has increased, and the majority of people have become active participants in the creation and sharing of content via various social media technologies

(Taderera, 2017:1). In Zimbabwe, the number of social media users increased by 20% from 0.88 million in 2018 to 1.2 million in 2019 (TechZim, 2019:2), and 1.30 million in 2021 (TechZim, 2019:2; Statistica, 2021:1). Users of the following social media tools have diverse reasons for choosing the social media tools for their communication purposes (Thompson, 2019:1). Table 2.3 indicates the popular social media tools in Zimbabwe and their percentage market share as at August 2021.

**Table 2.3: The most popular social media tools in Zimbabwe**

| Social media tool | Percentage market share |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Facebook          | 43.2%                   |
| Twitter           | 31.73%                  |
| Pinterest         | 15.7%                   |
| YouTube           | 4.91%                   |
| Instagram         | 2.13%                   |
| Tumblr            | 1.51%                   |
| LinkedIn          | 0.82%                   |

**Source:** Statistica, 2021

These social media tools are discussed below, highlighting their impact on the business.

### **2.6.1 Facebook**

Facebook (FB) is the most common and widely used social media tool worldwide with more than one third of the world population using Facebook for communication purposes (Ahmad, 2019:2). There are 2.853 billion global Facebook users (Statistica, 2021:1). In Zimbabwe, Facebook has the highest percentage of market share compared to the other social media and about 43.2 percent of the population are Facebook users, which is approximately 1 100 000 users, and these include prominent brands and organisations that have popular Facebook pages (Statistica, 2021:1). Facebook is a **social networking site** that allows the targeting of users by, for example, location, jobs, interests, and others. Facebook allows users to build connections and exchange information with individuals and groups on the internet (Ahmad, 2019:2). Facebook allows the uploading and online sharing of images, text, and videos. However, this sharing of information is only possible if the user has opened a Facebook account (Lua, 2019:1).

According to Lua (2019:1), over 65 million businesses worldwide are using Facebook for business. Since over one third of the world population uses Facebook, businesses can use Facebook to reach audiences around the world through uploading relevant content about the company and its products as well as to host events that give publicity to their products (McLeod, 2019:1). A study by Lee, Hosanagar and Nair (2018), on the effect of social media advertising on customer engagement using Facebook data showed that dialogue on

Facebook with content is linked to brand personality. The study also showed that informative posts like those that include product price, when posted alone did not offer engagement but had information on brand features, functions and benefits. The study concluded that Facebook content should be informative and provide leads, brand personality and engagement.

Although the statistics on the number of businesses using Facebook for business in Zimbabwe have not been documented, several businesses have been observed to be active on Facebook, including the mobile network operators, Econet, Telecel, and NetOne. Table 2.4 shows the number of fans on the mobile network operator’s pages in Zimbabwe.

**Table 2.4: Number of fans on the mobile network operator’s pages in Zimbabwe as at 26 October 2021**

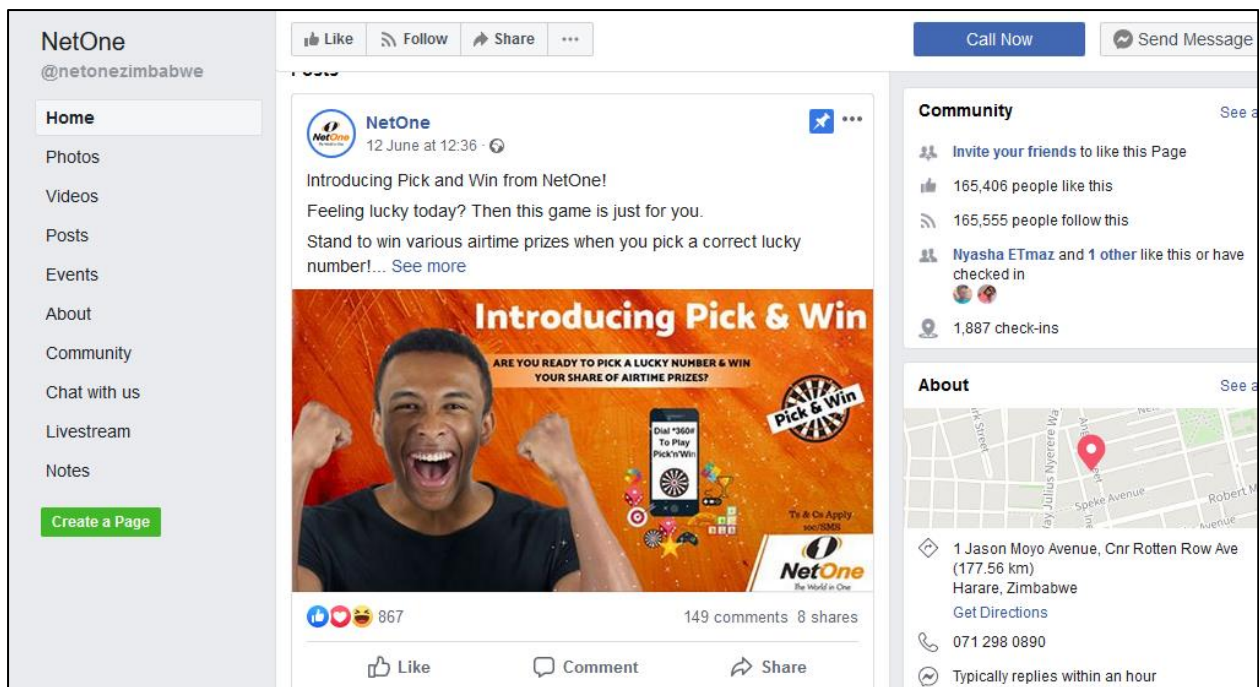
| Facebook page    | Number of followers on its page |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Econet-Zimbabwe  | 736 384                         |
| Telecel Zimbabwe | 258 983                         |
| NetOne Zimbabwe  | 243 837                         |

**Source:** NetOne Facebook page, 2021; Econet Facebook page, 2021; Telecel Facebook page, 2021

As indicated in table 2.4, the mobile network operators have a large number of followers on their Facebook (FB) page. This means the business can target people who follow them on their Facebook pages through communicating and interacting with them, as well as posting relevant content.

The mobile network operators can make use of the number of Facebook followers, as shown in Table 2.4, to create brand equity through promoting their businesses, products and services. Since the mobile network operators have a large number of followers on their FB pages, the mobile network operators can use Facebook to launch a product to the people that follow them and can also offer them special discounts (Marzouk, 2016:210). The mobile network operators can also post pictures of products, as well as videos and news on their activities and offerings (Madziwa & Sibanda, 2018:252). Businesses that use Facebook rely on its ability to allow users to create conversations and sharing of content which can create the much-needed publicity for the business (Lua, 2019:1). Facebook advertisements that may pop up on the sides of the Facebook conversations can be used by the businesses to lure customers and maintain dialogue between the business and customers (McLeod, 2019:1).

Facebook allows the sharing of content among its users and this provides mobile network operators with the chance to display their products and brands to potential clients, thereby creating brand awareness among the Facebook users (ElAydi, 2018:1). Figure 2.1 shows an example of a Facebook page promoting Netone Zimbabwe’s data and voice bundles.



**Figure 2.1: NetOne’s Facebook page**

In figure 2.1, it can be observed that NetOne has used their Facebook page @netonezimbabwe to promote its pick and win promotion and has used the platform to inform its customers that they can win prizes when they participate in the promotion. The platform allows customers to like the NetOne FB post, to share it, call the service provider, send a message, and perform other activities like recommendations which all promote the brand, create brand awareness, and enhance customer brand recognition and recall.

Furthermore, because all Facebook users share demographic information such as their age, gender, occupation, and region, mobile network operators can use this information to target a particular audience of Facebook with a particular service and brand of product to captivate the interests of the mobile network users who follow them on Facebook (Marzouk, 2016:210). Facebook allows mobile network providers to develop relevant content that is made to suit the target audience, and this can help to build the customer base, brand recognition, sales conversions which in turn, influences mobile network users’ purchasing of mobile network operators’ brands (Karamian, Nadoushan & Nadoushan, 2015:362). Furthermore, the engagement of the mobile network operators and the mobile network users on Facebook gives the businesses important feedback on what the mobile network users want and complain about.

Customers tend to do business with businesses they trust and the connection and dialogue on Facebook creates this much needed trust by customers (Ismail, 2017:130). The moment Facebook consumers trust the brand, they may share it with others on Facebook and this

visibility creates value for the brand (Karamian et al., 2015:362). A business's FB page can be used to lure customers, maintain contact customers through posting brands on its FB page (Seo & Park, 2018). Posting of brands on FB pages may influence brand exposure when customers see the messages on the news feed, and this may lead to brand awareness (Nobre & Silva, 2017). Customers may react to the post on the wall by liking a brand on the business's FB page, like a post on the brand, comment on a post about the brand and at times, share pictures and videos of the brands (Ismail, 2017:130).

### **2.6.2 Twitter**

Twitter is a popular social media worldwide that offers real-time exchange of information (Agrawal, 2016:1). Twitter, a microblogging service, connects people online and people interact through sending messages that are called tweets (Lua, 2019:3). Twitter users can make many posts in a day. The users are able to share text, photographs and videos on their Twitter profiles and other users are able to follow them, send them messages privately or publicly, like the tweets, respond to the tweets and even repost the tweets (Dogulin digital, 2018:2).

Cripps, Singh, Mejttoft and Salo (2020:588) carried out a study to look into the usage of Twitter in business as a tool for knowledge sharing and crowdsourcing information in order to encourage innovation and improve business connections in the context of B2B marketing. Data was gathered through 52 face-to-face interviews in five countries, as well as tweets collected from each interviewee's Twitter account. The study revealed that businesses used Twitter as a source of information, ideas, promotion, and invention. The study also showed that Twitter helps firms, and their suppliers, customers, and peers develop relevant business relationships by facilitating the real-time flow of new, expert, and high-quality information across like-minded communities. Twitter was found to be useful because it allows customers and peers to converse, which helps product and service development. Cripps et al. (2020:588) concluded that marketers may use Twitter to inform and engage customers and peers in their networks on a variety of issues, allowing them to build their personal and company brands at the same time.

A study by Leek, Houghton and Canning (2019:116) showed that Twitter is a reliable source of reputable knowledge, information, and new ideas. Leek et al.'s (2019) findings revealed that Twitter provides instant feed as a channel for awareness and information transmission.

There are 397 million monthly active global Twitter users (Statistica, 2021:2). In Zimbabwe, 31.73% (approximately 290 000) of the population is on Twitter (Statistica, 2021:1). Table 2.5

shows the Twitter profile statistics of the mobile network operators in Zimbabwe as of August 2021.

**Table 2.5: Twitter profile stats for the mobile network operators in Zimbabwe**

| Twitter handle                             | Year joined Twitter | Tweets | Following | Followers | Likes |
|--|---------------------|--------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Econet Wireless Zimbabwe (@econetzimbabwe) | 2013                | 18 800 | 2 578     | 392 600   | 8 425 |
| Telecel Zimbabwe (@Telecel_Zim)            | 2011                | 16 400 | 14 600    | 125 100   | 8 063 |
| NetOne Cellular (@NetOneCellular)          | 2013                | 17 400 | 135       | 59 700    | 7 943 |

**Source:** NetOne Twitter page, 2021; Econet Twitter page, 2021; Telecel Twitter page, 2021

The numbers presented in table 2.5 shows that the mobile network operators have been using Twitter and have a huge following on Twitter and the mobile network operators can make use of this following to create and maintain brand equity. Twitter offers the opportunity of real time communication by the business thereby linking the business to its customers quickly. The mobile network operators can advertise on Twitter and capitalise on the wide following they enjoy on Twitter (McLeod, 2019:2). By displaying their brands to the large Twitter audiences, mobile network operators create brand awareness through the formation of brand communities on Twitter (Chomiak, 2017:1). Also, the mobile network operators can initiate, join and lead conversations on brands and interact meaningfully with customers through sending videos, texts and images on Twitter (Law, 2019:1). This communication with customers helps to build relationships because Twitter content can be tracked and the mobile network operators can notice associations, public tweets and identify those following the business or brand (McLeod, 2019:2).

Twitter can also be used for customer relationship management purposes where the platform is used as a customer service channel (Chomiak, 2017:2). Businesses can use Twitter to update their customers about the products and promote new products (Pride & Ferrell, 2017). Twitter can also be used to inform customers about the newest products and topics that are of interest to the customers and the people who follow their Twitter page (Barnes, 2018). This is because once people get used to a brand on Twitter, they follow the tweets. As such, the mobile network operators must engage their Twitter followers by developing Twitter content that captures the attention of users by expressing brand competence and increasing brand awareness (McLeod, 2019:2). Real time response to customer tweets, giving feedback and attending to their queries by the mobile network operators creates and maintains an emotional attachment to the brand which creates brand loyalty (Law, 2019:2). Relevant tweets can be posted by the mobile network operators to publicise their brands, products, and activities, such as, new products to be launched, special offers, other promotions and even upcoming

business events (Chomiak, 2017:2). Figure 2.2 shows an example of a mobile network operator Twitter page where Econet Wireless is promoting its BidBuddie.



**Figure 2.2: Econet Zimbabwe's BidBuddie Tweet**

As illustrated in figure 2.2 Econet Wireless is promoting its BidBuddie brand on Twitter. Econet makes use of the platform to give out information to users and how they can enjoy the BidBuddie brand. Posting information on Twitter assists Econet wireless to spread information quickly about on how businesses and customers can make use of the BidBuddie platform for business. For instance, as shown in Figure 2.2, BidBuddie is used by a supplier of Hisense Microwave Oven to sell the product.

The power of Twitter lies in its ability to allow users to retweet and comment on posts and this increases the publicity of the information as it spreads quickly (Chomiak, 2017:2). By allowing real-time exchange of information, mobile network operators can use Twitter when introducing new products or launching new products and live videos can be send out as and when the event happens.

### **2.6.3 Instagram**

Instagram is a **multimedia sharing platform** that allows the distribution of visual content (photos and videos) (Kakkar, 2018:2; Spenser, 2019:2).

A study by Casalo, Flavian and Sanchez (2021) to examine the effects of brand publications on Instagram revealed that Instagram is quickly becoming the most popular social media platform, a trend that is particularly noticeable in the fashion industry. To engage their fans on Instagram, fashion firms are introducing imaginative advertisements. The study showed that Instagram publications may influence followers' affective commitment and interaction intentions by generating perceptions of creativity and good feelings in the fashion. The results of the study, based on data obtained from 808 followers of an Instagram fashion business account, indicated that Instagram users value perceived imaginative advertisements (Casalo et al., 20218). Positive emotions and affective commitment also play a role in the link and are critical in Instagram content development.

Another study by Ha and Huang (2019:42) argues that Instagram has transformed the fashion industry by allowing users to capture images, add filters and share them with followers who can like and comment on them since the platform's inception. New formats have been added over time to improve the user experience, for example, Instagram stories and live videos. The conclusion by Ha and Huang (2019) was that, because of the new formats of content, Instagram has a greater rate of engagement and more average interactions per post than Facebook and Twitter. Ha and Huang (2019) agree with Kim, Seely and Jung (2017:536) who earlier argued that Instagram is changing the fashion industry, and to be successful, fashion brands must have a significant presence on it, as its nature allows them to have more followers and interactions than other brand types.

An example of how business makes use of Instagram is Nike, who made use of Instagram to promote the comfort of their React range of sneakers. On their Instagram page, Nike posted images that showed a mannequin's foot on sponges, pillows, and springs to illustrate the comfort of the React shoe model (Entrepreneur, 2019:4). Nike, when it disclosed the name of the sneaker in a subsequent video, received the most views on Instagram as a result of the excitement it caused among its engaged followers (Entrepreneur, 2019:4).



Globally, there are 25 million businesses on Instagram and 1.386 billion monthly active users (Statistica, 2021:1). In Zimbabwe, 2.13% (which is approximately 193 500) of the population have active Instagram accounts (Statistica, 2021:1). Businesses can use Instagram to target a large number of audiences in various parts of the world (Lau, 2019:4). A business can develop an Instagram profile that users can follow and get informed on various issues and brands (Foreman, 2017:2). Visual content on Instagram can elicit demand of products (Newberry, 2019:1). Mobile network operators can partner with people who already command a huge following on Instagram who can act as influencers (Newberry, 2019:1). For example, figure 2.3 shows an Econet's BidBuddie Instagram post.



**Figure 2.3: Econet Zimbabwe's BidBuddie Instagram post**

Figure 2.3 shows local Zimbabwean socialite, Pokello, being used by Econet to promote its BidBuddie brand on their Instagram page. Using influencers can be a powerful source of brand equity for the mobile network operator because people tend to buy brands associated with

and recommended by influencers they follow on their Instagram feed because they trust them. The influencers thus become brand ambassadors by influencing other followers. The relationship between the business and the influencer can create long lasting brand awareness with customers. Influencers may help to attract new customers to the brand, increase brand advocacy, visibility, likability, memorability, and credibility of Econet's BidBuddie.

In some cases, branded hashtags can be used to introduce new mobile network products and brands (Long, 2016:1). Figure 2.4 shows an example of a branded hashtag for a marathon race by Econet Wireless.



**Figure 2.4: #BeTheThunder Econet branded hash tag**

The branded hashtag aims to introduce a new offering to clients. In figure 2.4, *#BeTheThunder* was developed by Econet to promote Econet Victoria Falls marathon in July 2019. The hashtag was posted on Econet's Instagram feed where followers of Econet could come across the hashtag while searching for other content. As a result of this hashtag, more followers may end up following the hashtag which they can also share with other people thereby further

promoting the marathon. Customers can also like, share, and comment on the hashtag as seen in figure 2.4 where 65 people have liked the post and others commented on it.

In order to keep customers interested and connected to the brand, mobile network operators should post content regularly (Gyant, 2018:1). Regular posts by the operators facilitates active interaction between the operators and their customers and this engagement promotes brand loyalty. Instagram insights and metrics in the form of brand impressions, who viewed an operator's posts, demography and location tags can be useful for the operators to develop relevant Instagram content that boosts customer interaction and engagement with the brand (Gyant, 2018:1). The growth rate on Instagram when it increases may create an opportunity for the operators to bring more people into contact with their brands who can then follow the brand. The business can respond by allowing users to link to the operators' website by the click of a button, link with other social media platforms, comment or call and this feedback can be used to make adjustments to the brand and even introduce new promotions for a brand (Simmonds, 2019:1). Product teasers can also be used for marketing purposes on Instagram (Long, 2016:2). Product teasers increase customer excitement about a product or brand and can be used to attract the attention of followers. The excitement can be derived from the mobile operators' offering, for example, a free application where followers can do their shopping, commenting, sharing, reposting, and liking of available brands thereby impacting positively on the brand image (Newberry, 2019:1).

Meanwhile, customer generated content like testimonials and sharing of moments with brands, experiences, images, and videos on Instagram can act as brand advocacy that attracts new customers, promotes brand visibility and trust.

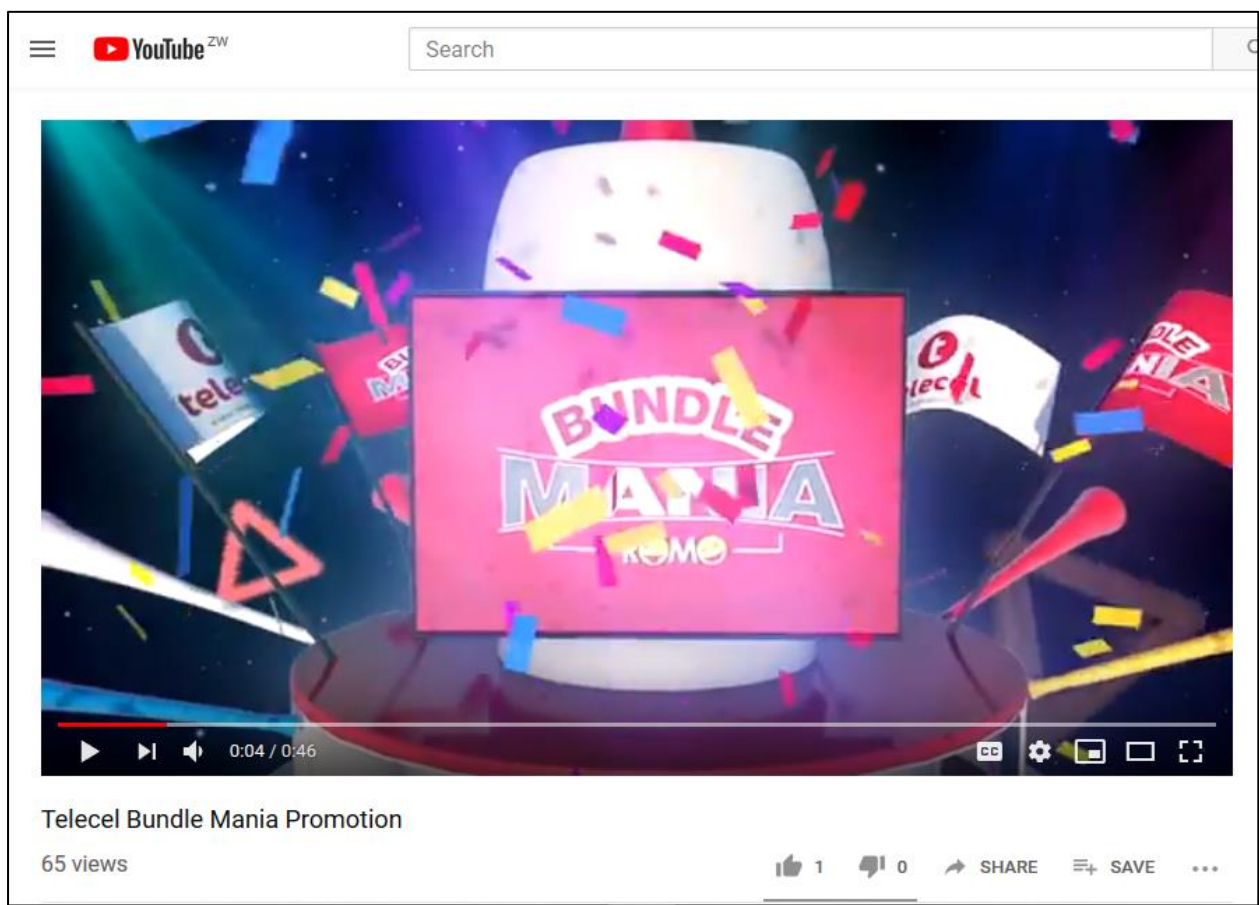
#### **2.6.4 YouTube**

YouTube is a **multimedia sharing website** that allows the loading, sharing, searching, and viewing of video content online (Lua, 2019:3). YouTube allows users to subscribe, follow other users' posts and comment and even be followed by other users (Borpuzari, 2019:1).

Tafesse (2020:1689) carried out a study where data was collected from 4,398 videos scraped from YouTube's popular list to examine video optimisation practices, information content of video titles, emotional intensity of video titles, information content of video descriptions, and volume of video tags, using a mix of text and sentiment analysis. The study revealed that greater information availability in video titles is inversely related with video views, whereas the strength of negative emotional feeling in video titles is positively associated with video views. The study showed that more content in video descriptions is linked to more video views.

A study to evaluate how YouTube advertisements may help improve brand awareness and image, as well as the impact they have on purchase intention of millennials between the ages of 18 and 35 in Batam City by Febriyantoro (2020) revealed that brand awareness and brand image are influenced by YouTube advertising. The study concluded that the intention to buy is closely linked to YouTube advertisements.

Globally, there are 2.291 billion YouTube users (Statistica, 2021). In Zimbabwe 4.91% of individuals are active YouTube users (which is approximately 300 0000 of the population using YouTube (Statistica, 2021:1). As a marketing tool, YouTube can be used for advertising and sharing of knowledge because the creation of video content that captures the attention of users allows the users to view and share with others thereby creating brand awareness (Thompson, 2019:1). Figure 2.5 show how Telecel used YouTube to market its new data bundles.



**Figure 2.5: Telecel Zimbabwe’s Bundle Mania YouTube promotion**

Figure 2.5 is an example of how the mobile network operators can use YouTube for marketing purposes. Telecel Zimbabwe runs a bundle mania promotion on YouTube where it informs clients on the promotion and how to subscribe as well as the rewards that are on offer. As

shown in Figure 2.5, YouTube allows subscribers to view the promotion, to save it, share and even comment on the product.

By sharing the YouTube video, the brand image goes viral and generates more publicity due to the high traffic of video viewers (Borpuzari, 2019:1). YouTube videos provide entertainment, connect people and increase engagement. These videos capture the attention of viewers and businesses have the opportunity to convert users' attention into possible sales of products (Kantar, 2018:1). A business may have to consider people's needs to develop YouTube content in a unique way to market specific products and brands created for specific users (Kantar, 2018:1).

YouTube can be used as a search engine and to host services (Thompson, 2019:1). Businesses' may create content that informs, instructs and entertains users and convert these activities into sales leads as well. Sometimes, YouTube can be used to support product promotions thereby facilitating increased brand recognition, brand recall and brand awareness through the watching of YouTube videos (Borpuzari, 2019:1). The brand recognition, brand recall and brand awareness gained from the videos and images may positively improve the brand image and brand reputation as the brand knowledge increases through the information acquired from the YouTube (Peters, 2018:1).

Businesses can upload videos of their brands and the customers can view the brands, like them, comment and even share the content, all of which create brand awareness and make the product more memorable and increase brand traffic (Stout, 2019:2). Furthermore, the business can carry out product demonstrations and explanations on YouTube since most people prefer watching to reading (Kantar, 2018:1). Videos, presentations, demonstrations, and brand testimonials on YouTube can be used to improve product understanding, perceived value of the product and influence the perceived product quality (Peters, 2018:1). YouTube allows subscribers to make comments and these comments can be useful to the business as they may respond to the comments, clarify issues, respond to questions, and take objective criticism which improves the brand and customer relationship (Previte, 2018:1).

### **2.6.5 LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is a **social networking platform** that is an online professional network. LinkedIn allows users to form groups and form relationships according to their job titles and professions (Stout, 2019:4). The users are able to post pictures, update regarding their careers, articles, send messages, join groups and create profiles on the website which can be viewed by other like-minded professionals. Hence, LinkedIn allows experts to share information and network

amongst themselves (Lua, 2019:3). LinkedIn allows businesses to create their business profiles too.

LinkedIn is mostly used by businesses, recruiters and job seekers (Dogulin digital, 2018:3). Professionals on LinkedIn share issues to do with their jobs, employer and employee research, descriptions of companies and other items of interest. As such, businesses on LinkedIn must target appropriate people (Foreman, 2017:6). LinkedIn allows for the luring of talent, personalised advertising and promotion of brands. Furthermore, businesses in the same industry can connect with each other (B2B) on this platform and they can share industry experiences and form useful synergies in their industry (Lua, 2019:3).

LinkedIn profiles create a good image for the mobile network operators since clients are able to see the operators' relationships, such as who endorsed their product and brand and what other people say about the brand (DeMers, 2015:1). LinkedIn can be used by the mobile operators to influence brand equity by facilitating the distribution of product and brand news, brand launches and information to other users who can be the media, bloggers and customers which all become sources of sales lead generation (Edmindson, 2018:2). Furthermore, connections between individuals and businesses are made on LinkedIn and the connections enhances brand recognition, distribution of information on new mobile product brands and encourages the formation of groups consisting of followers and connections (DeMers, 2015:1).

Mobile operators can capitalise on the trust that is built on LinkedIn in influencing people's thoughts, endorsements and recommendations of the company which can improve the reputation of the brand, its image and increase customer trust. LinkedIn increases brand visibility because there is no filtering of information, so all posts reach followers' feed thereby creating brand awareness (Edmindson, 2018:2). In fact, information shared with present connections on LinkedIn and followers as well as advertisements have a high chance of reaching influencers and probable clients (DeMers, 2015:2).

### **2.6.6 Pinterest**

Pinterest is a **discovery website** that is photography focused and allows for the uploading and sharing of trending images and content of images (Dunbar, 2019:1). Users of Pinterest are able to discover, edit and share trending content (Kakka, 2018:1). Sometimes users also discuss and comment on the content. Currently, there are 478 million global monthly active users (Statistica, 2021:1) whilst 15.7% of the Zimbabwean population is on Pinterest (Statistica, 2021:1).

A study on Pinterest platform's usability, design, user-platform fit and media content to see how users felt about it by Hazari, Beheruzi, Brown and Cheryl (2017:230) revealed that in

comparison to other larger social media platforms, the Pinterest social media network is quite modest. Pinterest has a smaller user base than Instagram and is underutilised as a marketing tool. Because of its niche appeal in a powerful visual medium, Pinterest, on the other hand, has a lot of potential for marketers. The study showed that Pinterest users experienced notions of worth, loyalty and trust.

Mobile network operators in Zimbabwe can make use of Pinterest to create brand equity. Pinterest is useful in business for sharing content on brands and commenting on trending issues in the industry. As such, mobile network operators can use Pinterest to pin content which can be in video or images on virtual bulletin boards they develop. Pinterest feeds can show the brand's content, and this may encourage people to buy the brands (Newberry, 2018:1). Product demonstrations can be done to enable people to view the brands, and this can improve customers' perception of brand quality, increase brand recognition and customer trust of the brand (Webb, 2018:1).

Operators can take images of their brands and upload them on their Pinterest sites where many people can have access to the information and the brands (Webb, 2018:1). Sharing of the content is possible through repinning of interesting content with friends thereby further promoting brand awareness (Newberry, 2018:1). Pinterest is also credited for turning more business browsers into customers, luring customers because of colourful content uploaded, enhancing high engagement with customers, and can be integrated with other social media tools (Kallas, 2018:2). Furthermore, Pinterest can enable a business to get to know its customers' needs, create brand awareness and increase web visits (Dunbar, 2019:2).

### **2.6.7 Tumblr**

Tumblr is a **microblogging browser** that allows people to search and follow content and media they want (Spenser, 2019:1). Tumblr is a social media tool that allows the posting of many quotes and links from the browser, multimedia posting and allows the user to make comments on posts (Foreman, 2017:2).

Mobile network operators can use Tumblr to customise product offerings, build brands, increase sales and sharing content on the business, its products and events (Spenser, 2019:2). Promotional posts in the form of images and videos can be posted by the mobile operators and this content can also be reposted and shared by users who further promote the brands (Tumblr, 2019:1). Trending brand posts, topics and issues that can attract feedback from users who may like the brand, reblog the brand many times, share texts, photographs and quotes which promote active customer engagement with the brand (Driver, 2018:1). By allowing tagging and links to brand sites, Tumblr acts as a search engine that drives users to

other sites where active engagement of users can occur (Spenser, 2019:2), and more people can be invited onto the platform thereby creating more brand awareness (Hunt, 2016:1). Businesses are also able to track customers and tag customers on Tumblr. The social media tool can also be used by customers to discover brands and also to follow their preferred businesses (Kallas, 2018:2).

In the next discussion, factors influencing social media use are discussed.

## **2.7 FACTORS INFLUENCING SOCIAL MEDIA USE**

There are various factors that influence the use of social media, and include, amongst others, level of engagement, influence, trustworthiness, exposure, cost effectiveness, subjective norms, ease of use and perceived usefulness. The factors and how the factors influence the use of social media platforms are briefly discussed below:

### ***2.7.1 Level of engagement***

Social media level of engagement describes the potential of the social media to allow businesses and users to click, share, retweet, and comment on social media messages (Matikiti, Mpinganjira & Roberts-Lombard 2017:3).

A study of over 24,000 Facebook posts from event organisations by Demmers, Weltevreden and van Dolen (2020:53) revealed that social media is used by brands to engage customers at all phases of the customer lifecycle. The study discovered that instructive posts produce more likes, shares, and comments in the pre-consumption stage, while entertaining posts generate more consumer involvement in the post-consumption stage. In the pre- and post-consumption stages, higher levels of activation in brand posts are linked to increased engagement. The findings imply that brands can profit from tailoring their social media content to the stage of the customer journey as time passes.

The ability of social media to connect businesses, people, build relationships and maintain contacts through real time communication has lured many social media users who want to follow events, news and people and to share content (Sanmamed, 2016: 207). The relationships and interactions are only possible when one is present on a social media network. In some instances, social media businesses and users prefer platforms that allow for active interaction of the individuals and businesses with their consumers. Satisfied consumers tend to spread good messages via the social media platform, while unsatisfied consumers spread negative word of mouth statements about the social media and its features (Abdullah & Siraj, 2016:38).



Linked to the current study, the mobile network industry continues to grow, both in terms of customer base and revenue inflows and the level of competition is very tough (POTRAZ, 2017:6). As a result of the competition, the operators in the industry have started using social media as an engagement to create dialogue with customers and make efforts to influence consumers to switch to their services (Kaduwo, 2017:1; Hwambo, Shanhuyenhanzva & Sibanda, 2017:108).

### **2.7.2 Influence**

Social media has the power to influence businesses and users to share and report on various things such as products and brands. Social media influence can come from the ability of the social media platform to allow businesses and users to connect to many other users, complement the needs of the users, allowing users to perform many functions like uploading, downloading, and commenting on visual and audio content on the social media platform (Alotaibi, Ramachandran, Kor & Hassenian-Far, 2016:62). Social media sites that are informative tend to enjoy high traffic of businesses and users and the attitude and behaviour of other people on the platforms can influence social media use (Khalid, 2016:5).

Itani, Krush, Agnihotri and Trainor, (2020:264) carried out a study to look at how business-to-business salespeople use various types of sales technologies to fulfill their boundary-crossing responsibilities. The study evaluated how salespeople use social media technologies to promote competitor information collection, product information transmission and buyer information sharing in different ways. The findings of the study showed that social media has a good impact on buyer-seller information exchanges. The conclusion was that managers should promote the usage of social media apps to their salesforce to influence customers' responses. Social media has influenced active mobile phone users (simcard owners connected to a mobile service operator) to switch to brands that offer them the best service they require (Elliott, 2019:1). The different brands offered by the mobile operators are fighting for space in consumers' minds and this influences consumers' purchasing of mobile network products which can be motivated by the firm's network coverage, product range and loyalty (Jokinen, 2016:13). The experiences of consumers with the product, perceived product quality, loyalty and brand awareness create brand equity and when the customers' experiences are positive, the brand is valued (Jokinen, 2016:13).

### **2.7.3 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness of a social media network and tools may influence the intentions and behaviours of the businesses and users. When businesses and users trust the social media platforms, they may be impressed by the social media content, make inquiries, and make

conversions (Sanmamed et al., 2017:204). Also, when social media users trust the social media platform based on comments and reviews they get from trusted individuals and family, they are bound to act according to the comments they get (Abdullar & Siraj, 2016:41). Users tend to carry out risk assessment to judge the social media, credibility of information shared on the social media, reliability of other users, relationships, and the reputation of the social media users (Halji, 2014:396). Social media users' interactions lead to rating of platforms because when users get social support on the networks that can also bring other users onboard. Positive feedback, support, comments, and reliable systems may help to build user trust. Trust creates loyalty in social media. But when the trust is low, social media users' attitude will also mean lack of trust in the business.

A study by Wiedmann and von Mettenheim (2021:707) investigated if the attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of influencers are relevant for online influencer campaigns to a clothes brand. An online poll compared the profiles of influencers who met the three criteria listed above. These requirements were investigated for their effects on brand image, brand satisfaction and brand trust, as well as purchase intention and price premium. The findings revealed that the most significant criterion were trustworthiness.

Another study by Yang, Teran, Battocchio, Bertellotti and Wrzesinski (2021:34) investigated the impact of expressive facial and visual aesthetics in Instagram photographs on consumers' evaluations of a source (the model in the image) and brand. The findings revealed that a smiling (vs. non-smiling) facial expression and a snapshot (vs. studio) photography aesthetic resulted in a higher perceived source genuineness. Furthermore, via mediation of perceived source trustworthiness, data demonstrated a beneficial effect of perceived source genuineness on an endorsed brand's perceived authenticity. Furthermore, consumers' brand opinions and behavioural intentions were found to be positively affected by model sincerity.

#### **2.7.4 Exposure**

Social media has the potential to reach many people in different places. Exposure as a social media factor can be measured by looking at consumer visits, views, followers, fans, and subscribers. This exposure can cut across the demographic variables like age, gender and sex which can allow businesses to expose their content to users and connects them through sharing of content on the business, its products, services, and brands (Alotaibi, Ramachandran, Kor & Hasseinian-Far, 2016:62). In addition, the ability of social media to expose users to various content and information accessed through many gadgets in different locations expose people to many messages (Bogea & Brito, 2017:9). Businesses can capitalise on this exposure to create brand awareness to customers by offering information on products and brands through the various social media channels. The many social media

channels make the business more visible and may attract customers to the business and products. Businesses can create content that suits the targeted customers that engage them and this positions a brand better in the market. The sharing of content creates connections between the business and customers and helps to build trust as well as customer loyalty (Kim, Lee & Yoon, 2015:323). Social media creates business exposure since once posted on the website, content stays forever, and customers may keep on referring to the content. In most cases, customers do not realise that businesses are promoting products on social media, and they receive the advertisements thereby influencing people's perceptions of the business, products, and brands.

Sharma, Singh, Kujur, and Das (2021:602) undertook a study on the residents in India to establish the impact of social media advertising on Facebook pages of fashion branding on consumer-brand relationship and purchase intention. The study revealed that social media users spend the majority of their time doing things like promoting and endorsing fashion-related businesses or products to their friends and co-workers, which they consider to be significant, useful, and fashionable because they trust the information they get from other people on social media. Fashion brands' social media marketing activities were found to be influenced by the social media users' trust of the advertisements and trendiness. The study showed that social media users are interested in learning about current trends since the fashion industry's tastes and preferences are always evolving and they may turn to social media for information. The study concluded that when the fashion brands engage with customers on social media sites like Facebook, customers' desire to buy that particular brand or product grows stronger, and the customers feel ready to pay for it because they trust the information they get through social media. The mobile network operators in Zimbabwe have already begun using social media in their business and are active on social media. For example, Telecel offers a range of its products that include Telecash, Telecel go, Teletunes, telecare, telecel business, sms bundles, telecel red and broadband plus on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to try and influence consumers to like its products.

### **2.7.5 Cost effectiveness**

The use of a social media platform can be influenced by the cost effectiveness of the platform, and this involves the cost of using the platform, its extent of reach and leads the platform is capable of generating (Sanmamed et al., 2017:204). Users tend to prefer a social media platform that allows them to perform desired actions at a cost-effective rate. Businesses may require and use less money to lure customers and generate sales leads when using social media as compared to budgets required for traditional marketing in newspapers, television, and radios. It becomes cheaper to use social media because it reaches many people at once

without putting a lot of money into it. Furthermore, social media is always available 24 hours a day and seven days a week, does not limit geographical reach of content, has fewer expenses and there is no payment of the advertising channel (Segal, 2019:1). A business may have their own social media managers who may be capable of developing and designing social media content which is cheaper than outsourcing agents to design the content (O'Brien, 2019;1). Some social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, amongst others, are free to join and they may be cost effective channels of increasing customer engagement and this creates the opportunity to promote brands and increase brand awareness (WebFX, 2019;1).

A study by Ainin, Parveen, Noor, Jaafar, Liyana and Shuib (2015:570) on small businesses in Malaysia indicated that cost-effectiveness is a variable that influences consumer use of Facebook for interactions.

### **2.7.6 Ease of use**

When developing social media content, business must consider the attitude of the people it is dealing with and the perceived enjoyment the content is likely to cause in the customers. The ease of use of the social media platform may influence the frequency of use and even the number of users the platform attracts (Bogea & Brito, 2017:10). Users tend to like a platform that offers a variety of functions but allowing those functions to be carried out easily without technical hurdles that may affect other members of the society like the illiterate members of the society (Matikiti et al, 2017:3). The accessibility of the social media platforms on various gadgets like tablets, mobile phones and laptops can influence the use of the social media. Furthermore, the level of knowledge of the users influences the ease of use of social media platforms (Bogea & Brito, 2017:10).

A study by Syaifullah, Sukendar, Syaifudin and Junaedi (2021:523) argue that because the employment of information technology is seen as enhancing added value and productivity, social media is being used more frequently as a promotional medium. The study indicated that it is necessary for social media to be simple to use so that users are not inconvenienced. The more users believe social media to be simple to use, the more likely they are to use it.

### **2.7.7 Perceived usefulness**

Perceived usefulness implies that the social media is judged on its worth in society in terms of the functions that it allows the society to perform (Matikiti et al. 2017:3). Perceived usefulness is the belief that social media enhances performance and when the benefits of using social media outweigh the advantages, people tend to be receptive to it (Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat & Fabeil, 2014:120). Such benefits may vary from time to time from being social, economic, and functional benefits and from one social network to another. Businesses perceived usefulness of the social media can be judged considering output quality of social media content and its relevance. The output may be in terms of the business reaching many people, improving sales efficiency, and turning potential customers into real buyers of the product (Kern, 2019:1). Social media can be useful to the business in contacting customers, increasing potential clients, promoting brands, and developing the brand strategy. The business may also make social media useful in its marketing of its products by posting trending issues, topics and brands that promote products and generate sales as well as promoting customer referrals (Segal, 2019:1). The benefits can also be derived from social media users' ability to use the social media platform. The benefits may also influence the type and social media tool to use and may also be a result of the resources one user may be having. Thus, the value of a connection is important in influencing social media use (Halji, 2014:400). Perceived usefulness can be judged based on easier connectivity, user participation and the quality of

information to be obtained on the social network (Bogea & Brito, 2017:8). The more useful the social platform is, the more popular it can become in society since it accommodates a lot of functions. Various researchers have shown that usefulness has a positive impact related to the use of social media.

The next section discusses the business and consumer uses of social media.

## **2.8 SOCIAL MEDIA AND BUSINESS**

The focus of general debates about social media in the literature should change from social media use statistics and the number of enterprises that have adopted social media platforms to how businesses may take advantage of the opportunities presented by social media to acquire a competitive edge (Cesaroni & Consoli, 2015:262). For many firms, social media has become a crucial aspect of their marketing strategy (Bashir, Ayub & Jalees, 2017:74). Social media, through its interactive nature, has an immediate and profound effect on an organisation, its products and its brands because it brings awareness of the organisation to its customers (Xinhua, 2017:1). Stojanovic et al. (2018:94) argue that a well-received brand with good perception on social media enjoys strong brand awareness, which in turn, creates a good image of the business and value for the business.

Sharma, Singh and Aiyub (2020) carried out a study to look into how small businesses use social networking sites to interact with their customers. The study showed that client pleasure has a favourable impact on customer loyalty. A positive association was established between customer involvement and customer loyalty. The study emphasises the importance of social networks for businesses.

As with all marketing activities, social media has an impact on an organisation's brand - perhaps even more so due to the participatory nature of social media (Bashir, Ayub & Jalees, 2017:74). Businesses must adopt the usage of social media as a means of contacting customers and engage actively by creating social media content that appeals to the target market (Berg, 2018:1). Social media provides for two-way contact between a business and its customers, which can aid in the development and maintenance of customer relationships, the attraction of new customers, and the establishment of trust between the brand and its customers.

Study findings by Ukpere, Slabbert and Ukpere (2014:484) in Cape Town revealed that social media tools that included Twitter, Facebook and public websites influenced customers' purchases of products, spread a lot of information about the business and improved market share through increasing online shopping traffic. A study of the 2020 social media landscape

in South Africa showed that businesses were using social media platforms to reach existing and potential customers, increasing social media advertising budgets and 89.2% of the brands were finding value for money through social media advertising on Facebook, 77.5% finding it on Twitter, 75.5% on LinkedIn, 68.6% on Instagram and 50% on YouTube (Worldwide Worx, 2020:1).

Social media can be used to promote brand image with the intention of influencing consumer purchasing decisions, rechanneling brand preferences and image as well as influencing transactions (Rambe & Jafeta, 2017:658). Businesses are using social media to influence brand image, appeal to new customers, to reach out to customers through the internet, interact with customers and promote active and mutually beneficial engagements between the business and consumers because social media allows two-way conversations (Hung et al., 2016:122).

The increased social media application downloads and increased access to social media on mobile devices has brought about convenience to customers as they can now make transactions and share content, access videos and images of brands by a click of a button on their hand-held devices (Fin24, 2017:2). Furthermore, social media exposes a lot of consumers to information on brands and allows for real time action and quick responses to communications (Fin24, 2017:2). Social media is considered to influence customer tastes and accessibility (Khosro, et al., 2016:175). The two-way nature of the communication on social media allows customers to send feedback to the business and such contributions are useful in creating customer satisfaction and designing content that elicits the highest response from the social media users (Otugo, 2015:435; Karamian, Nadoushan & Nadoushan, 2015:36).

The majority of present and potential customers spend an average of five and a half hours every day on social media around the world (Madziwa & Sibanda, 2018:249). Businesses may promote viral sharing of brands and products, regular information sharing, and monitoring of customer reactions to brands and images, as well as content published, thanks to the widespread use of social media (IMM, 2020:156). Customers' understanding of items can be enhanced by business activities and material on social media, which can also affect their purchasing decisions and choices (Otugo, 2015:440).

Consumers tend to use information they get through social media to evaluate a product and decide on whether to buy the product or not (Tan, 2016:130). The purchase intention on social media depends on what the consumer learnt from trustworthy sources and other individuals' knowledge, social interactions with others, experience about the product, beliefs, and attitudes (Lu et al., 2016:229). However, since consumers have no opportunity to confirm assertions they receive from sellers, they tend to rely on fellow consumers by relying on the views,

reviews and comments of other consumers who might have bought the product (Lu et al., 2016:229). The search costs, whether the products are necessities or not, value of the product, product information product display, price comparisons, reference messages, all influence consumer purchase intention (Hung et al., 2016:122; Lu et al., 2016:229).

## **2.9 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, social media was defined from various angles, the global social media landscape was discussed, social media characteristics were identified, and the types of social media established. The chapter also discussed the social media marketing tools, factors influencing social media use and the influence of social media on business. The next chapter focuses on brand equity and the effect of social media on brand equity.



# **CHAPTER 3: BUILDING BRAND EQUITY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA**

## **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Brands have developed into key players in the contemporary world where businesses, products and brands fight for recognition in the market (IMM, 2020:41; Ganesh, Kaushik & Talukdar, 2018:94). Brands are seen as omnipresent as they infiltrate all domains of human existence, namely, economic, social, cultural, sporting and even religion (Chatzipanagiotou, Christodoulides & Veloutsou, 2019:3; Talay, Townsend & Yeniyurt, 2015:58). Brands have received more attention from business strategists as a result of their omnipresence and the need for businesses to effectively use their marketing resources (Poerwadi et al., 2019: 26; Yousaf, Amin & Gupta, 2017:122). The businesses' attention on a brand is necessitated by the desire to operate businesses, products and services that create value for all the stakeholders (Talay et al., 2015:58). The value created by the business, its products, services and brands is known as brand equity. In business, brand equity is essential because the commercial value obtained from brand awareness, reputation, and recognition, which arises from customer perceptions of a product or service's brand or brand name, typically correlates to financial success and brand preference (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020:16; Feng, 2014:2). Brand equity helps consumers to choose their products or services from competing products (Rambocas, Kirpalani & Simms, 2018:22). Brand equity is influenced or impacted from social media, advertisement, word of mouth and other electronic communication media (Stojanovic, Andreu, & Curras-Perez, 2018:94). The current study sought to focus on social media as a source of brand equity and determine the social media factors that influence the brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe.

This chapter focuses on defining brand equity (BE), a discussion of the perspectives of brand equity, elements of brand equity, building brand equity through the social media and the importance of brand equity in business is provided. The chapter also discuss the effect of social media on brand equity.

## **3.2 DEFINING BRAND EQUITY**

Various definitions of brand equity have been proposed, and there appears to be no consensus on one (Liu, Wong, Tseng, Chang & Phau, 2017:194; Datta, Ailawadi & van Heerde, 2017:3). Brand equity is defined by Alhaddad (2015:76) as a collection of brand assets and liabilities associated with a brand name and symbol that adds to or detracts from the value supplied by a product or service. Brand equity, according to Alavinaseb, Soltani, and

Alimohammadi (2017:2), is the intangible assets that distinguish one business or brand from another in the marketplace. Brand equity, as defined by Wang, Capon, Wang, and Guo (2018:6), is the worth of a brand to all individuals who are interested in it, whether users, middlemen, or manufacturers. Brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty are all elements that contribute to brand equity (Shuv-Ami, 2016:706). According to Keller and Swaminathan (2020:16) and Kaira (2015:14), brand equity is the value that comes from high brand name, awareness, unique associations, strong quality and the memory of a product. According to Abril and Rodriguez-Canovas (2016:169), brand equity can be demonstrated by consumer choice and readiness to pay a higher price for a comparable level of quality just because of the product's symbol, logo, or name.

Poerwadi et al. (2019:26) argue that brand equity is the value attached to a brand that is based on what the brand users have experienced, heard, felt, their attention, affection and response to a brand over a period of time. The value of the brand is created by the business through offering superior product quality, consumer trust, consumer satisfaction, social status provided by the brand to users and consumers' willingness and desire to be identified with the brand (Emami, 2018:3; Shuv-Ami, 2016:706). Based on the various definitions, it can be concluded that brand equity is the value that is attached to a particular brand by the brand users. The value attached to the brand helps to distinguish one product from another in the eyes of the consumer. Based on the definition discussed, the current study interpreted brand equity as the value attached to the mobile network operator's business, products, and services.

The next section focuses on brand equity perspectives.

### **3.3 BRAND EQUITY PERSPECTIVES**

Customer-based brand equity and firm-based brand equity are two contrasting perspectives on brand equity (Blair, Atanasova, Pitt, Chan & Wallstrom, 2017:447). The best way to understand brand equity is to look at it through the eyes of the business stakeholders, which include the employer and the employees who are instrumental in the production of value for the company (Chatzipanagiotou, Christodoulides & Veloutsou, 2019:330). Customer based brand equity and firm-based brand equity are discussed below.

#### ***3.3.1 Customer based brand equity (CBBE)***

CBBE can be defined as customers' knowledge and response to the performance of the brand (Yang, Sonmez & Gonzalez, 2019:717; Keller, 2016:2). CBBE has been found to be a major factor in influencing the choices of customers and business profitability (Risius & Beck, 2015:825). CBBE is characterised by high levels of customer awareness of the brand,

familiarity with the brand, brand trust, perceived quality, strong brand memory and associations which lead to customers favouring the brand (Shuv-Ami, 2016:708). Customer awareness of a product influences customer purchasing decisions and the level of competitiveness of the brand in the market (Su & Tong, 2015:570). Customer familiarity with a brand lead to customers favouring a particular product and creates customer loyalty to the product and brand (Makudza et al., 2020:4). Brand trust increases customers' willingness to choose and buy that particular brand first (Anselmsson, Burt & Tunca, 2017:199).

The perceived brand quality provides the justification as to why customers prefer a particular brand and are interested in paying the highest price for a particular brand and increases the business' market share (Oliveira, Caetano & Coelho, 2017:286). Strong brand memory and associations increases the sales, helps to retain customers, lure new clients and reduces cases of customer switching to rival brands in the market (Hewett, Rand, Rust & van Heerde, 2016:2). A positive relationship between characteristics associated with CBBE improves customer satisfaction with the brand and influences consumer choice of the brand (Risius & Beck, 205:826). CBBE can create a superior advantage for a brand in the market, which can lead to loyalty of customers, and profitability (Anselmsson et al., 2017:199). Understanding the CBBE concept is critical for a business because it helps the business to appreciate the brand equity concept and its impact on consumer choices and decision-making processes (Su & Chang, 2018:92).

In order to determine the extent to which social media activity outcomes are related to brand equity, Lim, Pham and Heinrichs (2020) captured social media activity outcomes for Fortune 500 companies. The study showed that firms are increasingly utilising social media platforms to interact with individuals, as it is known that the consequences of a firm's social media activity, such as the amount of user comments, follows, or likes, have an impact on brand equity. The findings reveal that social media activity outcomes are related to brand equity in a substantial way and the social networking and content community's platform's activity outcome indicators are strongly linked to a company's brand equity.

A study by Raji, Rashid and Ishak (2019:511) to learn more about CBBE and how it applies to car brands showed that CBBE is a viable concept that captures customers' perceptions and mindsets about their knowledge, as demonstrated in brand awareness, hedonic brand image, functional brand image and brand sustainability of automobile brands. The study also revealed that marketing activities and content on social media play an essential role in boosting consumer perceptions of automotive brands, leading to the development of automotive CBBE. The study concluded that brand managers can create CBBE through social media communications.

CBBE can be enhanced through endorsements (Dwivedi, Johnson & McDonald, 2015:457). Endorsements refers to the act of approving, supporting, and recommending a business, products, services and/or brands (Cambridge Dictionary 2019:1). Endorsements can be done through the use of celebrities to publicly support and defend a business, its products and services. A study conducted by Dwivedi et al. in 2015 on the impact of celebrity endorsements in the USA revealed that celebrity endorsements influence brand equity since consumers tend to trust the celebrities and their endorsement of a brand impacts positively on the brand-consumer connection. This is because celebrity endorsements improve the self-concept of customers and there is the transfer of association from celebrity (endorser) to the endorsed brand.

There are several factors that affect the CBBE. These factors are discussed in the following section.

### ***3.3.1.1 Factors affecting CBBE dimensions***

According to Emami (2018:6), Santos, Caetano and Limongi (2017:282), Pinar, Trapp, Girard and Boyt (2014:620), there are three factors that affect CBBE, and these are marketing mix factors, consumer factors and factors related to the business which are all discussed below.

#### **Factor 1: Marketing mix factors**

The first factor affecting CBBE, as indicated by Pinar et al. (2014:620), is marketing mix factors. Marketing mix factors consist of a combination of elements, including product features, brand names, logos, and celebrity endorsements that a business can adjust or use to enhance brand equity (Su & Tong, 2015:570).

**Product features** refers to characteristics of functions of a product that offers benefits to the consumers of the product (Spacey, 2017:2). Product aspects, such as quality, innovativeness, newness of the product, new features, price, distributors employed, and promotions used to engage with customers can all impact customers' perceptions of a product (Fatterson, 2017:2). An example of how a business adjusts the products can be observed in the mobile industry in Zimbabwe where a whole range of new products and brands have been brought onto the market by the various mobile operators. NetOne brand, for example, has several categories of products which include Khuluma24/7, News On One, OneMusic, OneGlobal, One Help, One Cover and One fusion to its name (NetOne, 2018:1). As for Telecel, the following products make up the Telecel brand; Telecel go, telecash, teletunes, telecare, telecel business, sms bundles, telecel red and broadband plus (Telecel, 2018:1) while, Econet Wireless offers, amongst others, the following products: buddies, ecocash, ecosure, ecofarmer, ecoschool, ecohealth, ownai and ruzivo to its brand name (Econet Wireless, 2017:1). All the variations of

products and brands from the mobile network operators come with different product features and are varied from one operator to another.

The business can also adjust or manipulate the brand name (Pinar et al., 2014:620) and the adjustment of the brand name can help to lure and retain customers in business. ThoughtCo. (2018:1) defines **brand name** as a label given to a business, its products, services, and brands. Econet Zimbabwe, Telecel Zimbabwe and NetOne Zimbabwe are the brand names of the three mobile network operators in Zimbabwe that are under research in the current study. A business can adjust its name and make it easily recognisable, memorable, and reputable and this creates value for the business as consumer awareness is increased because of easy recognition of the brand (Blindell, 2017:2).

A **brand logo** is defined by Kenton (2019:1) as a symbol or any visual feature used to identify a particular business, product, or service. Figure 3.1 indicates the brand logos for the three mobile network operators in Zimbabwe that are currently being studied.



**Figure 3.1: Brand logos for the three mobile network operators in Zimbabwe**

Source: NetOne, 2019; Econet, 2019; Telecel, 2019.

Figure 3.1 shows the brand logos for Econet Zimbabwe which is dominated by the blue colour, the logo for NetOne in black and orange and the logo for Telecel is predominantly red in colour. The logos help to make it easy for the consumers to identify, recognise, and remember the business.

News of the South, (2014:1) defines **celebrity endorsement** as the use of popular personalities to publicly endorse, support, and recommend a business, product, or service as a way of manipulating the way consumers perceive the business. For instance, in 2014, Econet Zimbabwe brand used Kirsty Coventry, popularly known as the “Golden girl” in Zimbabwe because of her exploits and world accolades in swimming spanning a period of five years to push the Econet brand. Coventry acknowledged that Econet brand is there to change the world. Such actions can influence a positive outlook in consumers of Econet and its products as well as services.

## **Factor 2: Consumer factors**

The second factor affecting CBBE, as indicated by Pinar et al. (2014:620), is consumer factors. Consumer variables refer to the emotional attachment to a product that develops in customers as a result of their interactions with the brand, as well as the brand's perceived utility, business image, brand affinity, and authenticity (Shen & Liu, 2015:63). Consumer variables can occur as a result of a consumer's interaction with a brand, which can lead to the consumer recalling the brand and exchanging brand views, affecting brand awareness, loyalty, and perceived quality (Keller, 2016:2).

Consumer considerations are based on the assumption that consumers are aware of the brand name, that strong associations with the brand exist, that consumers remember the brand, and that the brand exists in their minds (Oliveira et al., 2017:287). The consumer factors can increase consumer brand knowledge which further influences consumers' behaviour and decisions on a brand (Yousaf & Amin, 2017:253).

Social media can be used to make announcements on brand related issues like performance, quality, appearances, relevance, and affordability, all of which can influence consumers in favouring the brand and developing brand loyalty (DeBois, 2017:1). Social media connections with potential and existing consumers that provide users with informative profiles can facilitate easy recognition of the business, products, and brands and this improves the consumer brand knowledge and the image fosters an emotional attachment for the consumer (Edmonds, 2017:1). An emotional connection between the business and consumers can be created through generation and sharing of visual content that promote engagement and evokes feelings of the social media followers (Khosraw, 2017:1).

### **Factor 3: Factors related to the business**

The third factor affecting CBBE, as indicated by Pinar et al. (2014:620), is factors related to the business (Oliveira et al., 2017:287). The factors related to the business include the provision of after sales services, customer relationship management activities and the history of the business (Cifci, Ekinnci, Whyatt, Japutra, Molinillo & Siala, 2016:3742). Business factors, such as, after sales services and building relationships through social media can build brand equity. After sales services are defined by GFK (2015:1) as post sales services that aims to solve consumer problems that arise after buying a product. A business must be proactive on social media and show concern for its customers through providing information and support teams and solving problems quickly. Post sales interaction on social media creates value for the business because the consumers who would have received after sales support become advocates of the business, its products, and brands (GFK, 2015:4). The business must use social media to share information with the consumers through posting of its brands, events, and profiles (Edmonds, 2017:1).

Customer relationship management is a process of establishing and maintaining good profitable relationships with customers (Hanaysha, 2016:680). Building and maintaining relationships with customers can be done through social media where activities as such customer involvement, customer associations and joint problem solving are done (Lingavel, 2015:70). Shriedeh and Abd Ghani (2017:30) argue that customer relationship management can be a driver of brand equity because, through involving customers and joint problem solving, the business gains customer trust, improves brand image and creates customer loyalty and even influences customer choices and buying preferences of particular brands.

The following discussion focuses on firm-based brand equity.

#### ***3.3.2 Firm-based brand equity (FBBE)***

Firm-based brand equity can be defined as the assigning of a monetary value to the brand as determined by consumer purchases of the product (Shuv-Ami, 2016:708). Firm-based brand equity is characterised by assigning a financial viewpoint to brand equity that gives premium returns to the business (Blair et al., 2017:447). The assignment of monetary value to consumer purchases of a brand is done because the moment there is value for the consumer, there is also a corresponding value for the business (Liu et al., 2017:194; Sui & Chong, 2017:92). FBBE is associated with increased market share for the brand, brand recommendation, brand profitability and the ability for the business to charge premium price for the brand (Liu et al., 2017:194). FBBE can be observed when customers compare a non-branded product to a similar but branded product (Blair et al., 2017:447).

Firm-based brand equity recognises the financial value in terms of cash inflows generated by the business as evidenced by the revenue the brand brings into the business (Shuv-Ami, 2016:708). FBBE makes a comparison of the revenue generated between a branded product as compared to revenue that would be obtained if the product had not been branded (Carter, 2016:5; Rea, Wang & Stoner, 2014:533). However, this financial value (FBBE) of the brand only comes as a result of customers' willingness to choose and buy that particular brand name (Dwivedi et al., 2015:457). It can thus be argued that FBBE measures the consequences of CBBE.

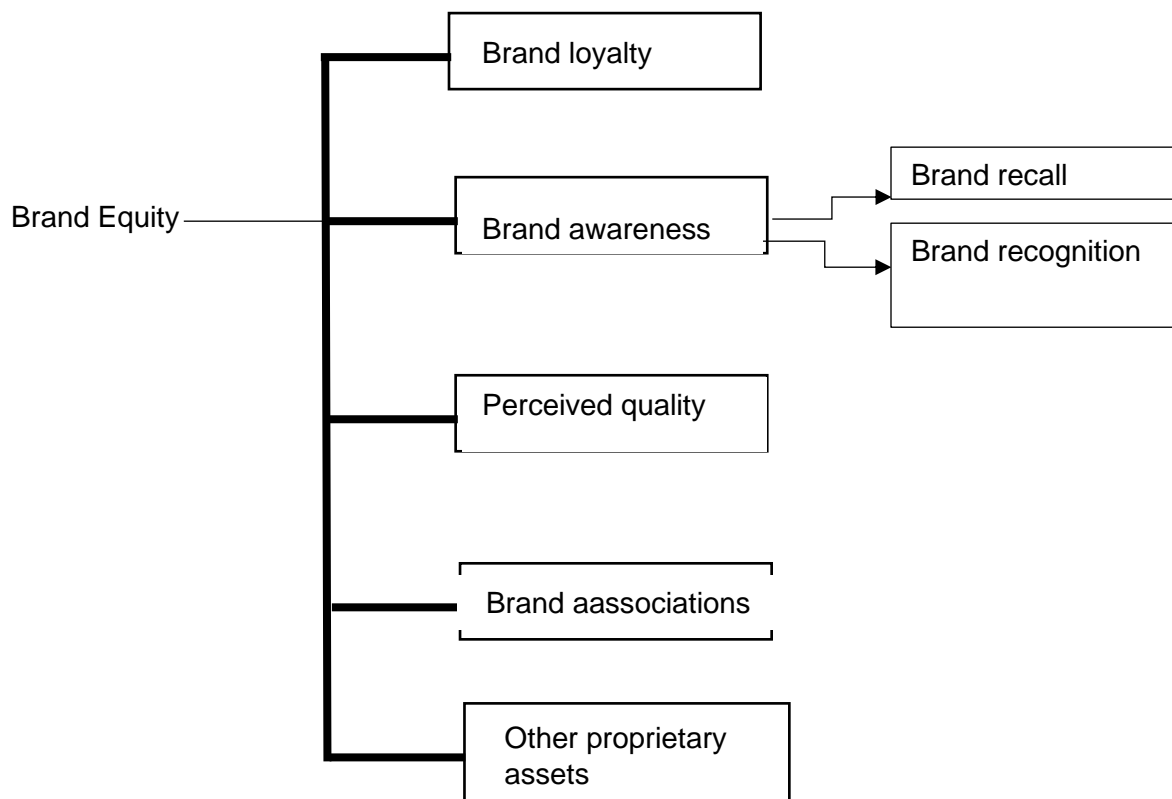
For the purposes of this study, CBBE was deemed the most applicable perspective for determining the social media factors that influence brand equity in the mobile network industry in Zimbabwe. The reason for this is due to the fact that the CBBE approach uses the customers' viewpoint regarding consumers' feelings related to a mobile network operator brand and establishes what brand the consumers buy and why they buy that brand. Also, determining the social media factors that influence brand equity requires customers' interaction on social media about the product and brand offered by the mobile network operator. Consumer-based brand equity has been described as a multidimensional construct that reflects both customers' perceptions and attitudes in previous studies (Yang, Sonmez & Gonzalez, 2019:717).

In the next section, elements of brand equity model are discussed.

### **3.4 ELEMENTS OF BRAND EQUITY MODEL**

The brand equity model by Aaker (1991) illustrates that brand equity is made up of five elements which are brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary brand assets. Figure 3.2 shows the elements of brand equity as illustrated by the brand equity model.





**Figure 3.2: Brand equity model: (Aaker, 1991)**

Each of the five elements of brand equity (as illustrated in figure 3.1) and how social media is used to create or enhance the element is discussed below.

### **3.4.1 Brand Loyalty**

Brand loyalty is one of the aspects that makes up brand equity, as seen in figure 3.2. Consumers' tendency of purchasing the same brand's products or services rather than competing brands is known as brand loyalty (Cifci et al., 2016:3742). Consumers who buy the same product or receive the same service from the same brand rather than from multiple/different companies who supply that product or service are said to be loyal to that brand (Shuv-Ami, 2016:706). Consumer perceptions, behaviour, and attitude all contribute to brand loyalty, which results in an emotional tie to the brand (Pinar et al., 2014:620). Marketers can utilise social media to impact consumer perceptions, behaviour, and attitude in order to increase loyalty. Customers who are loyal to a brand anticipate it to always be there when they need it and to suggest it to other people (Farjam & Hongyi, 2015:17).

Ebrahim (2020:288) carried out a study in Egypt to see how social media marketing affects brand loyalty through brand trust and equity. According to the findings, there are just three dimensions to trendiness, personalisation, and word-of-mouth. The social media marketing

dimensions have a direct impact on brand loyalty and brand equity via brand trust. Another study by Jibril, Kwarteng, Chovancova and Pilik (2019:1) investigated the mediating effect of online based-brand community via social media platforms. An online survey was utilised to evaluate the opinions of online customers in order to determine the link between social media usage and consumer-brand loyalty via the online based-brand community. The study revealed that social media platform favourably initiates consumer-brand engagement and user-brand relationships.

Brand loyalty can be enhanced through the emotional connection and dialogue that is created between the brand and the consumer on social media (Cifci et al., 2016:3742). Brand loyalty can result in the consumers' demanding the same product every time they make a purchase (Davis, 2017:1). It is critical for the business to use social media engagement and influence to retain existing loyal social media customers because it is more difficult and expensive to attract new consumers (Su & Chang, 2018:14). Competitors also find it difficult to entice and lure consumers that are loyal to a particular brand (Farjam & Hongyi, 2015:17). Findings from a study by Su and Chang (2018:14) indicated that students' loyalty to fast fashion trends was influenced by their perceptions, brand awareness, perceived product quality, association, and product uniqueness that they share on social media.

A business can use social media to enhance brand loyalty by developing connections with potential and actual consumers on social media using the various types of social media and social media tools. Davis (2017:1) argues that businesses can engage consumers on social media by being active on social media, sharing with consumers useful information on the business, products and services as well as involving consumers on what issues create value for them on social media. Meyer (2019:2) argues that brand loyalty can be seen through in-store visits, viewing of websites and appraisal. Buying of products can be enhanced through the creation of informative social media profiles that brings consumer trust and make consumers feel the connection with the business and brand on social media (Cifci et al., 2016:3742).

Social media can also be used to influence brand loyalty by using influencers and celebrities who are people with status in society and who have a huge following on social media. The celebrities can be brand ambassadors who spread information, endorse products and brands and influence consumer opinions of products and brands.

A business can also use social media to share business and industry news and must be trustworthy in the business and industry to promote brand loyalty (Clement, 2019:2). By sharing such information, the business can be viewed as an expert in the business and can earn the respect and loyalty of consumers (Social report, 2017:1). The perceived expertise of

the business can be complemented by being authentic on all social media posts because it brings consumer trust. Authenticity can be enhanced through joining online consumer conversations, appreciating consumer feedback on social media, and acting upon customer feedback quickly, following back consumers who follow the business on social media (Meyer, 2019:2). The business must also give out consistent business, product, brand messages and be transparent and accountable on social media (Clement, 2018:1). In some instances, giving demonstrations of the products on the social media enhance brand loyalty as it brings in an element of personal touch and the status associated with a business or brand is formed, which in turn, forms trust and brand loyalty begins (Davis, 2017:2).

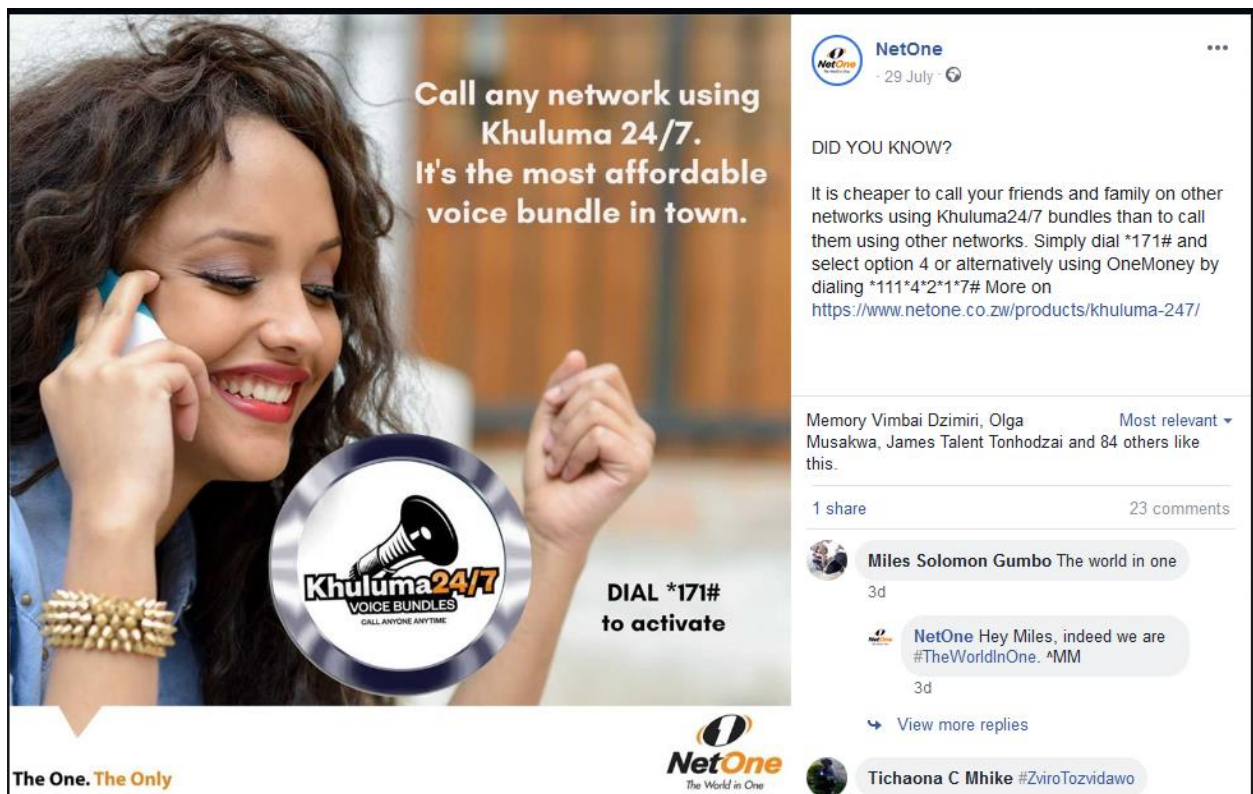
### **3.4.2 Brand awareness**

As illustrated in figure 3.2, brand awareness is another element that make up brand equity. When consumers are exposed to a brand, brand awareness refers to their capacity to recall and recognise it. Consumers must be able to recognize a specific brand by its name, logo, symbol, and associations with that brand (Emami, 2018:2). In the minds of customers, brand awareness implies brand strength. If consumers are familiar with a brand, they are able to recall and recognise it quickly (Pahwa, 2017:2).

Dedeoglu, van Niekerk, Kucukergin, Martino and Okumus (2019:34) carried out a study on the effects of social media sharing on tourist destination brand awareness, natural and service quality. Using domestic and foreign tourists in Alanya, Turkey, the study revealed that failure to share information on social media has no influence on destination brand awareness, however, participant sharing has a beneficial effect. The study concluded that tourist opinions of both destination service quality and destination natural quality are positively influenced by destination brand awareness. Another study by Dulek and Saydan (2019) revealed that social media advertisement influences brand awareness, brand awareness influences brand image, brand image influences brand attitude, and brand attitude influences brand loyalty.

Brand awareness can be used to track progress and performance of a product or service. Brand awareness reflects the strength of the brand name and how familiar the brand is amongst consumers. Brand awareness assists consumers' decision-making processes in choosing a service provider or brand (Isoraite, 2016:321). Consumer's awareness of the product has a strong impact in making a brand successful because when customers are aware of the product, they may be tempted to perform some trial purchases and some repeat purchases are likely to occur amongst satisfied customers (Rubio, Oubina & Villasenor, 2014:289).

Brand awareness is a product of the strength of the brand in consumers' minds (Rubio et al., 2014:289). Figure 3.2 indicates that brand awareness is comprised of the consumer's ability to recall and recognise a particular brand. Brand recall helps consumers to remember brand attributes in their minds, while brand recognition helps consumers to identify a brand (Shuv-Ami, 2016:706). A study of young consumers in Malaysia revealed that brand awareness strongly influences brand equity among young consumers (Sun & Tong, 2015:130). The study further revealed that this awareness is derived from social media. Social media assists in spreading the brand name, image and products to a wider audience, resulting in the increased recognition and recall of the brand and its products. Using social media, a company may have a higher chance of increasing brand awareness, reinforcing brand positioning, and establishing signals of recognition (Gurhan-Canii, Hagrah & Sarial-Abi, 2016:16; Strauss, 2016:28). Consumers can utilise social media to recognise and recall products, as well as learn about their features and applications (Gurhan-Canii, et al., 2016:16). Figure 3.3 illustrates how NetOne is using its Facebook page to create consumer awareness of the Khuluma voice bundles product.



**Figure 3.3: NetOne's Facebook message**

Source: NetOne Facebook Page, 2019

Figure 3.3 shows a Facebook post by NetOne. The message shares with the NetOne fans information on its Khuluma voice bundles, its benefits, cost, and ways of accessing the service, thereby creating consumer awareness of the bundles.

Brand awareness can be created through social media in various ways. Businesses can use social media to encourage followers on social media to share its content on the business, products, and brands and this helps to get new social media followers (Edmonds, 2017:1). The brand can use the customers who follow the brand on social media platforms to create awareness for the brand by encouraging followers to share, repost, retweet, and recommend content on the business on social media. Barnhart (2019:1) argues that a business must create profiles on social media that must be updated regularly, that must also be informative such that consumers can easily recognise, understand, and appreciate the business on social media. The profiles can be made colourful to catch the attention of social media users. Also, attractive content must be posted on the social media to lure social media users to browse the content. In some instances, the business can tag other followers and use hashtags on social media, creating brand awareness by associating the brand with a person or topic that is trending. Tagging is mentioning a person who has a profile on the social media platform in a social media post. Tagging notifies the person and hyperlinks to the tagged person's profile and hashtag is a type of metadata tag which makes it possible for others to easily find messages or content with a specific content or theme (Barnhart, 2019:2). Tagging followers on social media helps to get other followers to get them to talk about the business, products and brands to others. Hashtags can be used to engage and excite followers on trending content and issues, and this creates brand awareness (Mosley, 2019:1). Khosraw (2017:1) argues that brand awareness on social media can be enhanced through posting of information and visuals that appeal to the social media users' emotions. The business can use content that generates a lot of engagement such as videos content and live broadcasts.

### **3.4.3 Perceived Quality**

Perceived quality, as indicated in figure 3.1, is another element that makes up brand equity. Perceived quality is the value ascribed to a product or service brand that qualifies it for the reason for which it was created (Shuv-Ami, 2016:706). Colour, product design, performance, functionalities, experience, flavour, brand, name, store, packaging of goods, and product attributes can all be used to determine quality. Perceived quality acknowledges the brand's utility and value, which might be a result of customer perceptions and evaluations.

Perceived quality gives consumers a reason to buy a certain brand and distinguishes them from other brands on the market (Su & Tong, 2015:130). Product quality helps to lure consumers because it is what customers look out for to satisfy their needs and wants.

Social media can be used to enhance consumers' perceived quality of mobile network operators, their products, and brands. According to Whelan (2018:1), social media can be used to differentiate the product. Information must be given that makes the product different from others and the product or business must be known for specific business, product features, functions and uses. These attributes enhance consumers' perception of quality of the product being offered. As such, the business must be present on social media, listen to social media followers, respond to their issues quickly and actively engage them to influence their perceptions of quality in the business (Okeke, 2018:2).

Hart (2019:2) argues that businesses can ensure that in their social media feed, they show expertise in the business and industry. The expertise can be associated with quality provisions by the consumers. The business must not hide anything on social media but must be honest. In addition, consistent messages reinforce quality perceptions. Figure 3.4 shows how one of the mobile operators in Zimbabwe is using social media to reinforce quality perceptions in the minds of consumers.



### **Figure 3.4: Econet's brand reinforcement message on Facebook**

Source: Econet Zimbabwe Facebook page, 2019

Figure 3.4 shows Econet's Facebook message communicating its brand values by giving out the features (digital lifestyle network, inspired to change the world), benefits of its data network (enhancing lives, keeping customers informed, helps to socialise, enhances online shopping anytime and anywhere). Such a message can influence consumer perceptions of the quality of Econet's network.

#### **3.4.4 Brand Association**

As illustrated in figure 3.1, brand association is another element that makes up brand equity. Brand association can be defined as the benefit-based perceptions of the usefulness of the product to the customers (Sasmita & Suki, 2015:289). Customers tend to evaluate and assess brands and the results of such evaluations offer reasons for users' choice and preferences of brands (Tresna & Wijaya, 2015:40). Brand associations come from the meaning of the brand that users derived from experiences, links, attitudes, and consumers' feelings with the brand (Su & Tong, 2015:130). Brand association creates customer-brand relationships which may positively influence customer thoughts and feelings about brand and result in consumers' brand loyalty (Wang, 2015:3). Advertisements to raise public knowledge of a product or service, viral marketing through word-of-mouth exposure, affordable pricing associated with a brand, and relying on celebrity figures or well-known established and popular organisations adopting the product can all result in brand connections. Alhaddad (2015:75) argues that the higher the brand association, the higher are the chances of the brand being remembered. Strong brand links exist when connected to consumers' experiences and exposure and when the consumers believe in the brand image and the uniqueness of the brand (Sasmita & Suki, 2015:289).

Social media can be used to enhance brand association. According to Parganas, Anagnostopoulos and Chadwick (2017:152), social media interactions enhance brand associations because a business can use social media to share the brand benefits with their followers. The given brand benefits can influence a positive consumer perception of the brand being offered. In agreement, Litterio, Nantes, Larrosa and Gomen (2017:2448) argue that social media interactions connect the social media users to the brand. The connection with followers on social media can be enhanced through giving out motivational messages on social media and using brand influencers and celebrities (Ross & Gorman, 2015:1). Influencers and celebrities may have many followers on social media and their association with a certain business or brand may influence their followers to also like the brand or

business. More and more consumers may end up associating themselves with a brand that is associated with a celebrity or influencer (Parganas et al., 2017:152).

According to Hitz (2016:2), social media can be used to enhance brand association by encouraging brand trial to social media followers. Brand trial is defined by Mbaskool.com (2019:1) as the sampling of a brand to gauge its benefits, uses and quality, among others. Brand trial results can be used by the business to gauge consumer feedback, observations, and questions on the brand because brand trial has a strong influence on brand association (Hitz, 2016:2). Since social media can be used by the business to allow consumers to evaluate a brand, the business can use social media to share with the consumers the brand attributes, such as performance, price, appearances, uniqueness, relevance and this can be done through reviews, recommendations and advertisements on social media (DeBois, 2017:2). The attributes can connect the consumers to the brand as they may associate the brand with good performance, unique features, affordability, relevant to solve their challenges or fill gaps and perform specific unique functions. A business can also humanise the brand. Humanising a brand is defined by Transition Marketing Services (2017:2) as giving a brand human related feature. These human related features include emotional attitude and places the business, product, and brand in the mind of users. When the business, product and brand is placed in the mind of users, the users may begin to associate the brand with specific characteristics and solving specific challenges.

According to DeBois (2017:2), social media can be used to make announcements on events or activities that the brand may host or partake in. The business can use social media to associate a business or a brand with certain events and activities that benefit the society at large. Figure 3.5 shows an example of a mobile operator in Zimbabwe posting on social media events associated with the brand.





**Figure 3.5: NetOne cleanup campaign message on its Facebook page**

Source: NetOne face book page: 2019

Figure 3.5 shows a message from NetOne’s Facebook page. The picture shows NetOne workers putting on NetOne branded clothing and engaging in a cleanup exercise in Harare on 2 August 2019. Followers on the page have liked the campaign and shared it. Such a message on social media can enhance NetOne’s association with a good cause as the cleanup benefits the society. As a result, followers on NetOne may begin to associate the business and brand with cleanliness, good appearances and NetOne building communities which may bring value to the business.

### **3.4.5 Other proprietary assets**

The other element that makes up brand equity (see figure 3.1) is other proprietary assets. Proprietary assets can be defined as features that makes a particular product different from other products (Shuv-Ami, 2016:706). Other proprietary assets include factors that drive brand equity and are not only limited to brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and customer associations, but also involve the brand assets. Proprietary assets may be in the form of patents, trademarks, distribution management, intellectual property rights and business processes (Pinar et al., 2014:620). The proprietary assets can add value to the business, products and brands leading to increased consumer satisfaction (Shuv-Ami,

2016:706). In cases where the proprietary assets are regarded as the main source of brand equity, the value of a brand is derived from the proprietary assets' features.

A business can use social media to communicate the uniqueness of its products and the deficiencies associated with not having the product. For example, in the mobile network industry in Zimbabwe, Econet may claim that it has the widest network coverage. By disclosing that kind of message on social media, Econet can gain a competitive advantage over rivals whose networks may be concentrated in certain areas but does not reach other areas.

In the next section, building brand equity through social media is discussed.

### **3.5 BUILDING BRAND EQUITY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA**

Building and maintaining great brand equity necessitates firms employing inventive and unique marketing and branding techniques. In today's competitive market, brand equity may be generated through connecting with consumers and efficiently communicating through social media in such a way that consumers form a positive brand impression (Arizal & Listihama, 2018:3; Rice, 2010:1). Products, on the other hand, cannot produce brand equity on their own; they rely on the business's inventiveness in generating social media content and customer interactions with the brand on social media, both of which are critical in the development of brand equity for enterprises. CMG (2016:1), in agreement to Rice, (2010:1) proposed five ways of building a strong brand equity, including through social media. Each of these ways and the effect of social media on each way, is discussed below. The discussion however, goes on to highlight a sixth way, that is, building trust which is not part of the five suggested by CGM (2016).

#### ***3.5.1 The introduction of a quality product into the market***

One of the ways of building a strong brand is through quality products. Although it may seem obvious, it is vital that businesses provide products that serve the intended function and purpose as per the business proposal and consumer expectation. A quality product is free of defects and is excellent in performance and satisfies customer expectations, as compared to other similar available products (Cruz, 2015:38). Quality can be portrayed in different forms, such as the product labeling, packaging, delivery, features, design or the value its offers to customers (Nuridin, 2018:23). A brand that is able to meet requirements, is free of defects, is distinctive, and unique, can help build brand equity (Arizal & Listihama, 2018:3).

Social media can be used to introduce a new product or promote its use through giving information on the brand performance, features, uses, benefits, appearances, and relevance (Mosley, 2019:2). A business can even use testimonials on social media where some users

would be sharing with other users their experience with a product. Furthermore, demonstrations can be uploaded on social media in the form of videos where people can visualise all the said characteristics of a product (Khosraw, 2017:2).

### ***3.5.2 Monitoring changes in the business environment***

Another way of building brand equity is through monitoring changes in the business environment. Businesses can build brand equity by developing strong brands that are capable of adjusting, and adapting to the changing business environment, to industry trends, to competitor activities and to the market (Newberry, 2018:2). Such changes in the business world may include changes in consumer behaviour, tastes, preferences and buying habits as these can influence customer perception of the brand. Adapting to the market and trends, as well as looking at competitor activities, enhances the chances of producing products that are relevant in the market and serve the purpose for which they are intended. The business environment is ever-changing and business must keep up with these changes to provide the desired products. As such, business must monitor products trends, industry trends and market conditions in order to survive.

Businesses may stay on top of changing business conditions by using social media. Businesses can, for example, use social media for social listening (Newberry, 2018:10). Social listening is defined as the collection of information, conversations, and actions of users on social media (Smith, 2017:2). Social listening is important because the business needs to be aware of the consumer tastes, likes, competitors, who mentions their product or brand and users' feelings about rival brands (Smith, 2017:2). Businesses must also be aware of the competitors' brand names and products, and they can get such information on social media conversations. Through the social media, the monitoring of changes in the business environment is enhanced since social media facilitates the collection of information, conversations, and actions of users on social media with regards to the business and industry (Newberry, 2018:2). The information on the changes in the business environment that the business receives through social media searches or social listening enhances brand equity because the business can make use of the information in deciding on the most appropriate social media tool and message to use to talk about their product or brand (Smith, 2017:1).

### ***3.5.3 Creating a consistent brand image***

Another way of building brand equity is through creating a consistent brand image. Businesses need to reinforce their brand's image by ensuring that the brand presents a consistent positive experience in the minds of the consumers. The brand consistency helps to build brand equity (Agius, 2015:2). The value of a brand must be managed to maintain the value of the brand in

the minds of consumers and be seen to be associated with particular benefits (Wang et al., 2018:6). The brand reinforcement makes a product more valuable and unique to consumers who may begin to want to be associated with the brand.

According to Colleen (2018:2), a business can use social media to reinforce its brand messages, solicit feedback from consumers about a brand and this creates a good brand image and positions the brand better in the minds of the consumers who can then easily remember the brand. Businesses can then develop social media profiles that give out information on the business, products and brands and try and convince the users on why they should choose that business, product, or brands. Social media can be used to enhance consistent brand image since a business can choose social media that sends the most effective message (Agius, 2015:2). The message must contain images that are linked to the target audience. Jackson (2019:10) argues that social media can be used for visual branding where the business posts branded content and provides profiles that connect users, at the same time enhancing easy recognition of the business through such features as colours and appearances. Brand image on social media can also be enhanced through frequent posts of content, clearing of messages and regular updating of brand related content (Dorari, 2019:1).

#### ***3.5.4 Consistency of brand messaging***

The other way of building brand equity is through providing consistent brand messaging. According to Agrawal (2018:2), social media can be used to provide consistent brand messaging because social media enhances the placement of a brand in consumers in a variety of forms that can be audio, images, and videos.

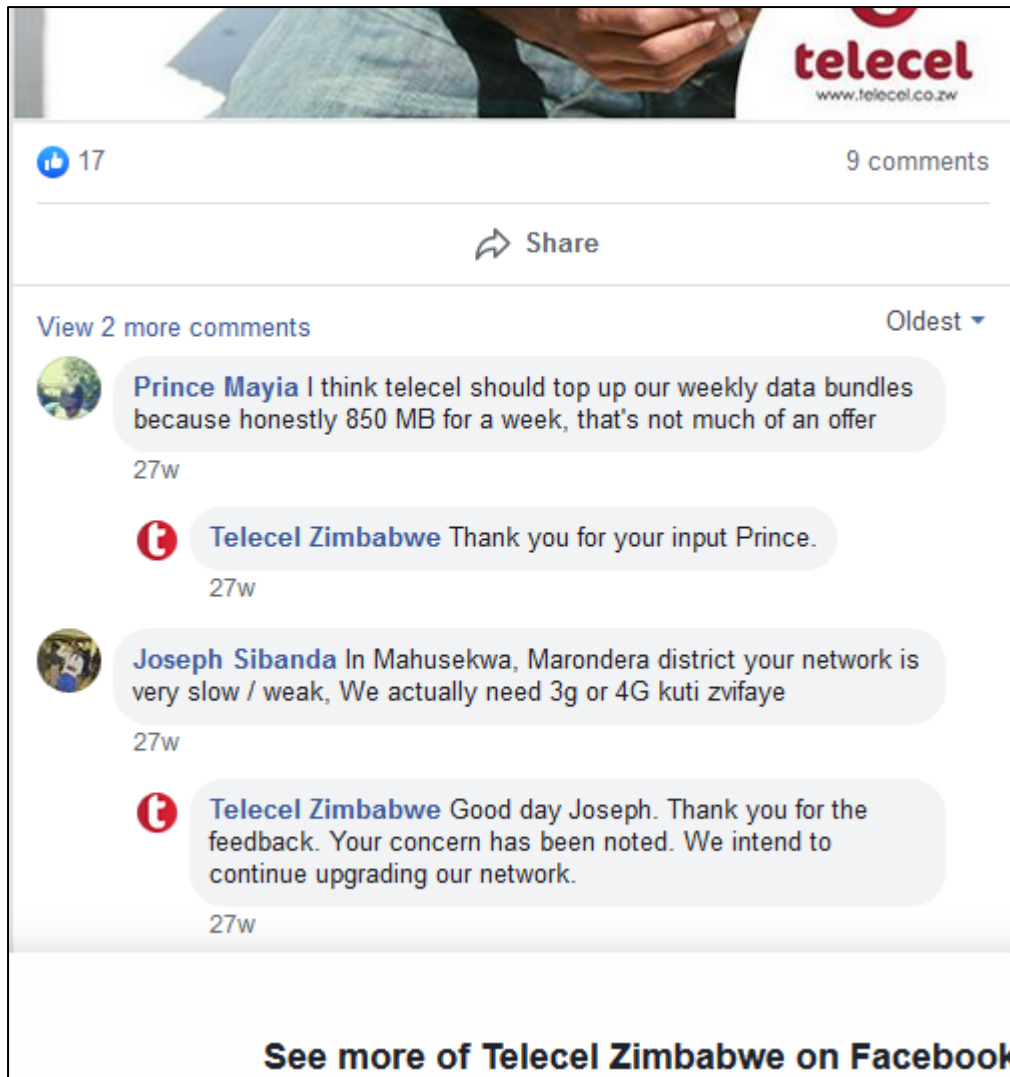
The placement of the brand's message must be consistent in such a manner that the business, product or brand logo, colours, design features of the products must be maintained across all social media platforms. Inkbots design (2017) proposes accurate messaging of the brand name, logo, trademark features and colours and the identification of the target consumers by age and use and choosing of a voice that appeals to the targeted audience. When changes are made, there must be consistent messaging to make sure that consumers are aware of these. Businesses can also be consistent in the tone in messages and social media profiles so that the brand can be easily identified by consumers (Payne, 2014:3). Durfy (2019:3) argues for the appropriate use of brand colours and no going off-brand in the social media messages.

#### ***3.5.5 Recognising and appreciating customer feedback***

Brand equity can be built through recognising and appreciating customer feedback. Since the strength of a brand lies in the minds of consumers, businesses must make efforts to analyse

and make use of the feedback derived from the customers through complaints, recommendations, and suggestions to improve on the product quality and attributes (Wilbanks, 2018:10). Recognising and appreciating customer feedback makes the brand responsive to the needs and wants of consumers and helps to retain customers whilst luring other consumers towards the brand (Shuckle, 2019:1).

According to Touchwork (2018:1), social media can be a useful source of information on consumers' likes, dislikes, needs, wants and identifying the problems associated with the brand the business offers. Wilbanks (2018:1) argues that social media helps the business to learn customer satisfaction without asking them but by looking at the interactions, conversations, appraisals, comments, key issues, and tone used on social media when discussing the business and its products. Businesses must monitor, pay attention, and acknowledge what the consumers would be talking about on social media and follow all available social media for information on users' comments and reaction about the business and brand on social media (Bernazzani, 2019:1). The feedback that the business has access to on social media is quick and helps the business to act on the feedback on time (Bannister, 2015:2). The feedback obtained can also be used to improve on the product, service, and brand related features. Figure 3.6 shows an example of a mobile network operator in Zimbabwe appreciating the feedback from its consumers.



**Figure 3.6: Telecel’s appreciation of consumers’ feedback**

**Source:** Telecel Facebook page, 2019

Figure 3.6 shows how social media can be used by consumers to raise their concerns on the business and its products. Telecel is seen to be active on its Facebook page and joining the conversations and giving feedback to its consumers. In this instance, Telecel is appreciating the feedback it is getting from its clients and promising to act on the feedback and upgrade the network.

Another way of building brand equity is through building brand trust; building brand trust is discussed below as the sixth way of building brand equity.

### **3.5.6 Building brand trust**

Another way of building brand equity is through building brand trust. Alwi, Nguyen, Melewar, Loh and Liu (2016:873) argue that brand trust can help build brand equity. The brand trust

which impacts on consumers' preference of the brand and loyalty is influenced by the brand performance and brand image (Alwi et al., 2016:873). The perceived brand performance and the image enhances consumers' trust of the brand. For example, a study by Alwi et al., (2016:862) in Malaysia in the heat, ventilating and air conditioning industry revealed that the performance of the brand affected consumers' commitment to the brand. The study concluded that in the heat, ventilating and air conditioning industry, the brand attributes such as image, logo, symbol, name and slogan, together with the performance of the brand, its image, consumers' trust and loyalty all enhance brand equity development.

Social media can play a critical role in building brand trust. According to Creately (2018:20), the two-way interaction on social media helps to form the brand trust as the consumers, if satisfied, may create a community around the brand. The trust that is formed around a brand may promote repeat purchase and product referrals which promotes the business activities (Daya, 2017:2). Social media can be used to share up-to-date latest developments and innovations in the industry (Gleeson, 2012:1). For example, Econet sharing its 4G network with its consumers. By sharing such useful information with consumers, consumers tend to develop trust in the business, its products, and brands. Figure 3.7 shows a how brand trust is earned as propounded by Smith (2019).

$$\text{TRUST} = \frac{\text{AUTHORITY} \times \text{HELPFULNESS} \times \text{INTIMACY}}{\text{SELF PROMOTION}}$$

**Figure 3.7: The basis of consumer brand trust**

**Source:** Smith (2019)

According to figure 3.7, trust is an outcome of authority, helpfulness and intimacy all divided by self-promotion. BusinessDictionary (2019:1) defines authority as the power a business has in the industry. The trust and authority of a business can come from its expertise in the field and industry as well as innovations.

Helpfulness is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary (2019:1) as the usefulness of a business. The businesses' products and brands can bring about trust especially when a business uses

social media to respond quickly to consumer concerns and also offers consumer support where necessary (Creately, 2018:20). Intimacy, which refers to the consumers' familiarity with a brand (Merriam-Webster, 2019:1), can enhance brand equity because social media can be used to create awareness of a product. The awareness that is created by social media helps consumers to recognise and recall a product or brand and helps in the development of familiarity with the brand (Isoraite, 2016:321. Study.com (2019:1) defines self-promotion as the effort made by the business to publicise its activities and what the business, its products and brands are capable of doing for the consumers. To promote self-promotion, a business can post on social media and advertise its products and present its products to the consumers on social media.

Brand trust can also be obtained from social media testimonials. Businesses can post customer testimonials about the business, its products or brands on social media and make them see honesty, trustworthy and authenticity in the business and products (Daya, 2017:3). Figure 3.7 shows an example of a testimonial of one of the mobile network operators in Zimbabwe as obtained from YouTube.



**Figure 3.8: EcoCash testimonial**

Source: YouTube, 2019



In figure 3.8, a consumer of one of Econet's products, EcoCash Save account which allows one to use his/her mobile number as a bank account and attracts no account charges, comments. The gardener advises other people to also open their Ecocash Save accounts and earn some interest. Other YouTube users who may view the message can like it, save it or even share it with others and this helps in creating a good image of the Ecocash Save account, make it a brand of choice and increases demand for the account.

In the next section, the importance of brand equity in business is discussed.

### **3.6 IMPORTANCE OF BRAND EQUITY IN BUSINESS**

Increased competition in business has forced consumers to focus on brands during their buying decision making process, and in response, businesses have crafted ways to create strong positive brand equity (Pahwa, 2017:2). Brand equity shapes the way the consumers see, feel and act towards a business, its products, and services (Carter, 2016:3). Brand equity can be derived from the quality, performance, or other aspects of value of a product or service, all of which can influence consumers' decisions among competing items (Fatterson, 2017:2). Brand equity is vital for enhancing a company's identity, as well as influencing brand performance, judgement, and consumer feelings, as well as actions toward a specific product or service (Yousaf et al., 2017:122).

Many businesses are trying to create and maintain brands to elicit positive responses from customers in terms of loyalty, association and awareness (Xi & Hamari, 2019:812). Brand equity can be positive or negative and is reflected through consumers' actions, thinking and feelings towards a particular brand (Madziwa & Sibanda, 2018:270). A product or service that has positive brand equity is easily identified, liked, and chosen by consumers unlike those products that have negative brand equity (such as those perceived to be of inferior quality and show a negative experience with a brand) (Chou, 2014:137).

Strong, positive brand equity increases market share, increases brand value on the market and allows for the charging of premium prices for the brand (Pahwa, 2017:3). Through positive brand equity, product range and depth can be widened because the consumers' trust and value the products or services (Carter, 2016:5). New markets can also be opened because of the good image on the brand (Carter, 2016:5). Positive brand equity helps the business to outdo competitors and, also impacts on brand positioning (Carter, 2016:7). Consumers rank brands, and if they believe a brand is trustworthy and important to them, they may choose the benefits associated with that brand over those connected with competitors, even if the price is quite high (Alhaddad, 2015:77).

As a result, having more brand ownership allows a company to take advantage of its market and brand prospects.

Godey et al. (2016:3) argues that brand equity dimensions influence product designs and the development of business strategies. Brand equity is also credited for enhancing consumer choices, helping consumers identify the product and influences the perception of product quality (Godey et al., 2016:3). Brand equity is important because it helps businesses and marketers to gain a competitive advantage in the market by developing strong brands (Cifci et al., 2016:3742). For example, when consumers favour a particular brand, they tend to become loyal to the brand and this influences customers' desire to buy the brand (Anselmsson, 2017:199). Brand equity helps an organisation attract talent, command a price premium, enhance customer connections, ensure successful line extensions, and improve stock prices (Dwivedi et al., 2015:457).

Brand equity has several different aspects, including awareness, attitude, image, preference, and satisfaction (Shuv-Ami, 2016:708). In order to design a suitable marketing strategy for a brand, brand awareness, attitude, image, preference, and satisfaction must all be taken into account. Some brands may only need to boost brand recognition; others may need to focus on creating confidence; and still others may need to concentrate on standing out from the competition (Pinar et al., 2014:618). Good perception of the brand attracts customers to the brand and builds a relationship with the brand which in turn, enhances the chances of more customer purchases in the future, which increases customer usage of the product and creates customer connections to the brand (Xi & Hamari, 2019:813).

Customers who feel connected to a brand are more likely to tell others about their positive experiences with it, which raises brand awareness (Yousaf et al., 2017:126). Creating great client experiences enhances brand value that seems to be one of the important things that contribute to a business's success in today's business environment (Tugrul, 2014:29). As a result, customers' brand experiences are linked to other brand-related ideas, feelings, images, perceptions, and attitudes, which are subsequently converted into favourable brand performance. Positive customer experiences can be observed through customer outcomes that include brand choices, increased sales of the brand, word-of-mouth brand publicity that creates good brand image and reduces customer switching to other brands (Rambocas, et al., 2018:22).

In the following section, the effect of social media on brand equity is discussed.

## **3.7 THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON BRAND EQUITY**

Social media can have a negative effect, no effect or positive effect on brand equity. The following are examples of studies to illustrate the positive and negative impact of social media on brand equity.

### ***3.7.1 Positive effect of social media on brand equity***

Social media is credited for accelerating the speed at which customers obtain information on brands (Gorgani, 2016:239). This is due to the fact that social media connects customers who may not even know each other through links (Khosro, Ahmedani, Subhankuzi, Khan & Shaik, 2016:175). Social media allows customers to watch videos, exchange opinions, share and comment on brands on social media platforms and creates high brand awareness, good brand image and creates strong customer associations with the brand (Abdullah & Siraj, 2016:40). Social media promotes customer interactivity which in turn, creates brand knowledge which strongly influences customer awareness, perceived quality and brand image which all make up components of brand equity (Tichafa & Nyoni, 2017:128). Brand assets are positively impacted upon by customer engagements on social media because satisfied customers tend to share favourable and positive feelings on brands on social media (Mishra, 2019:11; Chou, 2014:128).

Brands can attend to customer queries and complaints on social media which promotes information dissemination amongst customers (Tang, Fang & Feng, 2014:43). As a result, satisfied customers are more likely to recommend the brand to other customers on social media (Schweidel & Moe, 2014:388). Social media promotes two-way engagement which improves customer relationship management and helps to create online brand communities that positively influence customer brand attitude and brand loyalty (Palos-Sanchez, Saura & Debasa, 2018:2). Furthermore, social media enables customers to scrutinise the brands more as they view the product images, likes and recommendations and this helps to improve customer trust of the brand (Pauwel, Aksehirli & Lackman, 2016:642). Brands can post on social media, invite customers to share, like and comment. Customers' opinions may influence other customers, and this may lead to increased brand impressions, awareness, attitudes, and reviews because customers tend to trust recommendations from other customers (Schweidel & Moe, 2014:388).

A study by Khoso et al. (2016:180) on the impact of using social media on brand equity of restaurants and cafes in Pakistan found that social media has an impact on only three elements of brand equity: brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty, rather than perceived quality, because quality is never clear.

According to Barajas-Portas (2015:5), user-generated and company-generated social media material has a favorable impact on customer perceptions, reputation, and experiences. Consumer brand loyalty is positively influenced by user-generated social media content and customer involvement, according to a study by Zheng et al. (2015:102). A study by Almestarihi, Al-Gasawneh, Al-jabali, Gharaibeh, Nawras and Nusaira (2021:2) revealed that social media promotes brands and enhances brand equity. The study identified Facebook as the most commonly used social media to increase consumer awareness, association and loyalty to the brand. Almestarihi et al. (2021:2) argue that the use of social media in business does influence CBBE by creating consumer brand awareness, perceived quality, association, and loyalty. Another study by Majeed, Owusu-Ansah and Ashmond (2021) sought to establish the influence of social media on purchase intention within Ghana's fashion industry. The results of the survey showed that monitoring of customer action on social media and interacting with customers as well as information exchange strongly influences brand equity. However, the relationship between social interaction and entertainment have negative outcomes and are insignificant on brand equity.

Lim, Pham and Heinrichs (2020:928) studied social media activity results of Fortune 500 businesses. Using regression analysis, the study revealed that businesses are using social media to dialogue with customers. The study concluded that a business's use of social media may result in increased customer awareness, loyalty, and recommendation of a brand to others and more positive comments, followers and likes of a brand.

In another study among Millennial followers of fashion labels, Zollo, Filieri, Rialti and Yoon (2020:256) showed that consumers are increasingly turning to social media brand communities to learn more about products and make purchasing decisions. The study showed that hedonic benefits do not moderate the social media–CBBE association, but cognitive, personal integrative and social integrative benefits do. Furthermore, brand loyalty, brand awareness, and perceived quality are all influenced by both emotional and rational brand experiences. These findings could be used by luxury brand managers to develop SMM strategies that improve Millennials' overall brand experience and brand equity assessments in social media.

Babic, Sotgiu, Valck and Bijmolt (2016:299), in agreement with Schivinski and Dabrowski (2014:210), argue that both firm and user generated social media content have a positive effect on brand equity and brand attitude, but the firm generated social media content only affects brand attitude. Pauwels, Aksehirli and Lackman (2016:642) argue that social media interactivity influences customer brand awareness and brand image. The social media interactivity influences brand knowledge which is an important tool in brand equity

development (Severi, Ling & Nasermoadeli, 2014:92). Whilst studying the impact of social media on the Nike brand, Jung, Kim and Kim (2014:585) argue that social media impact positively on brand attitude which in turn, influences the trust of the Nike brand and customers' intention to buy the brand. Another study on the effect of social media on brand equity of environmentally friendly products by Grubor, Djokic and Milovanov (2017:977) revealed that firm generated social media material influences more brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty and perceived product quality, whilst, user created social media material negatively impacts perceived product quality and customer loyalty.

### ***3.7.2 Negative effect of social media on brand equity***

Customers dissatisfied with a brand tend to share negative feelings and this sharing of negative brand experiences and comments without the customers raising complaints with the brand providers may result in an anti-brand movement (Dube, 2019:1). A study conducted by Karpinska-Krakowiak (2016:206) showed that there was no relationship (no effect) between user generated social media content and brand equity on fast food brands.

## **3.8 SUMMARY**

This chapter focused on defining brand equity, the perspectives on brand equity, the elements of brand equity, the importance of brand equity in business and the effect of social media on brand equity. Various definitions of brand equity were analysed, and they all seemed to point to the intangible asset of value that is provided by a product. Two perspectives of brand equity (CBBE and FBBE) were identified and discussed. Five brand equity elements as illustrated by the brand equity model by Aaker (1991) were identified and discussed, highlighting how social media can be used to enhance the elements. The five elements are brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary brand assets. The chapter also discussed the various ways of building and maintaining brand equity through social media that included offering quality products, monitoring changes in the business environment, building brand trust, brand reinforcement, recognising, and appreciating customer feedback and consistency in brand messaging. The importance of brand equity in business was outlined. The chapter concluded by discussing the effect of social media on brand equity. In the next chapter, the research methodology is discussed.

# CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an important tool in creating and building brand equity (Fatteross, 2017:2). The literature in the preceding chapters has shown that social media has an impact on brand equity. However, there was a gap in the literature when it came to social media characteristics that affect brand equity. The research topic and aims came from a gap in the literature. An empirical investigation was required in order to answer the research question and meet the goals. This chapter focuses on the study's research paradigm and marketing research process to answer the research question. This chapter highlights the current study's primary and secondary research objectives. The research design, sampling plan, sample size, data collection instruments, data presentation, and data analysis techniques are all detailed as part of the methodology utilised to collect data for the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's ethical issues and limitations.

The following discussion focuses on the research philosophy and spells out the one adopted in the current study.

## 4.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY/PARADIGM

A research philosophy relates to the set of beliefs that guide the research process (Burrell & Morgan, 2016:11). The nature of the research, how the research should be conducted, what kind of knowledge is desirable, and how this knowledge has come to be known are all examples of these ideas (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019:130). There are four common research philosophies, positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism, which are discussed below.

- **Positivism** - Positivism has a scientific focus whereby generalisable research findings are obtained from experimentation or observation of reality (Ragab & Arisha, 2017:4). Positivism argues that human behaviour is influenced, controlled, and shaped by external forces (Burrell & Morgan, 2016:14). Only those observations the researcher makes from the study become the most trusted source of data and facts, hence, generalisations can be made on the observed data and facts (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018:8). However, the researcher simply obtains data from the research subjects, works independent of the research subjects, and does not involve self in their activities (Ragab & Arisha, 2017:4).
- **Realism** – According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019:147), a realism philosophy indicates that the purpose of a research enquiry is to explain what the researcher sees.

The research inquiry's purpose is to explain what the researcher sees and experience in terms of reality that shapes the events (Allmark & Machaczek, 2018:1302).

- **Interpretivism** – The Interpretivism paradigm argues that participants seek to understand the world in which they live, thus, reality is socially constructed (Ragab & Arisha, 2017:4). There is no one standard for research. Interpretivism allows for active involvement of participants in the research. According to interpretivism, the world is viewed and interpreted through respondents' experiences and perceptions. Interpretivism advocates for an interactive process between the researcher and research subjects to get a deep understanding of the unique social context of phenomena. The researcher enters into the world of research subjects to get information and the results enable an understanding of the social phenomena under study (Saunders et al., 2019:148). As a result, the information received is evaluated in light of the respondents' experiences and perceptions. However, the findings may not be accurate, and they may not be applicable to situations other than the one in which they were collected.
- **Pragmatism** – According to Allmark and Machaczek (2018:1302), pragmatism argues that human activity is key in research and once an inquiry into a problem begins, it ends once what is considered a solution to the problem as at that particular moment is found. Pragmatism focuses on the practical results of a research study and is based on what works in a situation. Pragmatism advocates for the use of more than one philosophy within one research study to achieve the set research purpose (Saunders et al., 2019:150). The researcher can adopt and apply any philosophical or methodological approach they see fit in the situation to enhance the achievement of research objectives.

The current study adopted the **positivism research philosophy**, capitalising on the scientific nature of positivism and its ability to generate findings from the most trusted source of data and facts.

A research philosophy or paradigm has four components, namely, ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. The **ontology** in research philosophy, refers to the nature of reality of research (Leavy, 2017:11). The ontology of positivism research philosophy believes that there is a single objective view of reality. **Epistemology** defines the make-up of an acceptable body of knowledge (Cohen et al., 2018:8). The epistemology of the positivism philosophy uses scientific research methods to measure facts and explain causes of phenomena and allows the researcher to make generalisations of findings. Thus, in the current study, a controlled, structured, and logical approach was taken to determine the social media factors that influence brand equity. **Axiology** in research philosophy means the role of values in the study (Leavy, 2017:11). In line with the axiology of the positivism philosophy, an objective approach was taken in determining the social media factors that influence brand equity. The objectivity of the

study was enhanced by the neutrality of the researcher who was detached from what was being researched. The **methodological philosophy** of the positivism philosophy was also observed. A structured quantitative study was undertaken using a sample, the study was deductive in nature and statistical measurements and analysis were used in the study.

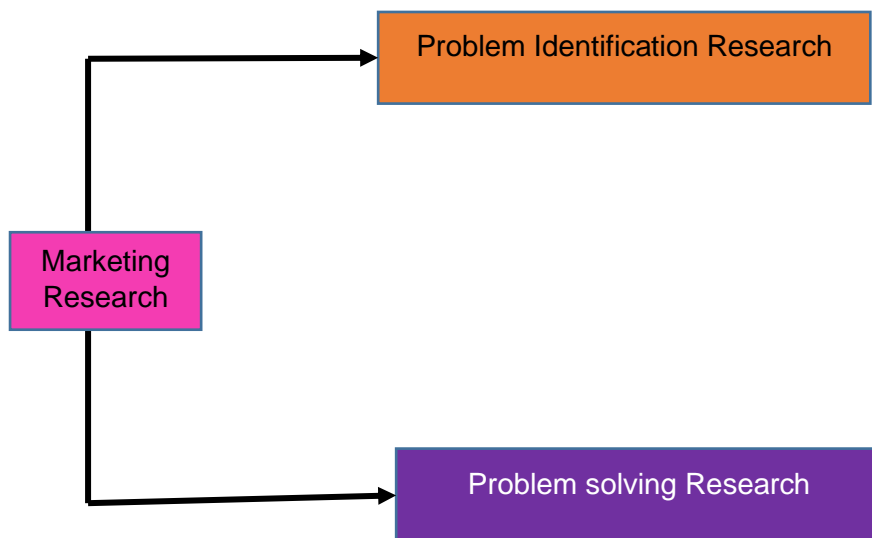
The quest for knowledge was underpinned by facts to arrive at the outcome concerning the social media factors that influence brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe (Saunders et al., 2019:150). An objective approach was taken to establish and understand the social media factors that influence brand equity. The researcher only accepted outcomes based on collected data and facts as knowledge, hence choosing the positivism research philosophy to explore and determine the social media factors that influence brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe.

The following discussion focuses on the research process, highlighting the various stages of the research process and its application to the current study.

### **4.3 THE MARKETING RESEARCH PROCESS**

Marketing research provides managers with timely, relevant, and accurate data for decision-making (Laccabucci & Churchill, 2015:4). Information collected through marketing research is used in decision-making processes and the development of relevant marketing strategies. A business may be able to survive in an environment where there is fierce rivalry for resources and customers by leveraging information acquired through marketing research (Ruel, 2017:87; Al-Shatanawi, Osman & Ab Halim, 2014:151). Marketing research attempts to provide information on how to create a data gathering method, manage the data collection process, analyse the findings, and share the results, as well as their commercial consequences (Ayuba & Kazeem, 2015:149). Therefore, marketing research can be critical in business in identifying problems and providing the possible solutions to specific problems. Marketing research can be classified into two as shown in figure 4.1 below.



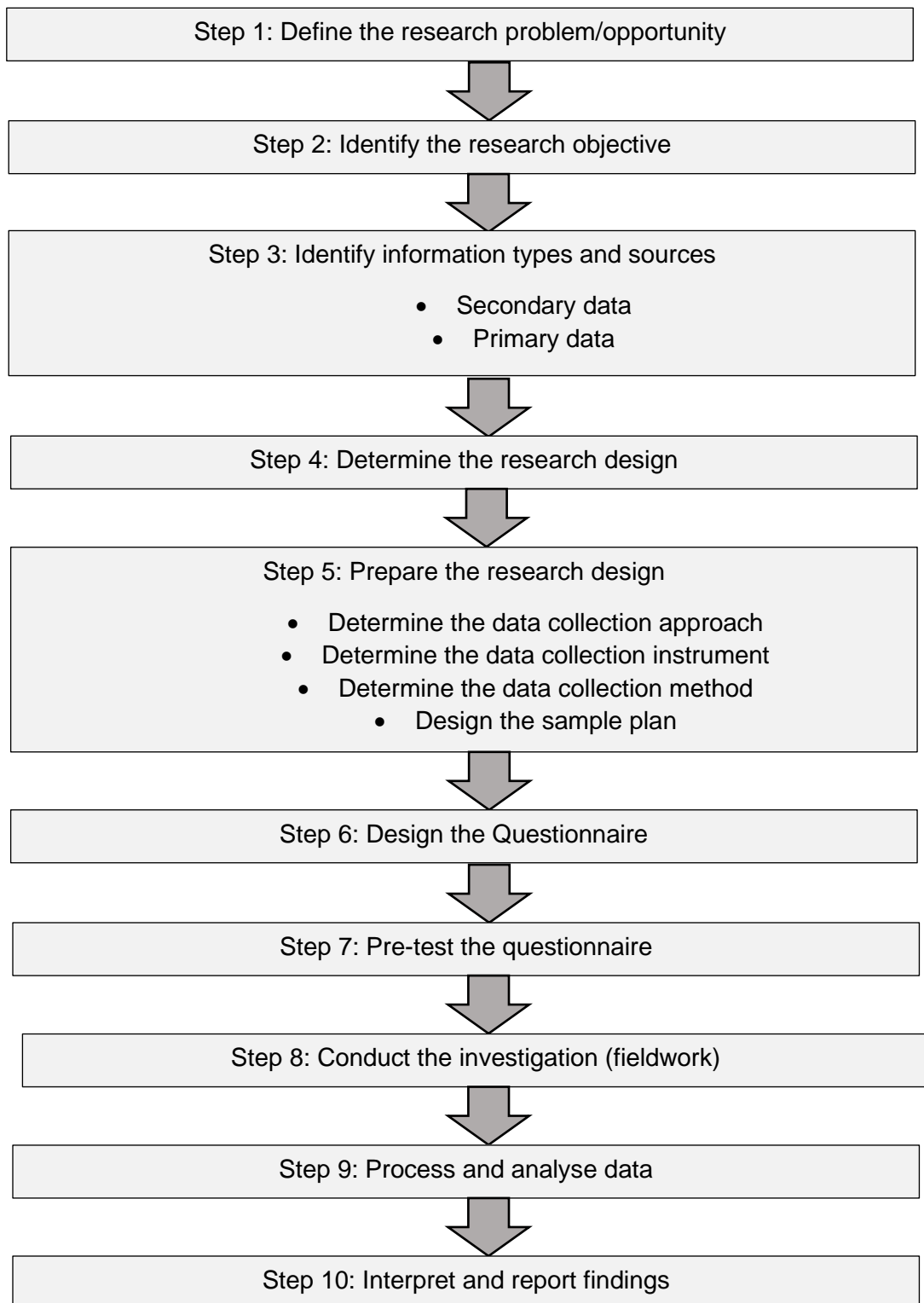


**Figure 4.1: Classification of marketing research**

**Source:** Malhotra (2019:6)

Figure 4.1 show that there are two classes of marketing research, and this classification helps the researcher to understand the nature of the problem or opportunity. For the purpose of the current study, the classification of marketing research helped the researcher to understand the social media factors that influence brand equity.

Marketing research is a set of actions that is devised and carried out in a methodical manner to meet the study's goal. For the purpose of this study, the research process as illustrated in figure 4.2 was used.



**Figure 4.2: The marketing research process**

**Source:** Adapted from Mooi et al. (2018:12)

As indicated in figure 4.2, the marketing research process consists of ten interrelated steps that may even overlap each other during the research study. The following discussion focuses

on these ten steps and each step is defined, discussed, and applied to the current study. The first step in the marketing research process is to define the research problem or opportunity. In the following section, the discussion focuses on the first step in the marketing research process which is to define the research problem or opportunity.

#### **4.3.1 Step 1: Define the research problem or opportunity**

The first step in the marketing research process as indicated in Figure 4.2 is to define the research problem or opportunity. A **research problem** is a concern or a problem to be solved that necessitates some research to be undertaken in order to solve it (Clow & James, 2014:9). A research opportunity is a void in the marketing environment that management can exploit to improve decision-making and organisational performance. The knowledge needed to solve problems, eliminate challenges, and make decisions is determined by the research problem or opportunity. As a result, since the research challenge or opportunity is the backbone of the research process, it must be properly described without ambiguity (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2018:13). It becomes difficult to acquire relevant information and develop a well-designed study if the problem is not clearly described or defined.

The problem statement is based on the gap, which is that there is an increased usage of social media by mobile network providers in Zimbabwe, yet not much is known regarding the social media factors that influence the brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe. It was necessary to undertake a research study using the perspectives of the consumers of the mobile operators' products and services to determine the social media factors that influence the brand equity in term of awareness, brand loyalty, association and perceived quality of the mobile operators, their products, and services.

The next step in the marketing research process is to identify the research objectives. The following discussion focuses on identifying the research objectives, which is the second step in the marketing research process.

#### **4.3.2 Step 2: Identify the research objectives**

The second step in the marketing research process, as indicated in Figure 4.2, is to identify the research objectives. Research objectives are measurable outcomes that the researcher intends to achieve to solve a research problem (Hyman & Sierra, 2015:2). Research objectives provide the direction that the researcher must take in the course of solving a problem or opportunity.

There are two types of research objectives, primary research objectives and secondary research objectives (Christensen et al., 2020). **Primary research objectives** are the principal

outcomes that a researcher hopes to attain through a research study, whereas **secondary research objectives** are developed from original research and try to connect to the primary goal (Saunders et al., 2019). The secondary objectives break up the primary objectives into its constituent parts and detail.

Both the primary objective and secondary objectives were formulated to address the research problem that had been identified.

After formulating the research objectives, the researcher must then decide on the information required to address the research problem. The next step in the marketing research process is to identify information types and sources of information. The following discussion focuses on identifying information types and sources of information which is the third step in the marketing research process.

### ***4.3.3 Step 3: Identify information types and sources of information***

The third step in the marketing research process, as indicated in Figure 4.2, is to identify information types and sources. In order to satisfy the research objectives of the study, the researcher must be able to obtain information. This information can be obtained from two sources that are the primary research data and secondary research data sources.

Choosing which source of data to use in the research is determined by the type of information that is required to answer the research problem (Yin, 2017; Metzler, 2014:176). However, the starting point of any research is the secondary data source that determines the kind of research that need to be done and primary research data is mostly used when secondary data is limited and does not fully address the research problem.

Primary and secondary data sources are discussed below.

#### ***4.3.3.1 Secondary data***

Secondary research entails the use of data derived mostly from primary data and derived from other published sources (Hair, Wolfinbarger, Money, Samouel & Page, 2016: 119). Secondary research entails data that has already been collected, analysed, evaluated, and published by someone other than the current researcher and the current problem (Booth, 2017; Cheng & Phillips, 2014:372). As a result, secondary researchers rely on past literature compiled in books, journals, and other publications to gather knowledge.

According to Greener and Martelli (2020:92), there are two categories of secondary data, and these are internal and external secondary data. **Internal secondary data** refers to data that

can be gathered from inside an organisation, such as sales reports, marketing activity reports, invoices, financial reports, and production reports, among others (Hair et al., 2016:121). In situations where secondary data obtained from internal sources are inadequate, researchers may also use external sources of data. **External secondary data** is data that is gathered from sources outside the organisation and such sources may include the internet, industry reports, media and professional associations, to mention but a few (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2018:29).

For the purpose of this study, **both internal and external secondary data** sources were utilised. The secondary sources used include the internet, textbooks, journal articles and telecommunication industry reports (to which the mobile network operators belong) that were used to access information on their market share, social media they use and their brands. Secondary data helps to understand the theories and other studies on the current topic (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Literature review (in chapter 2 and 3) was carried out using these secondary sources of information. However, the secondary data did not solve the research question which implies that primary research is required.

Primary data is discussed next

#### ***4.3.3.2 Primary data***

Secondary data may or may not be sufficient to answer the study topic and aims. To reduce the gap and propose solutions to the research challenge, primary data collection becomes important. Primary data is unprocessed information acquired directly from study participants in order to answer questions about the research problem (Salkind, 2017:52). Primary data, according to Christensen et al. (2020:55), includes first-hand facts and statistics from the original participants under investigation in order to solve the research topic at hand, and such material is fresh, unanalysed, and uninterpreted.

Observational and communication strategies can be used to collect primary data (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2018:43). Observational primary data collection techniques refer to the systematic process of identifying and recording the way people or objects behave without asking them questions or interacting with them (Greener & Martelli, 2018:90). Observational primary techniques may include human or mechanical methods. Human methods involve using trained researchers to make the observations whilst mechanical methods may involve the use of recording equipment like video recorders and computer chips. Communication techniques can be described as any method of gathering data through direct involvement of the people by way of interacting with them (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2018:43). Communication techniques may therefore include the use of surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and all forms of written communication

For the purposes of this study, **the communication technique was used to gather primary data**. Surveys were used to interact directly with the respondents and collect relevant data.

The next step in the marketing research process is to determine the research design. The following discussion focuses on determining the research design which is the fourth step in the marketing research process.

#### ***4.3.4 Determine the research design***

The fourth step in the marketing research process, as illustrated in figure 4.2, is to determine the research design. It is critical for the researcher to choose a research design that is appropriate for the study's research objectives before conducting primary research. The technique to be utilised in conducting a research study in order to acquire information to solve the current research challenge is referred to as research design (Salkind, 2017:16).

The steps to be followed in data collecting, measurement, and analysis with the goal of answering the study questions are outlined in the research design (Cooper & Schindler, 2018:140).

There are two steps to determining the research design to be used for a study. The first step is to determine the data collection approach, and the second step is to determine the type of research design to use in the study.

##### ***4.3.4.1 Quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches***

There are two data collection approaches that can be used to gather data by researchers, and these are quantitative and qualitative data research approach. Quantitative research deals with the study of relationships, cause and effect relationships and measuring the extent of a measurable outcome to confirm or predict some observations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019:96). Quantitative research employs measurement and observation, examines theories, is descriptive in character, and can be quantified and statistically analysed (Ruel, 2017). Qualitative research aims to comprehend a social phenomenon in its cultural, social, and situational contexts without imposing pre-existing expectations on the setting, and it is based on the notion that considerable in-depth data may be gleaned from everyday talks with people (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016:145). Customers' sentiments and opinions on a problem are gathered using a qualitative research approach, which does not assign a numerical value to them (Creswell & Poth, 2017:18). Table 4.3 highlights the differences between quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

**Table 4.1: Summary of differences between quantitative and qualitative research approach**

| Research aspect                                 | Qualitative research approach         | Quantitative research approach                  |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Aims and objectives                             | To describe and explain relationships | To quantify, describe and predict relationships |
| Questioning format                              | Unstructured, open-ended              | Structured, closed ended                        |
| Sample size                                     | Relatively small                      | Relatively large                                |
| Data format                                     | Textual                               | Numerical                                       |
| Amount of information required from respondents | Substantial                           | Varies  |
| Data analysis                                   | Interpretive                          | Statistical, descriptive                        |
| Type of research                                | Exploratory                           | Descriptive and causal                          |
| Time frame                                      | Relatively short                      | Longer  |
| Sample size                                     | Small                                 | Large   |
| Generalisability of results                     | Less generalisable                    | More generalisable                              |

**Source:** Adapted from Sarstedt and Mooi (2018:30)

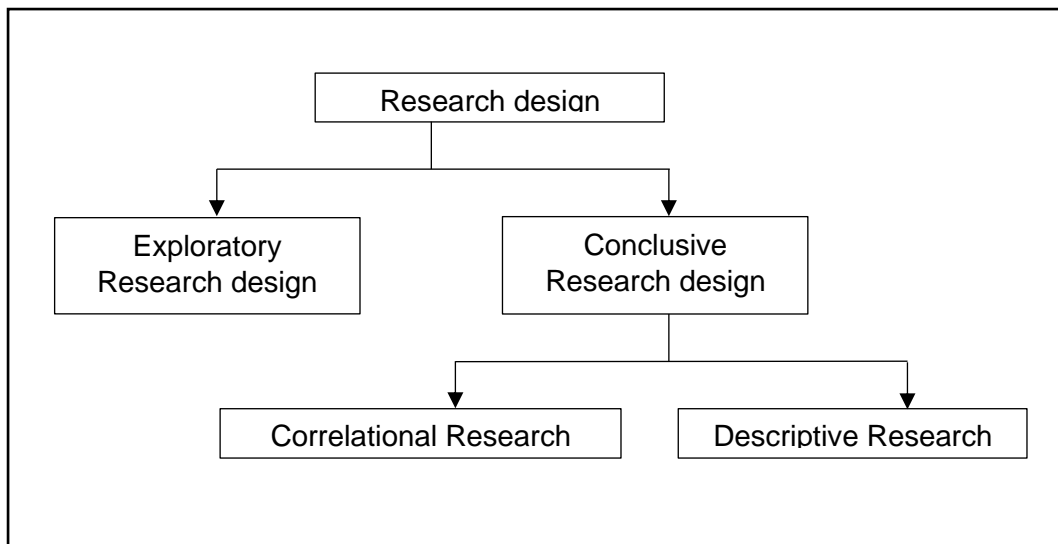
According to table 4.3, quantitative and qualitative research approaches differ in many aspects, hence, a researcher has to choose the right approach for a study based on the research aspects of each approach.

The current study followed a **quantitative research approach**. The quantitative approach seeks explanations on some observations and also seeks to establish or confirm the outcome of some known variables (Juson & Glenwick, 2016:22). The approach was preferred because of the aim of the current study which was to determine the social media factors that influence brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe. Quantitative research approaches would allow for the examination of associative and predictive links between social media elements (independent variables) and brand equity (dependent variable) using quantitative research methodologies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:44). Because of its ability to use numbers to characterise the presence, frequency, and distribution of phenomena including attitudes, perceptions, and intentions, the approach was deemed adequate for gathering exact self-reported data that was required to accomplish the research goal (Yin, 2018:322).

The second step in the research design process is to determine the type of research design to use in the study.

#### **4.3.4.2 Types of research design**

There are two types of research design, namely, exploratory design and conclusive research design (Sekeran & Bougie, 2019:43). These types of research design are illustrated in figure 4.3 below, after which a description of each design follows.



**Figure 4.3: Types of research design**

**Source:** Adapted from Sarstedt and Mooi (2018:14); Sekaran and Bougie (2016:43)

Figure 4.3 indicates the two types of research design, exploratory and conclusive research. Exploratory research is used to investigate and learn more about a phenomenon while also gathering primary data that aids in defining the problem and formulating a hypothesis.

When there is minimal information available about a research problem and the researcher wants to learn more about it, exploratory research is used (Saunders et al., 2016:139). Because it allows the researcher to generate clear notions, exploratory research can be utilised as the initial step in refining a topic and as a foundation for future research (Salkind, 2017:15). Although exploratory research can employ both quantitative and qualitative methods, it is often qualitative in character because it aims to better understand a problem and examine participants' thoughts and opinions (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2018:14).

**Conclusive research** is designed to provide information in reaching conclusions or making decisions (Pride & Ferrell, 2014:132). A conclusive research design is associated with a quantitative research approach because the decisions can be made, based on some statistical analysis. Conclusive research is in two forms, which are correlational research and descriptive research.

- **Correlational research** is research that is designed to test the cause-and-effect relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2016:139). Correlational research aims to test if there is a link between two variables. Correlational research is useful when two variables need to be measured (Salkind, 2017:203). Correlational research is important in assessing the relationship between two variables where the variables interact with each other (Christensen et al., 2020:41).



- **Descriptive research** aids in the description of objects, issues, and situations (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2018:14). A descriptive research design elucidates the existing qualities of a phenomenon under investigation in order to gain a better knowledge of the events; hence, descriptive research elucidates the current state of an issue under investigation (Salkind, 2017:12). In research, descriptive research aims to answer who, what, where, why, and how questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019:12).

For this study, **descriptive research** design was appropriate because it assisted in obtaining, understanding and confirming the factors of social media that influence brand equity. The analyses of the data described the consumer and the social media factors that influences consumer perceptions of brand equity (value) of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe. The descriptive research contributed to the objectives of the study by revealing the social media factors that influence brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe.

The next step in the marketing research process is to prepare the research design. The following discussion focuses on preparing the research design which is the fifth step in the marketing research process.

#### ***4.3.5 Step 5: Prepare the research design***

The fifth step in the marketing research process, as indicated in Figure 4.2, is to prepare the research design. Preparing the research design involves determining how the primary data will be collected to achieve the research objectives. The focus of step 5 of the research process is on the data collection approach, the instrument, data collection method and sampling that was used for the study.

##### ***4.3.5.1 Determining the data collection approach***

After choosing the most appropriate research design for the study, the next step is to determine the way the data is collected to satisfy the research objectives. Data can be collected through survey research, observational research, and experimental research (Mooi et al., 2018:66). These ways of collecting data are discussed below:

- **Survey research-** Survey research is a way of obtaining primary information from study participants by questioning them (Sekeran & Bougie, 2019:97). In survey research, respondents are asked several questions (verbally or in writing) in line with the research objectives and the questioning is standardised and structured (Leavy, 2017:101). As such, a survey allows for the identification of opinions and perceptions of respondents through the collection of huge amounts of data from the target population.

- **Observational research**- a data collection technique involving the researcher observing and recording the actions and behaviour of respondents without interacting with them (Clow & James, 2014:13).
- **Experimental research**-The experimental research strategy is a method of collecting primary data by altering one or more factors, treating them differently, and controlling one of the variables (Saunders et al., 2016:142). Controlling of variables enables the researcher to test an hypothesis, check for different responses and explain the cause-and-effect relationships of variables.

For the purpose of this study, **survey research** was selected as the data collection approach in order to achieve the study objectives. Survey research is fast, does not alter the research conditions and enables the identification of the real situation on the ground to assess thoughts and seek answers to questions from the mobile network consumers on the social media factors that influence brand equity (Leavy, 2017:101). Information obtained from the mobile network consumers through asking them questions helped to determine the social media factors that influence the brand equity of the mobile network operators involved in the study.

There are various types of survey methods that can be used and table 4.4 summarises the types of survey methods and their defining characteristics as well as examples.

**Table 4.2: Types of survey methods**

| Type of survey method                      | Characteristics   |
|--|---|
| Interviewer-administered survey            | Makes use of door-to-door interviews, telephonic interviews, and personal interviews.   |
| Self-administered survey                   | A survey questionnaire that is intended to be completed by the respondent without the involvement of a researcher or interviewer. Associated with the usage of questionnaires that can be sent via mail, fax, or in person. |
| Computer-assisted self-administered survey | Associated with the use of computer technology to carry out the survey and can use e-mails, web, and internet surveys.  |
| Hybrid survey                              | Associated with the use of tests to carry out the survey and can make use of concept tests, message tests and naming exercises.   |

**Source:** Adapted from Sarstedt and Mooi (2018:62)

Table 4.4 summarises the types of surveys and associated methods of carrying out the surveys that are available to a researcher. The choice of the data collection method depends on the kind of data one wants to gather to address the research problem.

For the purpose of this study, the **self-administered survey was used**. This type of survey makes use of questionnaires that can be administered through the mail, fax, and face-to-face surveys to collect information from the target population (Leavy, 2017:107). The current study used **self-administered questionnaires** administered through face-to-face survey. The data was collected in February 2020 before COVID-19 restrictions that began in March 2020 in Zimbabwe.

#### ***4.3.5.2 Determining the data collection instrument***

A self-administered survey was used to collect data from the consumers as this increased the response rate and obtained as much information as possible from the target group of individuals. The most appropriate data collection instrument for this study was a self-administered questionnaire administered through face-to-face survey (before lockdown in 2020) by the researcher and assistant. The questionnaire was chosen, based on its usefulness in the collection of valid and standardised responses.

#### ***4.3.5.3 Determining the data collection method***

The survey method that was used in this study to collect data from the target group was the self-administered survey that was face-to-face administration of the questionnaire to collect data. Data for this study was collected by distributing the questionnaires in person, face-to-face to individuals who had agreed to participate in the study. Questionnaires were distributed to the identified consumers and upon completion, the researcher and assistant collected the questionnaires to categorise responses in preparation for data analysis. Table 4.5 indicates

the main advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face self-administered questionnaire surveys.

**Table 4.3: Advantages and disadvantages of self-administered face to face administered questionnaires.**

| Advantages                          | Disadvantages  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| It is cheap                         | Security concerns for the data collector may arise such as hostility, violence, and destruction of questionnaires. |
| Fast                                | Respondents need monitoring  |
| High response rate                  | Questionnaire length may affect answering of all questions   |
| No interviewer error or bias        | Respondents' misunderstanding may be high  |
| Anonymity of respondents            | No guarantee of respondents' anonymity   |
| Can access a wide geographical area | Difficult to follow up with respondents  |

**Source:** Adapted from Sarstedt and Mooi (2018:62)

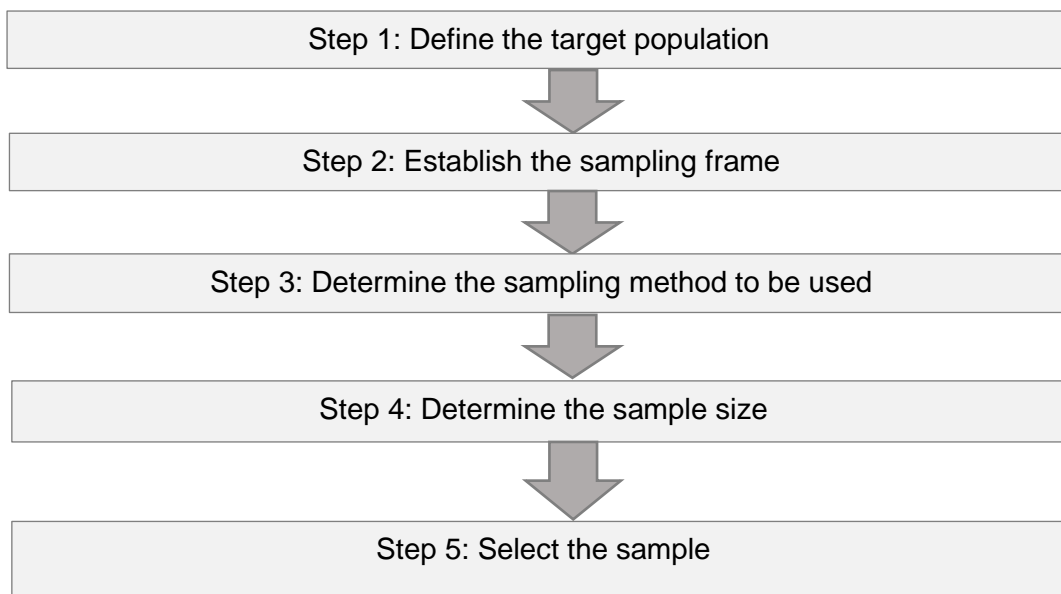
Despite the above-mentioned (Table 4.5) advantages of face-to-face self-administered questionnaires, this method of data collection may have some errors. Some of these as identified by Nosek et al. (2018) and Adams et al. (2014:87); the errors are discussed below:

- **Coverage error-** occurs when the researcher administers the survey to a few respondents compared to the targeted group. Coverage error occurs because not all members of the targeted population can be accessed. Coverage error was not a problem in this study because the self-administered surveys had a high response rate.
- **Non-response error-** occurs when information being sought is not obtained from the respondents and when the actual group of respondents differs from the targeted group of respondents. Non-response error can be in the form of low response rate, refusal to respond or answer all the questions in the questionnaire which all result in the absence of information. This error was of concern in this study because some respondents returned questionnaires that were not fully completed.
- **Sampling error-** refers to the disparity between the sample and the targeted population's genuine features, traits, behaviours, and attributes. When the wrong population is used to choose a sample, or when the estimates used to select the sample do not contain a complete list of the members of the target population, sampling error can arise.
- **Measurement error-** refers to the deviation between the number of respondents who indicate that they will take part in the survey and the actual number of respondents who participate in the study (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2018:34). Sometimes the respondents may not indicate their true value on the measure in the questionnaire and this brings in the measurement error.

After determining the data collection method, it becomes important to design the sample plan which is discussed below.

#### **4.3.5.4 Designing the sample plan**

Salkind (2017:95) defines sampling as the act of selecting a number of respondents who may provide the researcher with data from which the researcher can form inferences about a group (population) that these persons represent. Sampling is the process of selecting a subset or a proportion of respondents from the overall population under investigation from whom the researcher wishes to acquire data for the study (Ragab & Arisha, 2017:11). When money and time constraints exist, collecting data from a sample that represents the entire population is a viable option. Samples should, as much as possible, reflect the genuine picture of the entire population so that conclusions may be easily generalised. Rose et al. (2015:189) identify five steps in the sampling process as illustrated in Figure 4.4.



**Figure 4.4: Steps in the sampling process**

**Source:** Adapted from Rose, Spinks and Canhoto (2015:189)

#### **4.3.6 Step 1: Define the target population**

Defining the target population of the study is the first step in the sampling process as indicated in Figure 4.4. The target population is a group of people that have similar qualities, experiences, characteristics, attitudes, and behaviours, among other features, that are relevant to the study and can be valuable sources of information when they respond to the research questions (Hair et al., 2016:222).

The target population for this study was made up of both male and female mobile consumers (of Econet, NetOne, and Telecel) in Harare Province, aged between 18 and 64 years. Harare province has a population size of 1 542 813 (World Population Review, 2021:2). According to

the population profile of Zimbabwe, 55% of the population is within the 18 to 64 age group. Since this study targeted males and females in the 18 to 64 age group that make up 55% of the population, 848 548 mobile consumers that reside in Harare were the target population in this study. The 18 to 64 age group was targeted in this study because this is the group that commonly uses social media for communication purposes (Smith & Anderson, 2018:1; Stiehler & Mashaba, 2016:15). Harare province was chosen, as it is the capital city of Zimbabwe, it has the highest population size compared to the other ten provinces and has the highest percentage of the mobile users in Zimbabwe compared to the other ten provinces (Zimstat, 2018:14; POTRAZ, 2017:4). Harare is also the business hub of the country and has a high concentration of mobile network operator outlets and consumers of all the three mobile network operators (POTRAZ, 2021:6; Zimstat, 2018:14).

### **Unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis refers to the elements that have the required qualities for which the independent and dependent variable are assessed and are accessible for selection in the study, are referred to as the unit of analysis (Rubin & Babbie, 2016:163). Because they were regarded as rich sources of information with extensive knowledge on the subject, the mobile network users of the three mobile carriers in Harare province (NetOne, Telecel, and Econet) served as the unit of study. Table 4.6 shows the unit of analysis for the study.

**Table 4.4: Unit of analysis of respondents**

| <b>Mobile operator</b>        | <b>Number of participants</b> |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Econet subscribers in Harare  | 566 830                       |
| Telecel subscribers in Harare | 38 184                        |
| NetOne subscribers in Harare  | 243 534                       |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>848 548</b>                |

**Source:** POTRAZ, Operator returns (2021:7)

Table 4.6 shows the number of consumers each mobile operator has in Harare and all these subscribers were part of the target population.

#### **4.3.7 Step 2: Establish the sampling frame**

Establishing the sampling frame for the study is the second step in the sampling process, as shown in Figure 4.4. Sampling frame refers to the working population and the list of elements from which the sample is selected (Greener & Martelli, 2018:65). A sampling frame, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2019:158), is an up-to-date and accurate comprehensive list of study subjects whose study conclusions can only be generalised to this population

In this study, the sampling frame was difficult to determine since there were no lists of mobile consumers' names that could be obtained from the mobile network operators because this is confidential information which could not be easily made public. Thus, the researcher approached conveniently available consumers to be part of the study and those that agreed were added to the sample frame.

#### **4.3.8 Step 3: Determine the sampling method to use**

The third step in the sampling process is to determine the sampling method to be used for the study as shown in Figure 4.4. The sampling method is the criterion that can be utilised to choose study samples. Probability and non-probability sampling methods are the two types of sampling methods available (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019:214).

**Probability sampling** - all members of the population have an equal chance of being chosen for the sample, allowing a small percentage of the total population to produce a trustworthy result (Sarstedt, Bengart, Shaltoni & Lehmann, 2018:653). Simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster sampling, and systematic sampling are some of the probability sampling approaches available (Saunders et al., 2016:276). In simple random sampling, every element in the population has an equal chance of being selected for the study (Leavy, 2017:78). Stratified random sampling involves developing different strata with distinct layers of elements and then randomly selecting subjects from each stratum (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019:214). In cluster sampling, elements that are spread over a large area are subdivided into smaller areas and elements to include in the sample are then randomly chosen from each cluster. In systematic sampling, elements are chosen based on predetermined criteria or sequence that comes up by chance (Cooper & Schindler, 2018:388).

**In non-probability sampling**, the chances of any element of the population being part of the sample is unknown (Sarstedt et al., 2018:653). There is no probability attached to the selection and inclusion of a member of the population. The selection of elements of population for the study is based on personal judgement that may be influenced by the researcher's experience and convenience (Hair et al., 2016:174). However, findings cannot be generalised to populations outside of sample. Non-probability sampling methods include convenience sampling, judgement sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling (Cohen et al., 2018:217).

In the current study, **convenience sampling**, which is non-probability sampling method, was used to select the mobile network consumers to participate in the study drawn from the three mobile operators. Convenience sampling required any mobile network consumer who was available and ready and willing to participate in the study. Consumers of mobile network

operators' goods and services who were readily available were chosen to participate in study. A convenience sampling method was applied by approaching random people on the street in the city of Harare, greeting them, introducing oneself and displaying the personal ID and then asking them if they were willing to take part in the study. Individuals who agreed to participate in the study were added to the list of the sample frame. The researcher explained in detail, the nature, and objectives of the study to the participants who were then asked to sign the consent form. As such, the first available participants were targeted. However, findings of the study may not be generalisable and representative of context outside the current study.

#### **4.3.9 Step 4: Determine the sample size**

The fourth step in the sampling process, as indicated in Figure 4.4, is to determine the sample size for the study. The sample size refers to the number of participants to be included in the study (Saunders et al., 2019:300). Roscoe (1975) proposes the following rules of thumb for determining sample size: for quantitative research a minimum of 30 respondents is needed as this might allow statistical tests to be used and sample sizes larger than 30 and less than 500 are appropriate for most research (Saunders et al, 2019: Adams, 2007). There are a number of formulae and methods that can be used to determine the sample size. These formulae usually require the knowledge of the variance in the population, the maximum desirable error and the acceptable error risk (Research advisors, 2006:1). The sample size calculator of Survey system (2012) was used to calculate the sample size in this study because it makes use of a formula that calculates the sample size based on the population, confidence level and confidence interval (Creative Research Systems, 2012:2). According to <https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>, which is a website that contains the survey system sample size calculator, for the population (848 548) and a confidence interval of 5% with a confidence level of 95%, at least 384 respondents were required for this study to be valid. The current study used 384 respondents as the sample size and the sample size is within the 30m to 500 range proposed as the rule of thumb by Roscoe (1975). The survey system gives a sensible result, providing a manageable sample size. The calculator is accessed freely on <https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>.

#### **4.3.10 Step 5: Select the sample**

Selecting the sample is the last step in the sampling process as shown in Figure 4.4. The selection of the sample members was done on convenience. Any mobile network consumer that was available, ready, and willing to participate in the study was approached to be part of the study and those who agreed were added to the sample frame. The researcher explained the detail, nature, and objectives of the study to the participants who were then asked to sign the consent form. This sampling method was chosen because it is cheap; the population is



readily available for the data collection, it is easy to measure and data can be collected in a short time frame (Leavy, 2017:110).

The next step in the marketing research process is to design the questionnaire. The following discussion focuses on designing the questionnaire which is the sixth step in the research process.

#### **4.3.11 Step 6: Design the questionnaire**

The sixth step in the marketing research process, as indicated in Figure 4.2, is to design the questionnaire. A questionnaire is a collection of pre-written questions that allow participants to provide input on study-related topics in order to answer the research questions (Greener & Martelli, 2020:86). A questionnaire is a set of standardised questions arranged in a specific order that the researcher administers in the field to elicit specific information from the participants in the study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019:134).

There are three categories of questionnaires, and these are structured questions, semi-structured questions, and unstructured questions. These types of questions are briefly discussed below:

- **Structured questions:** closed-ended questions that provide responders with a variety of response alternatives are used (Gneezy, 2017; Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2014:128). Structured questions do not allow for free responses; instead, respondents must choose from a pre-determined list of options. In structured questioning, the format of the questions is also stated.
- **Semi-structured** questions use a mixture of structured, close-ended, and unstructured, open-ended questions in the same questionnaire (Saunders et al., 2018:449). The open-ended questions allow for probing and seeking for further explanations for chosen options in the close-ended questions (Brotherton, 2018).
- **Unstructured** questions are open-ended questions that provide the opportunity to get information outside the given options (Sekerani & Bougie, 2019:143). Unstructured, open ended questions require respondents to fill in the information freely without any predetermined responses given. Unstructured questions allow respondents to react freely and do not require them to choose from a pre-determined list of options (Brotherton, 2018). Instead, respondents are given the opportunity to communicate their feelings, thoughts, and ideas, and the researcher is given the opportunity to request explanation on issues.

The current study made use of a **structured self-administered questionnaire** because it is quick, less biased, and simple to implement and analyse the data (Cohen et al., 2018:471). A

self-completion questionnaire which refers to a questionnaire that the respondent does themselves without the assistance of the researcher or the researcher asking questions was used (Salkind, 2017:228). However, structured questions require careful planning, limit response options, and prohibit getting additional information beyond the options provided (Christensen et al., 2020:326). Structured questionnaires make use of dichotomous, multiple-choice, or scale-type questions.

- **Dichotomous questions** have two possible responses and allows for clear distinction of respondent's opinion and feelings (Christensen et al., 2020:326). It may use a 'yes' or 'no' answer, 'agree' or 'disagree' and/or 'true' or 'false' questions.
- **Multiple-choice-questions** consist of the question and several possible answers and requires the respondent to choose a single response from the given alternatives (Mooi et al., 2018:73).
- **Scale-type questions** are close-ended questions that provide respondents with a list of possible responses to a question (Christensen et al., 2020:326). Scale questions can be used to capture the respondents' level of agreement to a statement.

There are four levels of measurement scales, and these are nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio scales (Sekerani & Bougie, 2019:213) which are briefly explained below.

- **Nominal scales** deal with non-numeric elements where no quantitative value can be attached to the elements and are used for labelling the elements (Leavy, 2017:105). Nominal scales use quantitative value only to classify data into groups.
- **Ordinal scales** are concerned with arranging the elements into a defined order and do not consider the difference between the arrangement items (Greener & Martelli, 2018:71).
- **Interval scales** are numerical scales that consider both the order of items and consider the differences between the values of the items (Greener & Martelli, 2020:71).
- **Ratio scales** are similar to interval scales in that they both have an equal interval between values, but they differ in that the ratio scale has a true zero point (Leavy, 2017:105).

The current study used a **structured questionnaire** with dichotomous, multiple choice and nominal Likert-scale-type questions. The questionnaire comprised sections with section A (made up of multiple questions and dichotomous questions) focusing on qualification questions and background information that included respondent's age, ownership of a mobile phone, access to social media and following of a mobile network operator on social media. Section B consisted of Likert-type scale questions on social media factors and brand equity elements. The Likert-type scales requiring respondents to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with a statement were used because it is quick, less biased, and easy to code

the responses and opinions of respondents (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2018:71). Section C of the questionnaire consisted of dichotomous questions that focused on respondents' demographic information that included gender, occupation, income level and highest qualification. The copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix A.

The next step in the marketing research process is to pre-test the questionnaire to identify any errors and ensure that suitable questions are developed by the researcher. The following discussion focuses on pre-testing the questionnaire which is step seven in the marketing research process.

#### ***4.3.12 Step 7: Pre-test the questionnaire***

The seventh step in the marketing research process, as indicated in Figure 4.2, involves pre-testing the questionnaire. A pre-test is a questionnaire trial run conducted with members of the targeted population who are not participants in the study but share the same characteristics as the intended participants (Sekeran & Bougie, 2019:155).

For the current study, a pre-test survey was carried out to determine the clarity of the questionnaire items, instructions, and layout before it was administered to the actual respondents. The questionnaires were distributed to ten consumers in Harare who were not be part of the sample to evaluate their understanding of items in the questionnaire to verify that the questions were straightforward and able to elicit the required information. Errors were fixed before the administration of the questionnaire in the actual sample.

The next step in the marketing research process is to conduct the investigation and the following discussion focuses on how the fieldwork was done (step eight in the marketing research process).

#### ***4.3.13 Step 8: Conduct the investigation (fieldwork)***

The eighth step in the marketing research process, as indicated in Figure 4.2, involves conducting the fieldwork. At this stage, the researcher sought to find answers to the research questions. Data was collected by the researcher and one research assistant. The research assistant worked under the supervision of the researcher. The assistant's role was to support the researcher in recruiting research participants, distributing questionnaires in the field, gathering data from the respondents, and maintaining accurate records of the data collection process, safeguarding the confidentiality of research subjects and the collection of questionnaires from the participating respondents for onward submission to the researcher. The researcher ensured that the research assistant signed a confidentiality agreement form (copy attached as Appendix D). The researcher provided some basic training to the assistant on issues to do with study protocols, including study goals and information about

questionnaires, research ethics, the process of conducting informed consent, participants' recruitment procedures, courtesy, justice, confidentiality issues, respect for persons, personal skills in recruiting participants, communication skills and the ability to work accurately. Only those participants who agreed to participate in the study, were told of the nature and objectives of the study and asked to sign the consent form were allowed to complete the questionnaire.

The researcher and the assistant recruited participants in person in the streets of Harare. The researcher and research assistant introduced themselves to the potential participants, informed the potential participants of the study and disclosed that they were not identifiable and that results were to be used for academic research. Issues of privacy and confidentiality were disclosed to the potential participants. The fact that the research was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Review Committee was revealed. The participants were also given the name of the researcher, the study supervisor, and their contact details, in case the participants had some questions regarding the ethical aspects of the study. The participants filled in the questionnaire by themselves individually without the assistance of any other person or any form of manipulation. The researcher and assistant allowed each participant to fill in the questionnaire in 30 minutes and collected the filled in questionnaire, kept them safe away from other people, in preparation for data processing and analysis. The researcher and assistant thanked participants at the end of the process.

The next step in the marketing research process is to process and analyse the collected data and the following discussion highlights how the data was processed and analysed (step nine in the marketing research process).

#### ***4.3.14 Step 9: Process and analyse data***

The ninth step in the marketing research process, as indicated in Figure 4.2, is to process and analyse the collected data. This stage is critical in ensuring that the obtained data is turned into meaningful, relevant, and useable data that can be used to draw significant inferences and conclusions about the study (Bryman & Bell, 2019). Data analysis is a systematic method of logically describing, illustrating, and evaluating data in order to turn it into a form that can be analysed (Devellis, 2017:44).

There was no need to code the responses after data collection since a closed-ended structured questionnaire with Likert-type questions with pre-coded responses (assigned numerical value to the response options) was used. The gathered data was entered into a spreadsheet using a SPSS software programme, cleaned, and presented in the form of graphs and tables. Descriptive analysis and inferential statistics were done using a computer statistical software called Statistical Package for Social Sciences 21 (SPSS) to summarise the

data. Descriptive statistics are meant to summarise and organise huge volumes of data and make it easy to understand through numerical procedures indicating the distribution, central tendency, and variability of the data. Descriptive analysis was done to summarise and categorise the characteristics of individuals who took part in the study. To give information on the sample, bivariate descriptions were done, t-tests and factor analysis were used. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also applied. Inferential statistics were done to test whether relationships exist between different variables and if there were statistically significant differences between means of continuous variables across different nominal groups. The services of a statistician were sought to assist with the data description and analysis process. For confidentiality of information, the statistician was made to sign a confidentiality form, a copy is attached as Appendix C.

next step in the marketing research process is to interpret and analyse the data. The tenth step in the marketing research process is the interpretation and analysis of data as indicated in figure 4.2.

#### ***4.3.15 Step 10: Interpret the results and compile the research report***

The tenth and final step of the marketing research process, as indicated in Figure 4.2, requires the researcher to interpret and analyse data. At this stage, the researcher, with the assistance of the statistician, interpreted and presented the information gathered in line with the research question. The data analysis and interpretation, as well as the conclusions and recommendations of the study, are dealt with in chapter 5 and chapter 6.

In the next section, issues of reliability and validity of the measurement scales are discussed.

## **4.4 FACTOR ANALYSIS**

Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were used to test the reliability and validity of the scales of measurement that were used in the study.

Factor analysis was done to ensure validity of scales. There are two kinds of factor analysis, and these are confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) (Mooi et al., 2018:273). The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was done to ensure validity of the scales. The exploratory factor analysis deals with establishing the construct and minimising the number of variables to smaller variables which are then split into specific constructs (Hair et al., 2016:322). EFA enhanced the identification of the social media factors that influence consumer brand equity of the mobile network operators. Confirmatory factor analysis deals with whether there is an observable relationship between variables in the study (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:29).

There are two forms of exploratory factor analysis, and these are the principal component analysis and the common factor analysis (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2018:236). The principal component analysis converts a huge set of variables to small sets of variables that still contain the critical information identifiable with the huge data set (Osborne & Banjanovic, 2016:3). Common factor analysis uses only the most common factors to account for the differences in a dataset (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2018:236). For the current study, **confirmatory factor analysis** (CFA) was done. The common factor analysis model was used to identify the underlying constructs on the social media factors and to account for the common factors in the scales. The fitness of the CFA model was assessed using the following indices: Chi-square statistic, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis's index (TLI) and standardised root mean square residual (SRMR). A Chi-square goodness of fit test was performed to establish if the CFA model fits the data adequately. Table 4.7 provides a summary of the indices used to assess the fitness of the CFA model

**Table 4.5: Summary of the indices used to assess the fitness of the CFA model**

| Name of indices                                 | Description  | Comments on the indices   | Source(s)  |
|---|--|---|--|
| Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) | Root mean square error of approximation refers to the difference between the studied model and an hypothetical model in which every component in the model is related to every other component                                     | The RMSEA is a badness-of-fit index, with 0 being the best match.   | Jellison, Roberts, Bowers, Combs, Beaman, Wayant, & Vassrr (2019). |
| Comparative fit index (CFI)                     | Comparative fit index assesses model fit by looking at the disparity between the data and the hypothesised model, while accounting for sample size concerns that plague the chi-squared test of model fit and the normed fit index | The CFI scale runs from 0 to 1, with higher values suggesting a better match.   | Kline (2016)   |
| Tucker-Lewis's index (TLI)                      | Tucker-Lewis's index is the non-normed fit that eliminates some of the negative bias difficulties  | The values may occasionally fall outside of the 0 to 1 range, should have values ranging from 0 to 1, with a cut off of .95 or more indicating a successful model fit | Yuan, Chan, Marcoulides & Bentler (2016)                           |
| Standardised root mean square residual (SRMR)   | Standardised root mean square residual refers to the square root of the mismatch between the sample and model covariance   | Spans from 0 to 1 with a value of .08 or less indicating an adequate model  | Marcoulides & Yuan (2017)  |
| Chi-square statistic                            | Chi-square statistic determines the difference between the observed and expected covariance matrices   | Closer to zero values suggest a better fit, lower differences in expected and observed covariance matrices imply a better match.                                      | Kline (2016)   |

#### **4.4.1 Reliability**

The term 'reliability' refers to the consistency and stability of a set of measurements (Yin, 2018:84). Reliability also refers repeatability to whether the process used can be repeated and produce the same results (Hair et al., 2016:233). As a result, when utilised at different times or presented to diverse groups of respondents from the same target demographic, a dependable instrument must produce consistent results. The Cronbach's alpha scale, which ranges from 0 to 1, was employed to assure reliability. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of a

test's internal consistency (Mooi et al., 2018:284). If the test score is more than 0.7, it is regarded reliable; thus, the higher the test score, the more reliable the test. The guidelines for interpreting the acceptable levels of reliability as given by Maree and Pietersen (2016:174) are shown below:

- 0.90- excellent reliability
- 0.80- good reliability
- 0.70- acceptable reliability
- Less than 0.6- poor reliability

In this study, the researcher was concerned with the questionnaire's internal consistency since it was necessary to confirm that the scaled items gave consistent findings when delivered to multiple groups of respondents from the same target population. The current study followed Maree and Pietersen's (2016:174) recommendations for interpreting the levels of reliability. In Chapter 5, the Cronbach's alpha for this study is discussed.

#### **4.4.2 Validity**

Validity refers to whether the study's methods, tactics, and strategies genuinely connect to or measure the issues being investigated in order to generalise the findings (Yin, 2018:84). Internal validity refers to whether the research instrument used in a study measure what it claims to measure, whereas external validity refers to whether the results obtained using a research instrument may be generalised from the sample to the target population. The nature and representativeness of the sample, as discussed in the sampling section, determines external validity. Internal validity is divided into three types: content validity, criteria validity, and construct validity. The three common forms of validity are discussed below:

- **Content validity**

Content validity is the ability of a research instrument to appropriately cover all aspects of the research variable and referred to as content validity (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:238). The instrument (the questionnaire) in this study was designed to cover all aspects of social media and brand equity, therefore all of the items that made up the measuring tool addressed all of the needed social media factors and brand equity variables. In this study, content validity was ensured by relying on the knowledge of the supervisors who are subject experts in the area and understand the elements being measured. The supervisors assessed the questionnaire, and their input was used to refine the questionnaire to ensure the effectiveness of the questions. In addition, a pre-test survey (discussed in section 4.3.7) was carried out to determine the clarity of the questionnaire items, instructions, and layout before it was administered in the actual respondents.



- **Criterion validity**

Criterion validity refers to the predictive capacity of the items used to measure a variable and compare the measured outcome to a predetermined standard (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018:254). The amount to which a measure is related to another set benchmark that is accepted to accurately reflect the same construct is referred to as criterion validity, and deals with the predictive ability of the items used to measure a variable and compares the measured result to a set standard (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:254). In the current study, no instrument that relates to the variables under study in Zimbabwe existed and as a result, criterion validity could not be tested.

- **Construct validity**

Construct validity ascertains how well a set of related items measure a construct which the researcher aims to measure, thus, the available theory and the kind of measuring instrument being used in the study can be used to scrutinise and determine the construct validity. Maree and Pietersen (2016:29) argue that construct validity can be enhanced through using statistical analysis techniques. In the current study, construct validity was safeguarded through the use of the statistical techniques in the form of t-tests and factor analysis and the use of a pre-validated questionnaire.

In the next section, the ethical considerations observed in the study are discussed.

## **4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical issues in research and data collection were observed in this study. The principles of research ethics decide whether an act or choice is morally good or bad during the research study's execution (Cohen et al., 2018:129). The researcher followed ethical principles that ensured the respondents' rights, respect for their privacy, the right to participate or not, the right to withdraw from the study at any time, confidentiality, human dignity, and anonymity were all respected, making this research study morally upright in the eyes of the respondents, UNISA, and society at large (Greener & Martelli, 2018:52; Sekeran & Bougie, 2019:159).

The Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Marketing and Retail Management at the University of South Africa (UNISA) provided ethical approval to ensure that the research study did not violate the respondents' rights (a copy of the ethical clearance letter is attached as Appendix B). The participant mobile network consumers in Harare Province gave their permission to the researcher. A consent form was included to the questionnaire to obtain their permission, and respondents were informed about their privacy as well as the nature, purpose, and scope of the study. The consent form indicated that all information gathered from respondents would be kept confidential, that respondents' identities would be kept hidden and

not divulged to anybody, and that the information obtained would not be shared with anyone. (A copy of the consent form is attached as Appendix A). No names were used in the study and no information was shared with any person other than for the process of this study.

In the next section, the limitations of the study are discussed.

## 4.6 STUDY LIMITATIONS

Within this study the following limitations were found:

- Respondents could fail to interpret the research questions and such **respondent errors** could affect the outcome of the study (See 4.3.5.3).
- The mobile network consumers' responses might be **biased** towards a particular mobile network operator, products, and brands (See 4.3.5.3).
- **Non-response error** might happen when respondents fail to participate in the study, give incomplete information or fail to complete the whole questionnaire (See 4. 3.5.3).
- **Sampling errors may occur**. Since the study involve many respondents, it would be difficult to come up with a sampling frame and this might affect the sampling technique in choosing the number of people to take part in the study (See 4.3.5.3).

In the next section, a summary of the research methodology used in the study is provided.

## 4.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the research methodology that was used in this study was discussed. The chapter outlined the marketing research process that was followed in this study. The chapter also highlighted the research design that was used, the sampling plan selected, the sample size and the data collection instrument chosen. The data presentation and data analysis procedures were also discussed. The chapter concluded by discussing issues of reliability and validity, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

The next chapter focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the results collected in the study.

# **CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter focused on the research methodology that was used for the present study. The chapter discussed the way in which the data was collected, how the data was cleaned and coded, as well as editing the data in preparation for the data analysis and interpretation processes. The ninth and tenth steps in the marketing research process, as indicated in Figure 4.1 in the methodology, Chapter 4, is to process and analyse the data, and interpret the results respectively, and this is the focus of the present chapter.

In this chapter, the research findings are presented to provide answers to the research questions. The chapter also provides an overview of the research objectives and the research design used in the study. Descriptive statistical analysis, factor analysis and inferential statistical analysis that was conducted for the study are discussed in detail. To enhance the analysis and interpretation of the findings, relevant tables and figures are provided.

In the next section, a brief overview of the research questions, research objectives and the research design adopted in the study is presented.

## **5.2 ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Descriptive, exploratory factor analysis, conformity factor analysis and inferential statistical analysis were used to analyse the data that was collected during the fieldwork. Descriptive statistics provided a summary of the characteristics of the participants. Numerical procedures were used to summarise and reveal the distribution of measurements. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was done to explore, from the data, what social media factors were formed from the set of data obtained in the study. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was done to confirm the constructs proposed from the theory on social media and brand equity and also to determine the validity of variables (or constructs) used in the analysis. Cronbach's Alpha was used to confirm the reliability of variables (or constructs) used in the analysis. The variables constructed for further analysis are the social media factors which are: social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms. Descriptive analysis and inferential statistics were done using a computer statistical software called Statistical Package for Social Sciences 21 (SPSS) to summarise the data. Inferential statistics were done to test whether relationships exist between different variables and if there were statistically significant differences between

means of continuous variables across different nominal groups. Two statistical techniques, that is (a) independent samples t-Test and (b) analysis of variance (ANOVA), were applied in this study. Therefore, to give information on the sample, t-tests and factor analysis were used. A statistician assisted in the analysis of the results.

The descriptive data that was collected for this study is discussed in the following sections.

### ***5.2.1 Descriptive statistical analysis***

The descriptive statistics are meant to summarise and organise huge volumes of data and make it easy to understand through numerical procedures indicating the distribution, central tendency, and variability of the data. Descriptive analysis was done to summarise and categorise the characteristics of individuals who took part in the study. The descriptive statistical analysis consists of the demographics and social media factors. The purposes of these questions, their results, and implications for the rest of the study are discussed below. The analysis was based on the 306 qualifying questionnaires.

In the following section, the demographic profiles of respondents are discussed.

#### ***5.2.1.1 Demographic profile of respondents***

The demographic profile of respondents classifies people who participated in the study for statistical purposes and includes the following: net income level, gender, age, occupation and highest educational qualification. In the current study, profiling the demographic characteristics of respondents was useful in outlining the type of consumers (with regard to gender, age, net income level, occupation and qualifications) who are targeted by the mobile network operators in their social media campaigns. A total of 306 respondents answered the demographic questions and were analysed.

The demographic profile of the respondents who took part in the survey are discussed in detail in the following section:

#### **Age group**

In question 3, respondents were asked to indicate their age group. The age group of respondents was important as it helped to identify the age groups that took part in the study. The age group also provided insight into whether age group influences social media use or not. A total of 306 respondents answered the question. The results are presented in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Age group of respondents (n=306)**

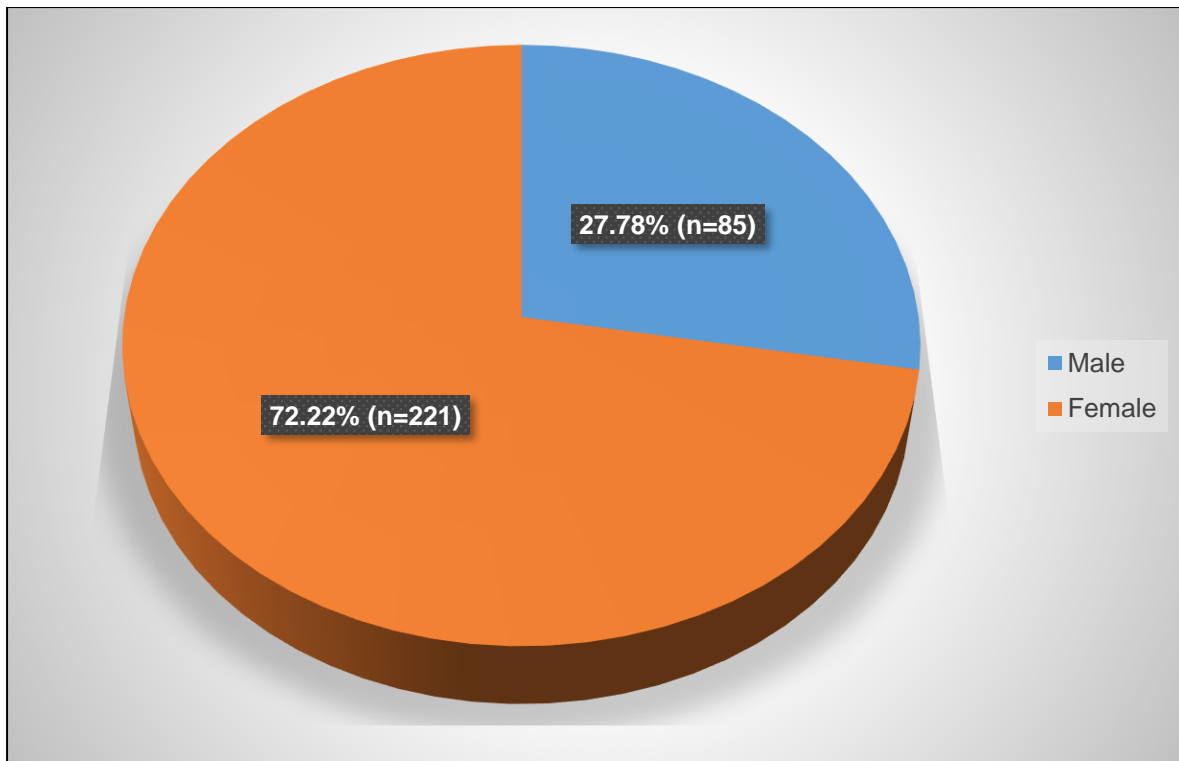
| <b>Variable</b>  | <b>Category</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Age group</b> | 18 to 25        | 201              | 65.69%         |
|                  | 26 to 33        | 50               | 16.34%         |
|                  | 34 to 41        | 35               | 11.44%         |
|                  | 42 to 49        | 9                | 2.94%          |
|                  | 50 to 57        | 8                | 2.61%          |
|                  | 58 to 65        | 3                | 0.98%          |
|                  | <b>Total</b>    | <b>306</b>       | <b>100</b>     |

**Source:** Question 3

The results presented in Table 5.1 show that the majority of respondents were in the 18-to-25-year age group. Statistics show that the 18-to-25-year age group is the most active on social media and Statistica (2021) indicates that as of 2019, a third of online users worldwide were aged between 18 and 24 years making up 18% of global social media users. Social media users in this age bracket constitute the biggest group of online users worldwide and the figures obtained in the current study are in line with the world trend. Table 5.1 indicates that 16.34% (n=50) of respondents were in the 26-to-33-year age group and 11.44% (n=35) of respondents were in the 34-to-41-year age group. There were 2.94% (n=9) of respondents in the 42 to 49 age group, while 2.61% (n=8) of respondents were in the 50 to 57 age group and 0.98% (n=3) of respondents were in the 58 to 65 age group. Although it was not the intention of the current study to analyse age specifically, the sample was skewed towards the 18-to-25-year age group and the premise that Zimbabwean population is youthful (Dzamara, 2018:2) may explain this result.

### **Gender**

In question 8, respondents were asked to indicate their gender. Gender was important as it provided additional context regarding the gender represented in the sample and the effect of gender on social media influence on brand equity and gender. The results obtained are presented in Figure 5.1.

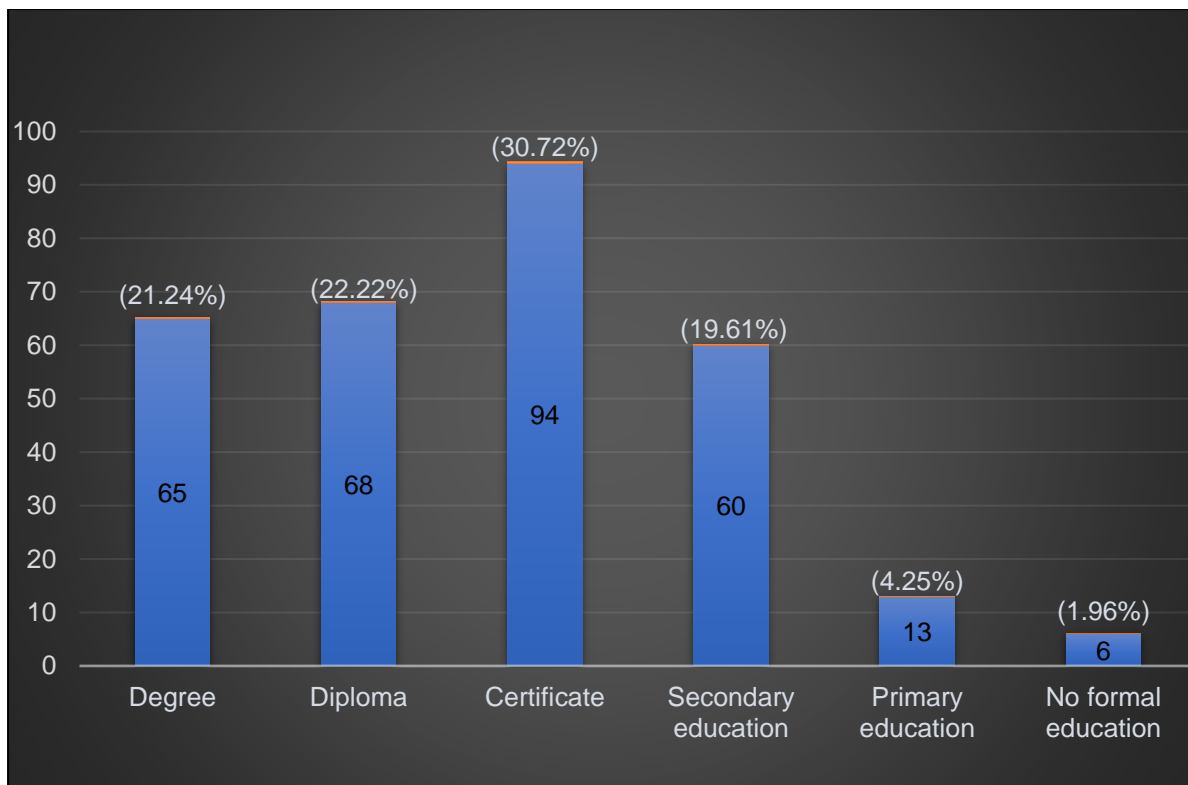


**Figure 5.1: Gender (n=306)**

The findings presented in Figure 5.1 shows that the overwhelming majority of the respondents (72.22%; n=221) were females while the remaining 27.78% (n=85) of respondents were males. Since convenience sampling technique was used, the researcher came into contact with more females who were doing shopping in preparation for stricter lockdown conditions that were to be enforced in the following few days. This result is not expected to scew the findings.

### **Qualifications**

Respondents were asked in question 9 to indicate their education levels. The qualification of respondents was important in highlighting whether or not there could be a link between social media use and qualification and also whether a respondent's brand equity formation through social media is influenced by the qualification of an individual. The results obtained are presented in Figure 5.2.

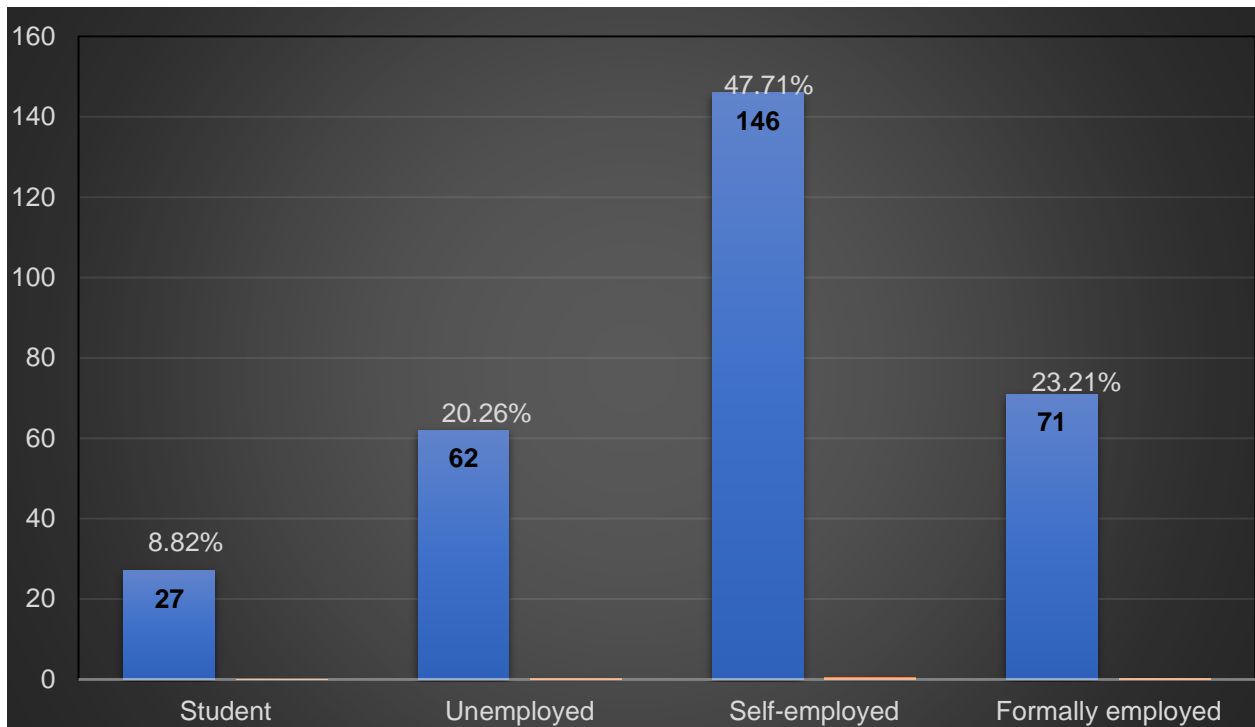


**Figure 5.2: Qualifications (n=306)**

The results shown in Figure 5.2 indicates that 30.72% (n=94) of the respondents had a certificate qualification while 22.22% (n=68) of respondents had a diploma qualification, 21.24% (n=65) of respondents had a degree qualification and a further 19.61% (n=60) of respondents had a secondary school education. These results clearly indicate that the overwhelming majority (98.04%= 21.24+22.22+30.72+19.61+4.25) of respondents had some formal education. The qualifications of respondents were important for the study since the qualification may have an impact on consumers social media use, frequency of use and shape the brand equity formations of consumers. The results further serve as an indication of the importance of education to Zimbabweans since most of the respondents had some formal educational qualifications.

### **Occupation**

In question 10, respondents were asked to indicate their current occupation. The question was asked in order to ascertain whether occupation has an effect on social media usage. The results are presented in Figure 5.3.



**Figure 5.3: Occupation (n=306)**

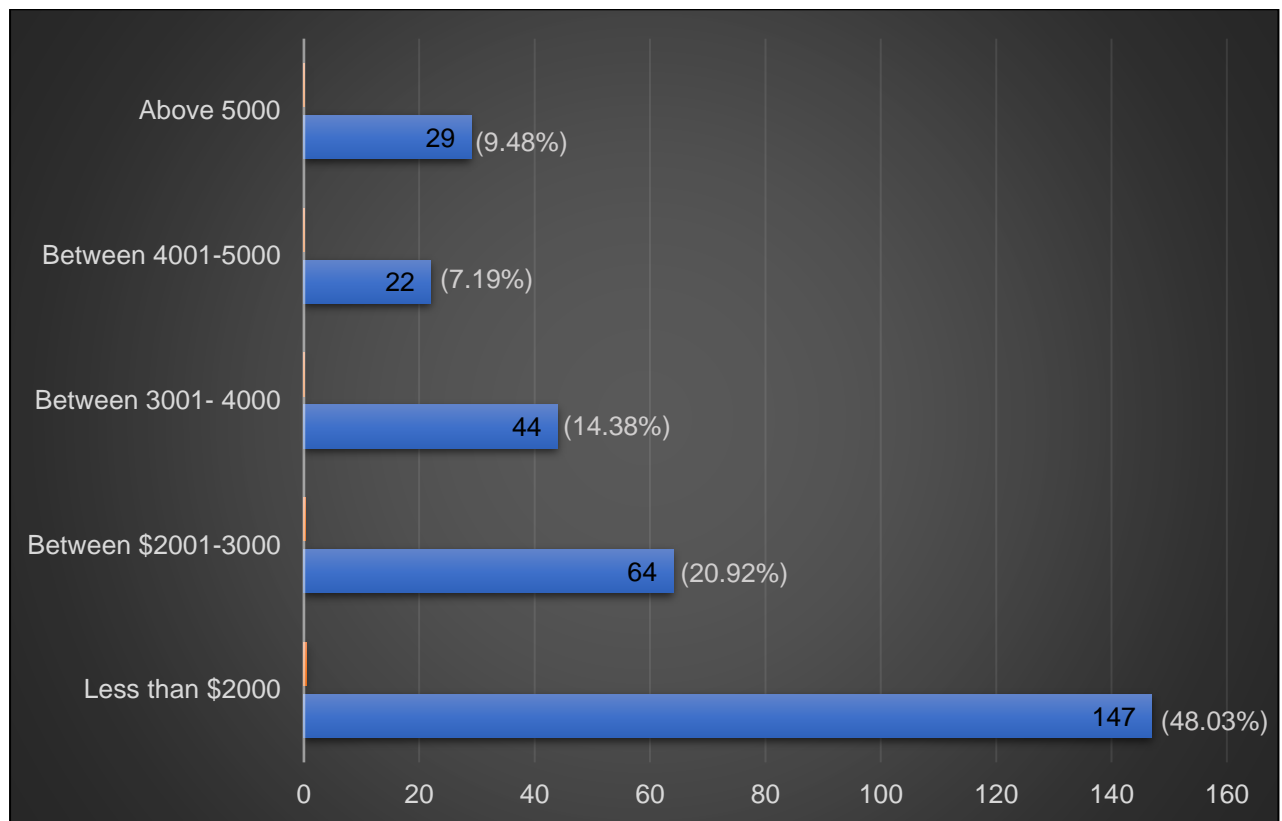
As depicted in Figure 5.3, only 23.21% (n=71) of respondents indicated that they were formally employed. The results show that the majority (47.71%, n=146) of the respondents were self-employed and this can be linked to the poor state of the Zimbabwean economy and job market that most people are self-employed. Official statistics shows that the national unemployment figures in Zimbabwe were at 4.95% as at 2019 statistics (Statistica, 2020:1; Trading Economics, 2020:1). Unemployment rate refers to the percentage of employees who are jobless (Chapperlow, 2020). Unemployed therefore means that an economically active person is jobless while formally employed means an employee is under an established working agreement that includes, salary or wages, health benefits, and defined work hours and workdays (Chapperlow, 2020). Results obtained in the study indicated a 20.26% (n=62) unemployment rate and this is higher than the national average unemployment rate of 4.95%. The result may be because Harare as the capital city attracts more people and job opportunities are reduced because of increased demand for jobs and the poor state of the economy. Table 5.3 shows that 8.82% (n=27) of respondents indicated that they were students.

### **Net income level**

Respondents were asked in question 11 to indicate their net income levels per month. The question was asked in order to ascertain whether the net income levels per month had an effect on respondents' access to and use of social media platforms and possibly, shapes their



perceptions of the value they attach to products and businesses. The results obtained are presented in Figure 5.4.



**Figure 5.4: Net income level (n=306)**

As depicted in Figure 5.4, a significant number of respondents, 48.03% (n=147) of respondents earned less than 2000 Zimbabwean Dollars (Z\$) per month, while 20.92% (n=64) of respondents earned between Z\$2001 and Z\$3000 and 14.38% (n=44) of respondents earned between Z\$3001 and Z\$4000. There were 9.48% (n=29) respondents who earned above Z\$5000 and 7.19% (n=22) of respondents earned between Z\$4001 and Z\$5000. The results show that the majority of the respondents previously indicated (as illustrated in Figure 5.4) that they are self-employed or students and with regard to income and this could explain the reason why the majority indicated that they earn less than Z\$2000. The results also show that all the respondents were earning some income and could use it to access social media platforms. The low-income earners could be relying on mobile data which is relatively cheap, compared to Wi-Fi, to access social media and also use the social media to shape their brand equity formations. The low-income levels could be due to the poor state of the Zimbabwean economy with more people engaging in informal businesses because of the poor job market and the impact of COVID-19.

In the following section, social media access through mobile networks is discussed.

### 5.2.2 Social media access through mobile networks (mobile data)

Social media can be accessed from various devices, such as desktops, laptops, tablets, gaming devices such as play stations, and mobile phones. In order to establish whether the respondents were using mobile data to access social media, their frequency of use of mobile data to access social media and the social media tools they access through mobile data, the following issues needed to be addressed:

- the mobile network operators used by the consumers to access social media.
- how often the consumers used mobile phones to access social media tools.
- the social media tools that the consumers access through the mobile networks.

The results are discussed in detail in the following section.

#### 5.2.2.1 Mobile network operators used to access social media platforms

In question 5, respondents were asked to indicate the mobile network operator the respondents use to access social media platforms. The question sought to determine the most common mobile network operator in Harare Province, the area under study. The results are presented in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2: Mobile network operators used to access social media platforms (n=306)**

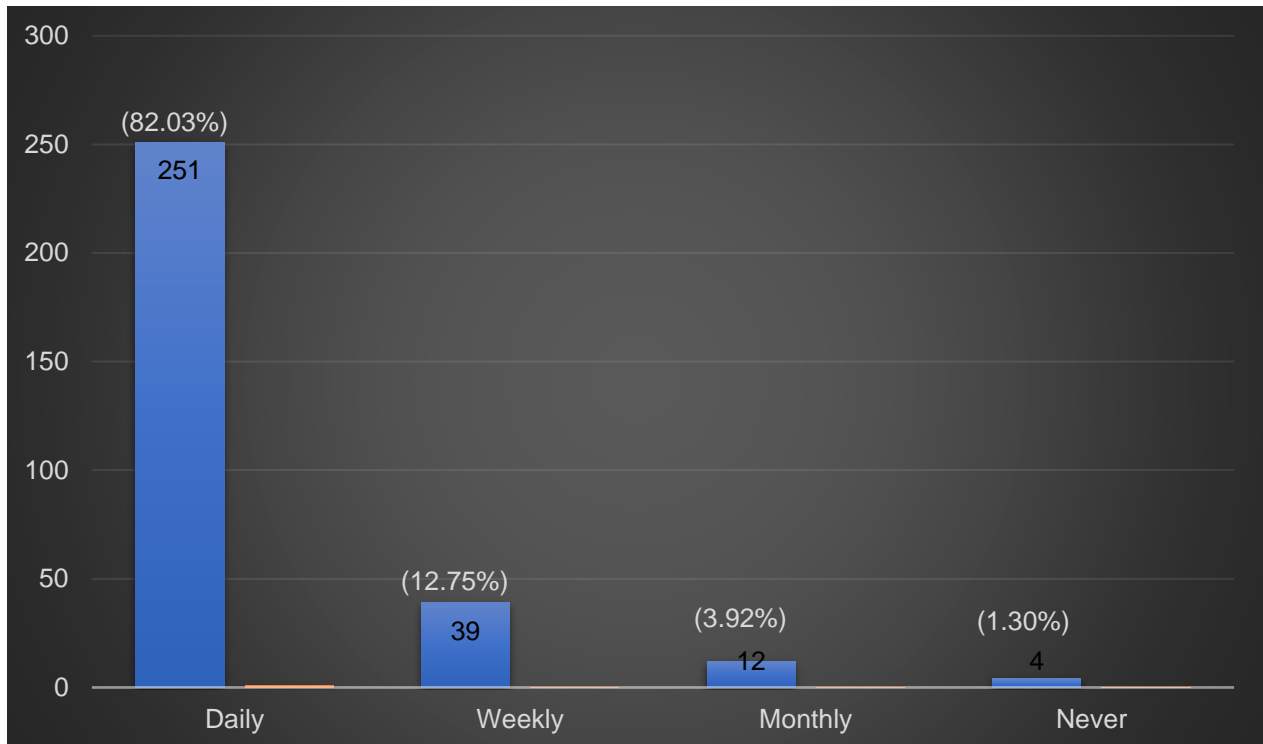
| Variable                | Category         | Frequency  | Percent    |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------|------------|
| Mobile Network Operator | Telecel Zimbabwe | 19         | 6.21%      |
|                         | NetOne Zimbabwe  | 51         | 16.67%     |
|                         | Econet Zimbabwe  | 230        | 75.16%     |
|                         | Other            | 6          | 1.96%      |
|                         | <b>Total</b>     | <b>306</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Source:** Question 5

The results illustrated in Table 5.2 shows that the overwhelming majority (75.16%; n=230) of the respondents make use of Econet Zimbabwe while 16.67% (n=51) of respondents use NetOne Zimbabwe. There were 6.21% (n=19) of respondents who use Telecel Zimbabwe and 1.96% (n=6) of respondents used other service providers. The results show that all (306) respondents access mobile networks, but they use different operators and people have a choice of mobile network operators. The fact that the majority of respondents use Econet may be attributed to Econet having the widest coverage in Zimbabwe and also Econet offers a wider range of special deals compared to the other networks (POTRAZ, 2020).

### 5.2.2.2 Frequency of use of mobile phone data to access social media

In question 4, respondents were asked to indicate how often they use mobile data to access social media. The question was asked to ascertain how often respondents used mobile data to access social media. The results are presented in Figure 5.5.



**Figure 5.5: Frequency of use of mobile phone network to access social media (n=306)**

The results shown in Figure 5.5 indicate that the majority, (82.03%; n=251) of the respondents use mobile data daily to access social media and 12.75% (n=39) of respondents used mobile data on a weekly basis. Furthermore, 3.92% (n=12) of respondents used mobile data monthly and only 1.30% (n=4) of respondents never used mobile data to access social media. The results show that the overwhelming majority of respondents [94.78% (82.03+12.75); n=290 (251+39)] use mobile data regularly (at least once a week) to access social media. The results are consistent with world trends that indicate that 99% of all social media users are accessing platforms via their mobile devices (Chaffey, 2021:1). A user is said to spend an average of 2 hours and 29 hours on social media each day (Olafson & Tran, 2021:1). The daily and weekly use of mobile data may imply that mobile data is affordable to most of the respondents.

### 5.2.2.3 Social media tools that the consumers access through the mobile data

In question 6, respondents were asked to indicate the social media tools that the respondents' access through mobile data. The question was asked to establish the common social media

tools that are accessed through mobile networks as well as to identify the more popular social media tools used by consumers. The results are presented in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3: Social media tools accessed through the mobile phone network (n=306)**

| Social media types |           | Yes    | No     | Total |
|--------------------|-----------|--------|--------|-------|
| Facebook           | Frequency | 261    | 45     | 306   |
|                    | %         | 85.29% | 14.71% | 100   |
| Instagram          | Frequency | 126    | 180    | 306   |
|                    | %         | 41.18% | 58.82% | 100   |
| Snap Chat          | Frequency | 41     | 265    | 306   |
|                    | %         | 13.40% | 86.60% | 100   |
| Twitter            | Frequency | 102    | 204    | 306   |
|                    | %         | 33.33% | 66.67% | 100   |
| Pinterest          | Frequency | 18     | 288    | 306   |
|                    | %         | 5.88%  | 94.12% | 100   |
| Google+            | Frequency | 115    | 191    | 306   |
|                    | %         | 37.58% | 62.42% | 100   |
| YouTube            | Frequency | 163    | 143    | 306   |
|                    | %         | 53.27% | 46.73% | 100   |
| LinkedIn           | Frequency | 21     | 285    | 306   |
|                    | %         | 6.86%  | 93.14% | 100   |
| Tumblr             | Frequency | 5      | 301    | 306   |
|                    | %         | 1.63%  | 98.37% | 100   |
| Reddit             | Frequency | 6      | 300    | 306   |
|                    | %         | 1.96%  | 98.04% | 100   |
| Quora              | Frequency | 6      | 300    | 306   |
|                    | %         | 1.96%  | 98.04% | 100   |
| Blogger            | Frequency | 4      | 302    | 306   |
|                    | %         | 1.31%  | 98.69% | 100   |
| Vimeo              | Frequency | 5      | 301    | 306   |
|                    | %         | 1.63%  | 98.37% | 100   |
| Word Press         | Frequency | 10     | 296    | 306   |
|                    | %         | 3.27%  | 96.73% | 100   |

**Source:** Question 6

The results presented in Table 5.3 shows that the majority of respondents (85.29%; n= 261) indicated that they access Facebook (FB) through mobile data, which is not surprising due to the popularity of this social media platform worldwide. Statistics by Facebook (2021:1) show that Facebook is one of the biggest social media platforms worldwide with 2.80 billion (33% of individuals worldwide) active users worldwide.

Table 5.3 indicates that 53.27% (n=163) of respondents accessed YouTube and 41.18% (n=126) of respondents accessed Instagram through mobile data. There were 37.58% (n=115)

of respondents who indicated that they access Google+ while 33.33% (n=102) of respondents accessed Twitter and 13.40% (41) of respondents accessed Snap Chat using mobile data. Another 6.86% (n=21) of respondents indicated that they access LinkedIn, 5.88% (n=18) of respondents accessed Pinterest, and 3.27% (n=10) of respondents accessed Word Press through mobile data. The following social media tools were accessed through mobile data by less than 2.0% of respondents: Tumblr, Reddit, Quora, Blogger and Vimeo.

In the next section, the social media factors and brand equity are discussed.

### **5.2.3 Social media factors and brand equity**

In order to determine social media factors that influence consumer-based brand equity, respondents were asked in question 7 to rate the respondents' level of agreement or disagreement with several statements relating to brand equity. Tables are used to indicate each of the statements and the results regarding consumers' responses to social media factors and brand equity. The results provide an indication as to which social media factors influence consumer-based brand equity of the mobile network operators, businesses, their products, and services. The factors were measured on a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree to strongly agree. For ease of analysis and reporting of findings on social media and brand equity, the responses were grouped into three categories namely agree ('agree' and 'strongly agree'), neutral or unsure and disagree ('disagree' and 'strongly disagree'). Question 7 consisted of sections which are discussed below.

#### **5.2.3.1 Descriptive statistics for social media engagement**

In question 7, the first section asked respondents to rate the influence of social media engagement on brand equity. The question sought to establish whether social media engagement influences how the respondents value and perceive the brand equity of mobile network providers. This section focuses on descriptive statistics for social media engagement and covers question 7.1 to 7.10 which are indicated in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4: Social media engagement (n=306)**

| Engagement   |      | Frequency distribution |          |        |        |                |
|--|------|------------------------|----------|--------|--------|----------------|
|  |      | Strongly disagree      | Disagree | Unsure | Agree  | Strongly agree |
| I trust a mobile network operator that uploads product related videos on its social media platforms. | Freq | 28                     | 32       | 45     | 144    | 57             |
|  | %    | 9.15%                  | 10.46%   | 14.71% | 47.06% | 18.63%         |
|  | Freq | 13                     | 28       | 32     | 155    | 78             |

|   |      |       |        |        |        |        |
|---|------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| I will ask questions to a mobile network operator on social media if I require assistance with their service.                     | %    | 4.25% | 9.15%  | 10.46% | 50.65% | 25.49% |
| I am likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who provides good customer service through their social media platforms.     | Freq | 15    | 21     | 26     | 134    | 110    |
|   | %    | 4.90% | 6.86%  | 8.50%  | 43.79% | 35.95% |
| I am likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who responds to my queries on their social media platforms.                  | Freq | 9     | 15     | 30     | 142    | 110    |
|   | %    | 2.94% | 4.90%  | 9.80%  | 46.41% | 35.95% |
| I trust advertisements of mobile network operators that I see on social media platforms.  | Freq | 16    | 67     | 68     | 91     | 64     |
|   | %    | 5.23% | 21.90% | 22.22% | 29.74% | 20.92% |
| I can easily recognise my mobile network operator on social media platforms.  | Freq | 11    | 40     | 59     | 122    | 73     |
|   | %    | 3.59% | 13.07% | 19.28% | 39.87% | 23.86% |
| I can easily recognise a mobile network operator because of their interaction with me on social media platforms.                  | Freq | 10    | 46     | 68     | 120    | 62     |
|   | %    | 3.27% | 15.03% | 22.22% | 39.22% | 20.26% |
| I perceive a mobile network operator that provides good customer service on social media to be a good brand.                      | Freq | 6     | 19     | 50     | 140    | 91     |
|   | %    | 1.96% | 6.21%  | 16.34% | 45.75% | 29.74% |
| I perceive a mobile network operator that provide answers to my questions on their products on social media to be a caring brand. | Freq | 10    | 22     | 40     | 148    | 86     |
|   | %    | 3.27% | 7.19%  | 13.07% | 48.37% | 28.10% |
| I judge if a mobile network operator brand is valuable to me or not based on the brand reviews I see on social media.             | Freq | 13    | 28     | 57     | 145    | 63     |
|   | %    | 4.25% | 9.15%  | 18.63% | 47.39% | 20.59% |

From Table 5.4, it is clear that 82.36% (46.41+35.95), n=252 (142+110) of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement “I am likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who responds to my queries on their social media platforms” and 79.74% (43.79+35.95), n=244 (134+110) of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement “I am likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who provides good customer service through their social media platforms.” These statements with the two highest percentage of responses imply that the respondents become loyal to a mobile network operator that offers them good customer service and assistance on social media. Table 5.4 further shows that 19.61% (9.15+10.46); n=60 (28+32) of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree to the statement “I trust a mobile network operator that uploads product related videos on its social media platforms” and 27.13% [5.23+21.90) (n=83 (16+67))] of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “I trust advertisements of mobile network operators that I see on social media platforms”. The two statements with the highest percentages of either disagree or strongly disagree deal with an element of consumer trust of social media. From Table 5.4, it is also clear that almost half [49.35% (5.23+21.90+22.22); n=151 (16+67+68)] of the respondents, combined, disagree, strongly disagree or are unsure to the statement “I trust advertisements of mobile network operators that I see on social media platforms. The results

show that a significant number of respondents do not trust the advertisements and product content shared by the mobile network operators on social media.

The discussion below focuses on the second section of question 7 which was on social media influence.

### 5.2.3.2 Descriptive statistics for social media influence

Questions 7.11 to 7.14 asked respondents to rate the influence of social media influence. The questions sought to establish whether the factor 'social media influence', has an influence on how the respondents value and perceive the brand of mobile network providers. Table 5.5 indicates the descriptive statistics of the statements relating to social media influence.

**Table 5.5: Social media influence (n=306)**

| Influence  |     | Frequency distribution |          |        |       |                |
|--|-----|------------------------|----------|--------|-------|----------------|
|  |     | Strongly disagree      | Disagree | Unsure | Agree | Strongly agree |
| I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media if I have received excellent service from them.                | Fre | 5                      | 18       | 37     | 135   | 111            |
|  | q   |                        |          |        |       |                |
|  | %   | 1.63                   | 5.88     | 12.09  | 44.12 | 36.27          |
|  |     | %                      | %        | %      | %     | %              |
| I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products. | Fre | 10                     | 11       | 34     | 145   | 106            |
|  | q   |                        |          |        |       |                |
|  | %   | 3.27                   | 3.59     | 11.11  | 47.39 | 34.64          |
|  |     | %                      | %        | %      | %     | %              |
| I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customer fast internet speed.                      | Fre | 9                      | 15       | 26     | 120   | 136            |
|  | q   |                        |          |        |       |                |
|  | %   | 2.94                   | 4.90     | 8.50   | 39.22 | 44.44          |
|  |     | %                      | %        | %      | %     | %              |
| I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customers fair tariffs and fees.                   | Fre | 13                     | 18       | 35     | 116   | 124            |
|  | q   |                        |          |        |       |                |
|  | %   | 4.25                   | 5.88     | 11.44  | 37.91 | 40.52          |
|  |     | %                      | %        | %      | %     | %              |

The results in Table 5.5 indicate that the majority of respondents, 83.66% [44.44+39.22]; n=256 (136+120)] either agree or strongly agree with the statement “I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customer fast internet speed” and a further 82.03% [47.39+34.64]; n=251 (145+106)] of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement “I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products”. These statements primarily link to the quality of the product and service received. These results could indicate that respondents may recommend a mobile network operator on social media if they have received excellent service. Results in Table 5.5 also show that all the statements on the social media factor influence have over 75% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing to all the statements. Only

10.13% [5.88+4.25]; n=31(18+13)] of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, “I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customers fair tariffs and fees”. The results could mean that social media has a strong influence on respondents’ perceptions of the service quality of the mobile network operator as provided by the mobile network operators on their social media platforms.

The discussion below focuses on the third section of question 7 which was on social media trustworthiness.

### 5.2.3.3 Descriptive statistics for social media trustworthiness

Questions 7.15 to 7.18 required respondents to rate the influence of social media trustworthiness on brand equity. The question sought to establish whether social media trustworthiness influence how the respondents value and perceive the brand of mobile network providers. Table 5.6 indicates the descriptive statistics of the statements relating to social media trustworthiness.

**Table 5.6: Social media trustworthiness (n=306)**

| Trustworthiness  |       | Frequency distribution |          |        |        |                |
|--|-------|------------------------|----------|--------|--------|----------------|
|  |       | Strongly disagree      | Disagree | Unsure | Agree  | Strongly agree |
| I trust the information posted by mobile network operators on their social media platforms.                                | Fre q | 32                     | 60       | 86     | 87     | 41             |
|  | %     | 10.46%                 | 19.61%   | 28.10% | 28.43% | 13.40%         |
| Reviews and comments on social media influence my perception about a mobile network provider.                              | Fre q | 15                     | 54       | 80     | 111    | 46             |
|  | %     | 4.90%                  | 17.65%   | 26.14% | 36.27% | 15.03%         |
| I would trust a mobile network operator that answers my questions I ask on their social media platforms.                   | Fre q | 13                     | 33       | 83     | 121    | 54             |
|  | %     | 4.25%                  | 10.78%   | 27.12% | 39.54% | 17.65%         |
| The product reviews I see on social media help me to determine whether a mobile network operator brand is valuable or not. | Fre q | 18                     | 35       | 85     | 118    | 50             |
|  | %     | 5.88%                  | 11.44%   | 27.78% | 38.56% | 16.34%         |

The results shown in Table 5.6 shows that more than half of the respondents combined [58.17% (10.46+19.61+28.10); n=178 (32+60+86)] disagree, strongly disagree or are unsure with the statement “I trust the information posted by mobile network operators on their social media platforms.” The results could imply that many of the respondents do not trust social media. The table also shows that 57.19% [39.54+17.65) (n=175 (121+54)] of respondents



either agree or strongly agree with the statement regarding trust “I would trust a mobile network operator that answers my questions I ask on their social media platforms. A significant percentage (28.10%; n=86) of respondents were unsure with the statement “I trust the information posted by mobile network operators on their social media platforms”. It is clear from the results in Table 5.6 that the percentage of respondents that either agree or strongly agree with all the statements on social media trustworthiness were slightly above the average 50% and a significant percentage of above 40% were combined disagreeing, strongly disagreeing or unsure. The results show that respondents’ trust of social media is low. The results could mean that respondents do not trust mobile network operators’ content they see on social media. The mobile network operators should look at ways of improving respondents’ trust of social media and content they see on social media.

The discussion below focuses on the fourth section of question 7 which was on social media exposure.

#### **5.2.3.4 Descriptive statistics social media exposure**

In question 7.19 to 7.23 respondents were asked to rate the influence of social media exposure on brand equity. The questions sought to establish whether social media exposure influences how the respondents value and perceive the brand of mobile network providers. Table 5.7 indicates the descriptive statistics of the statements relating to social media exposure.

**Table 5.7: Social media exposure (n=306)**

| Exposure   |      | Frequency distribution |          |        |        |                |
|--|------|------------------------|----------|--------|--------|----------------|
|  |      | Strongly disagree      | Disagree | Unsure | Agree  | Strongly agree |
| I am loyal to a mobile network operator that exposes me to its product range on social media.  | Freq | 17                     | 29       | 51     | 142    | 67             |
|  | %    | 5.56%                  | 9.48%    | 16.67% | 46.41% | 21.90%         |
| I follow a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products.                        | Freq | 14                     | 15       | 39     | 154    | 84             |
|  | %    | 4.58%                  | 4.90%    | 12.75% | 50.32% | 27.45%         |
| I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of a mobile network operator on social media because of the colourfulness of the symbol or logo. | Freq | 12                     | 30       | 46     | 154    | 64             |
|  | %    | 3.92%                  | 9.80%    | 15.03% | 50.32% | 20.92%         |
| I will make use of a mobile network provider that shows me how to purchase their products through social media.                          | Freq | 5                      | 26       | 50     | 149    | 76             |
|  | %    | 1.63%                  | 8.50%    | 16.34% | 48.69% | 24.84%         |
| Based on the positive reviews I see on social media, I feel that I get value for money with my mobile network operator.                  | Freq | 12                     | 34       | 63     | 123    | 74             |
|  | %    | 3.92%                  | 11.11%   | 20.59% | 40.20% | 24.18%         |

Study findings shown in Table 5.7 indicate that 77.77% [50.32+27.45]; (n=238 (154+84)) of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement “I follow a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products.” The result shows that many respondents find social media useful in providing them with product information from the mobile network operators. A significant percentage (20.59%; n=63) of respondents indicated unsure to the statement “Based on the positive reviews I see on social media, I feel that I get value for money with my mobile network operator.” The result could mean that some of the respondents do not trust the reviews they see on social media. Furthermore, 15.04% [9.48+5.56]; n=46 (29+17)] of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree to the statement “I am loyal to a mobile network operator that exposes me to its product range on social media.” It can also be noted in Table 5.7 that the statement that a combined 15.03% [11.11+3.92]; (n=46 (34+12)) of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “Based on the positive reviews I see on social media, I feel that I get value for money with my mobile network operator”. The statement focuses on positive reviews seen on social media. The result could mean that some of the respondents do not trust social media reviews with regard to the value they get from the brands.

The discussion below focuses on the fifth section of question 7 which was on social media cost effectiveness.

### 5.2.3.5 Descriptive statistics for social media cost effectiveness

In questions 7.24 to 7.28, respondents were asked to rate the influence of social media cost effectiveness on brand equity. The questions sought to establish whether social media cost effectiveness influences how the respondents value and perceive the brand of mobile network providers. Table 5.8 indicates the descriptive statistics of the statements relating to social media cost effectiveness.

**Table 5.8: Social media cost effectiveness (n=306)**

| Cost effectiveness  |          | Frequency distribution |            |            |            |                |
|---|----------|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------|
|   |          | Strongly disagree      | Disagree   | Unsure     | Agree      | Strongly agree |
| I consider myself to be loyal to a mobile network operator that posts all its products on social media because it does not cost me much money to search for information on the mobile network provider. | Fre<br>q | 14                     | 29         | 57         | 122        | 84             |
|   | %        | 4.58<br>%              | 9.48<br>%  | 18.63<br>% | 39.87<br>% | 27.45<br>%     |
| I trust mobile network operators that provide me with assistance with their service through social media because it does not cost money for me to interact with the operators.                          | Fre<br>q | 5                      | 35         | 47         | 141        | 78             |
|   | %        | 1.63<br>%              | 11.44<br>% | 15.36<br>% | 46.08<br>% | 25.49<br>%     |

|   |          |           |           |            |            |            |
|---|----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| I will engage with a mobile network operator on social media if I find information that I need from their social media platform for free.                 | Fre<br>q | 6         | 19        | 60         | 145        | 76         |
|   | %        | 1.96<br>% | 6.21%     | 19.61<br>% | 47.39<br>% | 24.84<br>% |
| I perceive mobile network operators that solve my complaints and queries for free through their social media platforms to be excellent service providers. | Fre<br>q | 6         | 16        | 54         | 152        | 78         |
|   | %        | 1.96<br>% | 5.23%     | 17.65<br>% | 49.67<br>% | 25.49<br>% |
| I feel that I get value for my money when mobile network operators allow me to ask brand-related questions for free through their social media platforms. | Fre<br>q | 12        | 20        | 47         | 146        | 81         |
|   | %        | 3.92<br>% | 6.54<br>% | 15.36<br>% | 47.71<br>% | 26.47<br>% |

From the results in Table 5.8, it is clear that 75.16% [49.67+25.49] (n=230 (152+78)) of respondents either agree or strongly agree to the statement “I perceive mobile network operators that solve my complaints and queries for free through their social media platforms to be excellent service providers.” The result indicates that respondents value a mobile network operator that uses social media to attend to their complaints and queries. Another high percentage, 74.18% [47.71+26.47] (n=227 (146+81)) of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement “I feel that I get value for my money when mobile network operators allow me to ask brand-related questions for free through their social media platforms.” The result shows that the respondents like a mobile network operator that enables them to be assisted by the mobile network operator cost free through the social media. From the results in Table 5.8, 19.61% (n=60) of respondents are unsure to the statement “I will engage with a mobile network operator on social media if I find information that I need from their social media platform for free.” A significant percentage [32.69 (9.48+4.58+18.63); n=100 (29+14+57)] combined, disagree, strongly disagree and are unsure with the statement “I consider myself to be loyal to a mobile network operator that posts all its products on social media because it does not cost me much money to search for information on the mobile network provider.” The result shows that even though most of the respondents either agree or strongly agree that they become loyal to a mobile network operator that gives them product information on social media because it does not cost them much money to search for information on the mobile network provider, some respondents’ loyalty is not dependent on finding the information for free.

The discussion below focuses on the sixth section of question 7 which was on social media perceived usefulness.

### **5.2.3.6 Descriptive statistics for social media perceived usefulness**

In question 7.29 to 7.33, respondents were asked to rate the influence of social media perceived usefulness on brand equity. The question sought to establish whether social media

perceived usefulness influences how the respondents value and perceive the brand of mobile network providers. Table 5.9 indicates the descriptive statistics of the statements relating to social media perceived usefulness.

**Table 5.9: Social media perceived usefulness (n=306)**

| Perceived usefulness  |      | Frequency distribution |          |        |        |                |
|---|------|------------------------|----------|--------|--------|----------------|
|   |      | Strongly disagree      | Disagree | Unsure | Agree  | Strongly agree |
| I will not switch my service provider because my current mobile network operator can quickly solve all my problems through its social media platforms.          | Freq | 28                     | 30       | 67     | 128    | 53             |
|   | %    | 9.15%                  | 9.80%    | 21.90% | 42.83% | 17.32%         |
| I trust the mobile network operators' product quality that I see on social media platforms.   | Freq | 15                     | 57       | 70     | 118    | 46             |
|   | %    | 4.90%                  | 18.63%   | 22.88% | 38.56% | 15.03%         |
| When I am looking for a mobile network product on social media, I first look at a particular mobile network providers social media platform.                    | Freq | 7                      | 29       | 70     | 147    | 53             |
|   | %    | 2.29%                  | 9.48%    | 22.88% | 49.04% | 17.32%         |
| I consider a mobile network operator that responds quickly to my complaints and queries through its social media platforms to be an excellent service provider. | Freq | 10                     | 23       | 59     | 138    | 76             |
|   | %    | 3.27%                  | 7.52%    | 19.28% | 45.10% | 24.84%         |
| I perceive a mobile network operator that shares its product promotions with customers through its social media platforms to be a reliable brand.               | Freq | 11                     | 23       | 64     | 133    | 75             |
|   | %    | 3.59%                  | 7.52%    | 20.92% | 43.46% | 24.51%         |

From Table 5.9 it is clear that 69.94% [45.10+24.84] (n=214 (138+76)) of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement “I consider a mobile network operator that responds quickly to my complaints and queries through its social media platforms to be an excellent service provider” while 67.97% [43.46+24.51], (n=208 (133+75)) of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement “I perceive a mobile network operator that shares its product promotions with customers through its social media platforms to be a reliable brand.” The results show that the respondents like a mobile network operator that uses the social media to solve their problems and share information on their products. Table 5.9 also shows that a significant percentage [46.41% (4.90+18.63+22.88); n=142 (15+57+70)] of respondents, combined, strongly disagree, disagree or unsure with the statement “I trust the mobile network operators' product quality that I see on social media platforms.” The statement has to do with respondents' lack of trust of products they see on social. The results are in agreement with previous results obtained and discussed in section 5.3.1.3.3 (social media trustworthiness) where the respondents had lower levels of trust of mobile network operators' content they see on social media. The results show that respondents find useful product

information and help from the mobile network operators through social media, but a significant number of respondents do not trust the product information they get on social media.

The discussion below focuses on the seventh section of question 7 which was on social media subjective norms.

### 5.2.3.7 Descriptive statistics for social media subjective

In questions 7.34 to 7.38 respondents were asked to rate the influence of social media subjective norms on brand equity. The question sought to establish whether social media subjective norms influence how the respondents value and perceive the brand of mobile network providers. Table 5.10 indicates the descriptive statistics of the statements relating to social media subjective norms.

**Table 5.10: Social media subjective norms (n=306)**

| Subjective norms  |       | Frequency distribution |          |         |         |                |
|---|-------|------------------------|----------|---------|---------|----------------|
|   |       | Strongly disagree      | Disagree | Unsure  | Agree   | Strongly agree |
| I intend to purchase additional products from the same mobile network operator that was recommended to me by friends through social media.  | Fre q | 10                     | 32       | 73      | 138     | 53             |
|   | %     | 3.27 %                 | 10.46 %  | 23.86 % | 45.10 % | 17.32 %        |
| I would recommend a mobile network provider on social media that is involved in community programmes.   | Fre q | 7                      | 24       | 66      | 143     | 66             |
|   | %     | 2.29 %                 | 7.84 %   | 21.57 % | 46.73 % | 21.57 %        |
| I recognise a mobile network provider's logo, symbol and products because of reviews I have seen on social media platforms.   | Fre q | 11                     | 30       | 60      | 148     | 57             |
|   | %     | 3.59 %                 | 9.80 %   | 19.61 % | 48.37 % | 18.63 %        |
| I find it easy for me to complete a transaction through a mobile network operator's social media platform.  | Fre q | 14                     | 46       | 59      | 128     | 59             |
|   | %     | 4.58 %                 | 15.03 %  | 19.28 % | 41.83 % | 19.28 %        |
| The brand reviews and recommendations I get from family and friends through social media about a mobile network operator's product make me feel that I get good value for my money from my mobile network service provider. | Fre q | 13                     | 25       | 76      | 133     | 59             |
|   | %     | 4.25 %                 | 8.17 %   | 24.84 % | 43.46 % | 19.28 %        |

Results in Table 5.10 shows that 68.30% [46.73+21.57] (n=209 (143+66)) of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement "I would recommend a mobile network provider on social media that is involved in community programmes". The result shows that respondents value a mobile network operator that undertakes corporate social responsibility programmes to assist the community. Table 5.10 also shows that 24.84% (n=76) of respondents are unsure with the statement "The brand reviews and recommendations I get

from family and friends through social media about a mobile network operator’s product make me feel that I get good value for my money from my mobile network service provider.” The result mean that although the respondents may recommend a mobile network operator on social media, a significant number of respondents are not sure of the value they get from the brand reviews and recommendations from family members and friends on social media. A significant percentage 19.61% [4.58+15.03]; (n=60 (14+46)) of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that “I find it easy for me to complete a transaction through a mobile network operator’s social media platform”.

The discussion below focuses on the eighth section of question 7 which was on social media ease of use.

### 5.2.3.8 Descriptive statistics for social media ease of use

In questions 7.39 to 7.45, respondents were asked to rate the influence of social media ease of use on brand equity. The question sought to establish whether social media ease of use influences how the respondents value and perceive the brand of mobile network providers. Table 5.11 indicates the descriptive statistics of the statements relating to social media influence.

**Table 5.11: Social media ease of use (n=306)**

| Ease of use   |       | Frequency distribution |          |         |         |                |
|---|-------|------------------------|----------|---------|---------|----------------|
|   |       | Strongly disagree      | Disagree | Unsure  | Agree   | Strongly agree |
| I am loyal to a mobile network operator that makes it easy for me to complete a transaction through its social media platforms. | Fre q | 13                     | 31       | 46      | 135     | 81             |
|   | %     | 4.25 %                 | 10.13 %  | 15.03 % | 44.12 % | 26.47 %        |
| I trust mobile network operators whose social media platforms allow customers to easily compare products with competing brands. | Fre q | 13                     | 21       | 60      | 131     | 81             |
|   | %     | 4.25 %                 | 6.86%    | 19.61 % | 42.81 % | 26.47 %        |
| I can easily recognise a mobile network operator among competing operators on social media through its unique symbol or logo.   | Fre q | 8                      | 29       | 72      | 121     | 76             |
|   | %     | 2.61 %                 | 9.48%    | 23.53 % | 39.54 % | 24.84 %        |
| I can easily complete my transactions with a mobile network operator on its social media platforms.                             | Fre q | 11                     | 31       | 74      | 131     | 59             |
|   | %     | 3.59 %                 | 10.13 %  | 24.18 % | 42.81 % | 19.28 %        |
| It is easy for me to find information on mobile network operators on social media.  | Fre q | 14                     | 36       | 53      | 128     | 75             |
|   | %     | 4.58 %                 | 11.76 %  | 17.32 % | 41.83 % | 24.51 %        |
|   | Fre q | 6                      | 44       | 56      | 146     | 54             |

|  |      |        |         |         |         |         |
|--|------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| I can easily compare mobile network operator prices with those of its competitors on social media.                         | %    | 1.96 % | 14.38 % | 18.30 % | 47.71 % | 17.65 % |
| It is easy for me to decide if the mobile network operator is valuable or not based on the comments I see on social media. | Freq | 11     | 32      | 54      | 134     | 75      |
|  | %    | 3.59 % | 10.46 % | 17.65 % | 43.79 % | 24.51 % |

The results in Table 5.11 shows that 70.59% [44.12+26.47]; (n=216 (135+81)) of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement “I am loyal to a mobile network operator that makes it easy for me to complete a transaction through its social media platforms.” The statement refers to loyalty to a mobile network operator. The result shows that consumers trust and like a mobile network operator that allows them to complete transactions on social media. Table 5.11 also shows that a significant number (24.18%; n=74) of respondents are unsure with the statement “I can easily complete my transactions with a mobile network operator on its social media platforms.” The statement refers to association with a mobile network operator that allows easy completion of transactions online. The result shows that although many respondents like a mobile network operator that allows them to do transactions through social media, a significant number of respondents doubt their ability to complete a transaction with a mobile network operator on social media. Table 5.11 further shows that 16.34% [4.58+11.76) (n=50 (14+36)) of the respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “It is easy for me to find information on mobile network operators on social media.” The statement refers to customer service quality in finding information on social media. The result may imply that some of the respondents find it difficult to obtain information on the mobile network operator on social media.

In the next section, the mean scores for the social media factor items are discussed.

#### **5.2.3.9 The mean scores for items of the social media factors**

The mean scores of the items on the social media factor variables were investigated. The arithmetic average, which is computed by summing all the values and dividing by the number of responses, is referred to as the mean score (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019:111). As a result, the higher the item's mean score, the more respondents agreed that it contributes more to the social media aspect that influences their view of brand equity. The mean scores are presented in Table 5.12.

**Table 5.12: Mean scores for the social media items**

| <b>Social Media Factor</b> | <b>Questionnaire Items</b>   | <b>Mean score</b> |
|----------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Engagement                 | I trust a mobile network operator that uploads product related videos on its social media platforms.                                     | 3.56              |
|                            | I will ask questions to a mobile network operator on social media if I require assistance with their service.                            | 3.84              |
|                            | I am likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who provides good customer service through their social media platforms.            | 3.99              |
|                            | I am likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who responds to my queries on their social media platforms.                         | 4.09              |
|                            | I trust advertisements of mobile network operators that I see on social media platforms.   | 3.39              |
|                            | I can easily recognise my mobile network operator on social media platforms.   | 3.68              |
|                            | I can easily recognise a mobile network operator because of their interaction with me on social media platforms.                         | 3.59              |
|                            | I perceive a mobile network operator that provides good customer service on social media to be a good brand.                             | 3.96              |
|                            | I perceive a mobile network operator that provide answers to my questions on their products on social media to be a caring brand.        | 3.92              |
|                            | I judge if a mobile network operator brand is valuable to me or not based on the brand reviews I see on social media.                    | 3.71              |
| Influence                  | I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media if I have received excellent service from them.                              | 4.09              |
|                            | I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products.               | 4.08              |
|                            | I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customer fast internet speed.                                    | 4.20              |
|                            | I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customers fair tariffs and fees.                                 | 4.06              |
| Trustworthiness            | I trust the information posted by mobile network operators on their social media platforms.  | 3.12              |
|                            | Reviews and comments on social media influence my perception about a mobile network provider.  | 3.39              |
|                            | I would trust a mobile network operator that answers my questions I ask on their social media platforms.                                 | 3.58              |
|                            | The product reviews I see on social media help me to determine whether a mobile network operator brand is valuable or not.               | 3.49              |
| Exposure                   | I am loyal to a mobile network operator that exposes me to its product range on social media.  | 3.68              |
|                            | I follow a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products.                        | 3.94              |
|                            | I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of a mobile network operator on social media because of the colourfulness of the symbol or logo. | 3.78              |
|                            | I will make use of a mobile network provider that shows me how to purchase their products through social media.                          | 3.89              |
|                            | Based on the positive reviews I see on social media, I feel that I get value for money with my mobile network operator.                  | 3.72              |



|                      |   |      |
|----------------------|---|------|
| Cost effectiveness   | I consider myself to be loyal to a mobile network operator that posts all its products on social media because it does not cost me much money to search for information on the mobile network provider.                     | 3.77 |
|                      | I trust mobile network operators that provide me with assistance with their service through social media because it does not cost money for me to interact with the operators.  | 3.83 |
|                      | I will engage with a mobile network operator on social media if I find information that I need from their social media platform for free.   | 3.87 |
|                      | I perceive mobile network operators that solve my complaints and queries for free through their social media platforms to be excellent service providers.   | 3.92 |
|                      | I feel that I get value for my money when mobile network operators allow me to ask brand-related questions for free through their social media platforms.   | 3.86 |
| Perceived usefulness | I will not switch my service provider because my current mobile network operator can quickly solve all my problems through its social media platforms.  | 3.52 |
|                      | I trust the mobile network operators' product quality that I see on social media platforms.   | 3.41 |
|                      | When I am looking for a mobile network product on social media, I first look at a particular mobile network provider's social media platform.   | 3.71 |
|                      | I consider a mobile network operator that responds quickly to my complaints and queries through its social media platforms to be an excellent service provider.   | 3.86 |
|                      | I perceive a mobile network operator that shares its product promotions with customers through its social media platforms to be a reliable brand.   | 3.83 |
| Subjective norms     | I intend to purchase additional products from the same mobile network operator that was recommended to me by friends through social media.  | 3.64 |
|                      | I would recommend a mobile network provider on social media that is involved in community programmes.   | 3.77 |
|                      | I recognise a mobile network provider's logo, symbol and products because of reviews I have seen on social media platforms.   | 3.68 |
|                      | I find it easy for me to complete a transaction through a mobile network operator's social media platform.  | 3.57 |
|                      | The brand reviews and recommendations I get from family and friends through social media about a mobile network operator's product make me feel that I get good value for my money from my mobile network service provider. | 3.67 |
| Ease of use          | I am loyal to a mobile network operator that makes it easy for me to complete a transaction through its social media platforms.   | 3.78 |
|                      | I trust mobile network operators whose social media platforms allow customers to easily compare products with competing brands.   | 3.80 |
|                      | I can easily recognise a mobile network operator among competing operators on social media through its unique symbol or logo.   | 3.74 |
|                      | I can easily complete my transactions with a mobile network operator on its social media platforms.   | 3.64 |

|  |  |      |
|--|--|------|
|  | It is easy for me to find information on mobile network operators on social media.   | 3.68 |
|  | I can easily compare mobile network operator prices with those of its competitors on social media                          | 3.64 |
|  | It is easy for me to decide if the mobile network operator is valuable or not based on the comments I see on social media. | 3.74 |

From Table 5.12, it can be seen that all the items received a mean score above 3.12, indicating that the respondents regard these items as important in describing the social media factors influencing the brand equity of the mobile operators. However, only five items received a score above 4.00, with “I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customer fast internet speed”, 4.20, followed by “I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media if I have received excellent service from them”, 4.09, “I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customers fair tariffs and fees”, 4.06 and “I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best product’s”, 4.00. The items that had a mean score above 4 fall under the social media factor influence dimension. These results show that most of the respondents agreed that social media influences how the consumers value and perceive the brand of mobile network providers. The mobile network operators must choose to dialogue with consumers on those social media platforms that have a great influence on how the consumers value and perceive the brand of mobile network providers. One item, “I am likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who responds to my queries on their social media platforms” that also got a mean score of 4.09 falls under the social media factor engagement. The result show that the respondents regarded highly a mobile network operator who responds to their queries on their social media platforms. The mobile network operators should respond to the queries of the consumers on their social media platforms.

Table 5.12 further shows that the items that had the lowest mean were mostly from the social media factor trustworthiness dimension with “I would trust a mobile network operator that answers my questions I ask on their social media platforms”, 3.58, “The product reviews I see on social media help me to determine whether a mobile network operator brand is valuable or not”, 3.49, “reviews and comments on social media influence my perception about a mobile network provider”, 3.39 and “I trust the information posted by mobile network operators on their social media platforms” having 3.12. The results show that the mobile network operators may have to consider the trustworthiness of the social media platforms they use to dialogue with the consumers of their products. The mobile operators should ensure that the consumers trust their social media messages by giving true information. All other items from the social media factors that are engagement, exposure, cost effectiveness, subjective norms, perceived usefulness and ease of use had a mean score above 3.40. The result shows that all these

factors are important in influencing consumers' perception of the value of a mobile network operator and they should engage the consumers on the social media platforms to expose the consumers to the mobile network operators' products. Furthermore, the social media platform used by the mobile network operator should be useful in assisting the consumers access the services, should be easy to use for the consumers, should be cheap to use and also in line with the values and expectations of the consumers.

In the next section, the factor analysis is discussed.

#### **5.2.4 Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)**

The EFA was an important aspect of the study as it validated the items that were to be used for the CFA. Exploratory factor analysis is a statistical technique that afforded the researcher the opportunity to explore theoretical factors or variables that are measured by the set of items. The EFA was important in identifying any underlying social media factors that influence the brand equity. The factor loadings would confirm if an item could be considered as part of a factor. EFA essentially explores, from the data, to see what factors are formed from a set of data. The EFA was essential to the study as it linked directly to the primary objective of determining the social media factors influencing brand equity perceptions by consumers.

In conducting the EFA, the researcher had to decide on the following: the method used for choosing the number of factors to retain, the rotation method utilised for the factor analysis, and a reasonable cut-off point to determine which variables to include for a given factor. When performing EFA, it was assumed that there is at least some level of correlation among the observed variables so that coherent factors could be identified. A factor is identifiable where a set of observed variables have strong relationships with one another and, therefore, demonstrate high factor loadings (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:238).

#### **EFA Method**

In the present study, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed for 45 observed variables using manual selection to determine the number of factors to retain with varimax rotation. Exploratory factor analysis based on **Principal component analysis (PCA)** was performed on the questionnaire items designed to measure each of the eight variables examined in this study and to extract the factors. The researcher proposed certain social media factors from the theory and EFA was used to determine if the theory is found in the data and according to the results, the underlying factors of the theory were picked up in the data. Therefore, EFA was done to validate the research instrument and items. The factor loadings displayed in Table 5.14 were calculated using principal component analysis which, in this

instance, was performed as a preliminary test, to assess if the observed variables (measuring items on the questionnaire) relating to particular theoretical constructs, were loading satisfactorily. Using Stata 13 computer software, the principal factor analysis process involved entering the measuring items (observed variables) for a particular theoretical construct (for instance subjective norms) as one factor.

### EFA loadings

EFA enhanced the identification of the underlying social media factors that influence consumer brand equity of the mobile network operators. The exploratory factor analysis is presented in Table 5.13. The table shows each factor with the items and their loadings.

**Table 5.13: Exploratory factor analysis**

| Observed variable   | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 | Factor 5 | Factor 6 | Factor 7 | Factor 8 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| I trust a mobile network operator that uploads product related videos on its social media platforms.                              | 0.528    |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| I will ask questions to a mobile network operator on social media if I require assistance with their service                      | 0.519    |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| I am likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who provides good customer service through their social media platforms      | 0.518    |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| I am likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who responds to my queries on their social media platforms.                  | 0.659    |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| I trust advertisements of mobile network operators that I see on social media platforms.  | 0.501    |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| I can easily recognise my mobile network operator on social media platforms.  | 0.657    |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| I can easily recognise a mobile network operator because of their interaction with me on social media platforms.                  | 0.604    |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| I perceive a mobile network operator that provides good customer service on social media to be a good brand.                      | 0.625    |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| I perceive a mobile network operator that provide answers to my questions on their products on social media to be a caring brand. | 0.538    |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| I judge if a mobile network operator brand is valuable to me or not based on the brand reviews I see on social media.             | 0.585    |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media if I have received excellent service from them.                       |          | 0.566    |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products.        |          | 0.759    |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customer fast internet speed.                             |          | 0.795    |          |          |          |          |          |          |

|   |  |       |       |       |       |       |  |
|---|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--|
| I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customers fair tariffs and fees.  |  | 0.648 |       |       |       |       |  |
| I trust the information posted by mobile network operators on their social media platforms.   |  |       | 0.623 |       |       |       |  |
| Reviews and comments on social media influence my perception about a mobile network provider.   |  |       | 0.709 |       |       |       |  |
| I would trust a mobile network operator that answers my questions I ask on their social media platforms.  |  |       | 0.700 |       |       |       |  |
| The product reviews I see on social media help me to determine whether a mobile network operator brand is valuable or not.  |  |       | 0.750 |       |       |       |  |
| I am loyal to a mobile network operator that exposes me to its product range on social media.   |  |       |       | 0.659 |       |       |  |
| I follow a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products.   |  |       |       | 0.716 |       |       |  |
| I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of a mobile network operator on social media because of the colourfulness of the symbol or logo.  |  |       |       | 0.677 |       |       |  |
| I will make use of a mobile network provider that shows me how to purchase their products through social media.   |  |       |       | 0.697 |       |       |  |
| Based on the positive reviews I see on social media, I feel that I get value for money with my mobile network operator.   |  |       |       | 0.625 |       |       |  |
| I consider myself to be loyal to a mobile network operator that posts all its products on social media because it does not cost me much money to search for information on the mobile network provider. |  |       |       |       | 0.686 |       |  |
| I trust mobile network operators that provide me with assistance with their service through social media because it does not cost money for me to interact with the operators.                          |  |       |       |       | 0.715 |       |  |
| I will engage with a mobile network operator on social media if I find information that I need from their social media platform for free.   |  |       |       |       | 0.700 |       |  |
| I perceive mobile network operators that solve my complaints and queries for free through their social media platforms to be excellent service providers.   |  |       |       |       | 0.645 |       |  |
| I feel that I get value for my money when mobile network operators allow me to ask brand-related questions for free through their social media platforms.   |  |       |       |       | 0.633 |       |  |
| I will not switch my service provider because my current mobile network operator can quickly solve all my problems through its social media platforms.  |  |       |       |       |       | 0.639 |  |
| I trust the mobile network operators' product quality that I see on social media platforms.   |  |       |       |       |       | 0.625 |  |
| When I am looking for a mobile network product on social media, I first look at a particular mobile network provider's social media platform.   |  |       |       |       |       | 0.775 |  |
| I consider a mobile network operator that responds quickly to my complaints and queries   |  |       |       |       |       | 0.667 |  |

|   |  |  |  |  |  |       |       |       |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|-------|-------|-------|
| through its social media platforms to be an excellent service provider.   |  |  |  |  |  |       |       |       |
| I perceive a mobile network operator that shares its product promotions with customers through its social media platforms to be a reliable brand.   |  |  |  |  |  | 0.659 |       |       |
| I intend to purchase additional products from the same mobile network operator that was recommended to me by friends through social media.  |  |  |  |  |  |       | 0.676 |       |
| I would recommend a mobile network provider on social media that is involved in community programmes.   |  |  |  |  |  |       | 0.690 |       |
| I recognise a mobile network provider's logo, symbol and products because of reviews I have seen on social media platforms.   |  |  |  |  |  |       | 0.727 |       |
| I find it easy for me to complete a transaction through a mobile network operator's social media platform.  |  |  |  |  |  |       | 0.653 |       |
| The brand reviews and recommendations I get from family and friends through social media about a mobile network operator's product make me feel that I get good value for my money from my mobile network service provider. |  |  |  |  |  |       | 0.636 |       |
| I am loyal to a mobile network operator that makes it easy for me to complete a transaction through its social media platforms.   |  |  |  |  |  |       |       | 0.693 |
| I trust mobile network operators whose social media platforms allow customers to easily compare products with competing brands.   |  |  |  |  |  |       |       | 0.684 |
| I can easily recognise a mobile network operator among competing operators on social media through its unique symbol or logo.   |  |  |  |  |  |       |       | 0.694 |
| I can easily complete my transactions with a mobile network operator on its social media platforms.   |  |  |  |  |  |       |       | 0.720 |
| It is easy for me to find information on mobile network operators on social media.  |  |  |  |  |  |       |       | 0.703 |
| I can easily compare mobile network operator prices with those of its competitors on social media.  |  |  |  |  |  |       |       | 0.747 |
| It is easy for me to decide if the mobile network operator is valuable or not based on the comments I see on social media.  |  |  |  |  |  |       |       | 0.553 |

Table 5.13 shows the factor loadings that were interpreted by taking the value of each loading. Values bigger than 0.71 are regarded as excellent, values between 0.63 and 0.71 are viewed as very good, values between 0.55 and 0.63 are treated as good, values between 0.45 and 0.55 are considered fair, and values between 0.32 and 0.45 are poor. Table 5.13 shows the factor loadings of all the measuring items were inspected, and all of them exceeded the rule of thumb of the minimum threshold of 0.4. The results in Table 5.13 show that all the items of the social media factors had a factor loading above 0.4 and the highest factor loading was 0.795 (for the item under the influence factor) and the lowest was 0.501 (for the item under the engagement factor). The results show that items in each of the social media factor

variables indicated in Table 5.13, clearly had a compact factor structure, as shown by the relatively high factor loadings. These high factor loadings shown in Table 5.13 indicate strong bonds between the items and its corresponding social media factor variable, and hence, all the items were retained for further analysis.

There are several items that loaded on specific factors. The factor and items that loaded on the specific factors are indicated in Table 5.14.

**Table 5.14: Items that loaded on specific factors**

| <b>Variables/Factors</b>       | <b>Number of Items</b> |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Factor 1: Engagement           | 10                     |
| Factor 2: Influence            | 4                      |
| Factor 3: Trustworthiness      | 4                      |
| Factor 4: Exposure             | 5                      |
| Factor 5: Cost effectiveness   | 5                      |
| Factor 6: Perceived usefulness | 5                      |
| Factor 7: Subjective norms     | 5                      |
| Factor 8: Ease of use          | 7                      |

The factors that loaded in the EFA reflect the factors identified in the theory. The content of the items that loaded into the eight factors related to brand equity elements which are brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, perceived value, and perceived product quality. The following variable names were coined for each of the eight factors: factor 1 –social media engagement, factor 2 –social media influence, factor 3 –social media trustworthiness, factor 4 –social media exposure, factor 5 –social media cost effectiveness, factor 6 –perceived usefulness, factor 7 –subjective norms, and factor 8 –ease of use.

As can be seen in table 5.13, all measuring items demonstrated adequate convergent validity. Consequently, all items representing the eight latent factors were retained. The factors that loaded in the EFA reflect the factors identified in the theory.

### **EFA results**

The results for the EFA are shown in Table 5.15.

**Table 5.15: Results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis**

| <b>Factor</b>           | <b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) Statistic</b> | <b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>     |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Social media engagement | 0.799  | Chi-Square=550.407, df 45, p-value=0.000 |
| Social media influence  | 0.689  | Chi-Square=163.371, df=6, p-value=0.000  |

|                                       |       |  |
|---------------------------------------|-------|--|
| Social media trustworthiness          | 0.684 | Chi-Square=156.038, df=6, p-value=0.000  |
| Social media exposure                 | 0.737 | Chi-Square=239.285, df=10, p-value 0.000 |
| Social media cost-effectiveness       | 0.707 | Chi-Square=277.764, df=10, p-value=0.000 |
| Social media perceived usefulness     | 0.695 | Chi-Square=284.895, df=10, p-value=0.000 |
| Social media related subjective norms | 0.709 | Chi-Square=265.409, df=10 p-value=0.000  |
| Social media ease of use              | 0.830 | Chi-Square=590.769, df=21 p-value=0.000  |

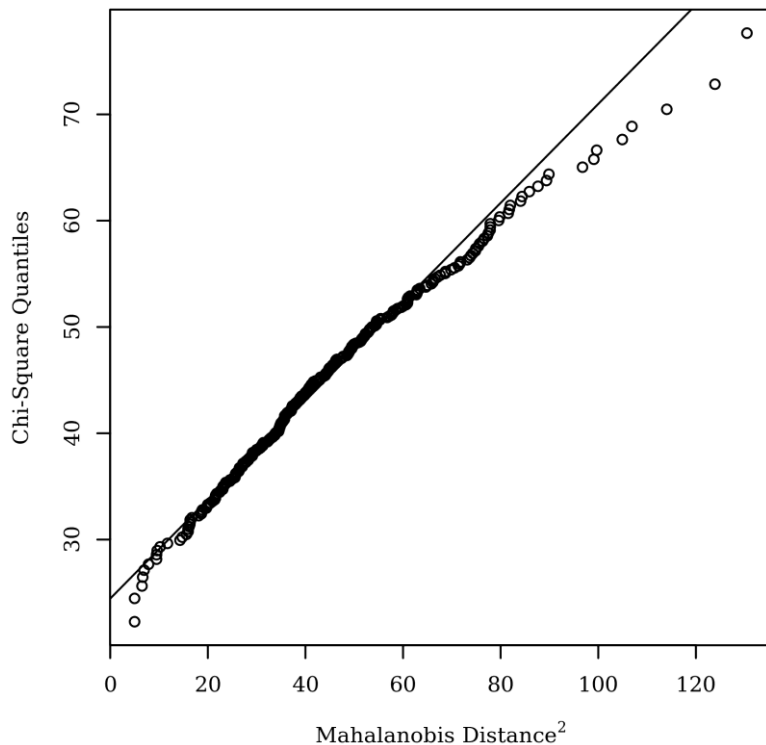
The PCA was performed in order to evaluate the structural validity of predetermined variables/factors, not to explore/extract new ones. Hence, the test was performed on each of the eight factors separately. As shown in Table 5.15, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin values, a measure of sampling adequacy for this type of analysis, for each of the variables were greater than the minimum threshold of 0.5, confirming the sampling adequacy for EFA (Hahn & Salmaso, 2017). The statistically significant outcomes ( $p < 0.001$ ) for Bartlett’s test of sphericity suggested that the extent of correlation for questionnaire items intended to measure each of the eight variables were large enough for PCA. The results thus confirmed adequate structural validity for each of the eight factors. Thus, all the eight factors and their measuring items were retained.

#### **5.2.4.1 Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)**

The CFA through significant factor loadings, together with the reliability analysis using the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, confirmed the single factors and the respective observed variables for each factor. Tables 5.14, presented earlier, revealed that the measuring items for the proposed eight predictors of social media mediated brand equity had acceptable factor loadings, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model was conducted to determine whether the latent variables (Social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media perceived usefulness, social media subjective norms and social media ease of use) adequately describe the data. All the items with factor loadings greater than 0.4 in the EFA were retained for further validation in CFA.

When conducting CFA, it is assumed that the dataset satisfies the conditions of multivariate normality and absence of multicollinearity. The data's squared Mahalanobis distances were calculated and shown against the quantiles of a Chi-square distribution to test the assumption of multivariate normality. The results are presented in the scatterplot in Figure 5.6.





**Figure 5.6: Mahalanobis distance scatterplot testing multivariate normality.**

In the scatterplot presented in Figure 5.6, the solid line represents the theoretical quantiles of a normal distribution. Normality can be assumed if the points form a relatively straight line. The points presented in figure 5.8 do not substantially deviate from the normal. In other words, the characteristics of the dataset do not differ markedly from a normal distribution. Therefore, CFA can be performed on the dataset, albeit with a caveat.

Although variables must be connected with one another in order to be regarded acceptable for factorisation, too much correlation might pose issues in CFA. The determinant of the correlation matrix was determined, and the squared multiple correlations were examined to determine multicollinearity. In the CFA model, every variable with an  $R^2 > 0.90$  can contribute to multicollinearity. High multicollinearity variables should be excluded from the analysis or aggregated into a composite variable. There were no variables with an  $R^2$  greater than 0.90. The determinant of the data's correlation matrix is another way to test for multicollinearity. A determinant of less than 0.00001 suggests that the data is multicollinear (Field, 2017). The determinant for the correlation matrix was 0.00001, indicating that the data was multicollinear and that the model results could be suspect.

### **Results of CFA**

The results of the CFA analysis are presented in Table 5.16. Table 5.16 provides information relating to the standardised factor loadings of the measuring items and the statistical

significance of these items. Standardised factor loading values range from -1 to 1. They describe the strength of the relationship between an indicator variable and the latent variable which it is supposed to measure (Robson & Pevalin, 2016). They are interpreted like correlation coefficients. A factor loading of at least 0.5 suggests a strong positive correlation between an observed variable and a latent variable. Loadings less than 0.5 reflect a positive weak relationship between the aforementioned variables. Factor loadings prefixed by negative signs suggest negative correlations between observed and latent variables. Hence, all items intended to measure a particular latent construct should have, at least, moderate loadings (at least 0.5).

The CFA model in this study consisted of all latent and observed variables that include social media engagement (10-item scale), social media influence (4-item scale), social media trustworthiness (4-item scale), social media cost-effectiveness (5-item scale), social media perceived usefulness (5-item scale), social media-related subjective norms (5-items scale), and social media ease of use (7-items). The factor loadings of all the measuring items were inspected, and all of them exceeded the rule of thumb of the minimum threshold of 0.4. Thus, all the measuring items had satisfactory and statistically significant factor loadings. Table 5.16 presents the standardised factor loadings and significance levels for each parameter in the CFA model. Factor loadings higher than 0.5 portray strong correlations and, therefore, that the observed variable is more representative of the theoretical variable (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:238; Kline, 2015).

**Table 5.16: Standardised Factor Loadings and Significance Levels for Each Parameter in the CFA Model**

| Parameter/observed variables                    | Parameter label   | Standardised loadings | p-value |
|---|---|-----------------------|---------|
| <b>Social media engagement (Eng) (Factor 1)</b> |   |                       |         |
| Eng1  | I trust a mobile network operator that uploads product related videos on its social media platforms.                          | 0.949                 | < 0.001 |
| Eng2  | I will ask questions to a mobile network operator on social media if I require assistance with their service.                 | 0.780                 | < 0.001 |
| Eng3  | I am likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who provides good customer service through their social media platforms. | 0.751                 | < 0.001 |
| Eng4  | I am likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who responds to my queries on their social media platforms.              | 0.658                 | < 0.001 |
| Eng5  | I trust advertisements of mobile network operators that I see on social media platforms.                                      | 0.852                 | < 0.001 |

|  |  |       |         |
|--|--|-------|---------|
| Eng6   | I can easily recognise my mobile network operator on social media platforms.   | 0.766 | < 0.001 |
| Eng7   | I can easily recognise a mobile network operator because of their interaction with me on social media platforms.                         | 0.813 | < 0.001 |
| Eng8   | I perceive a mobile network operator that provides good customer service on social media to be a good brand.                             | 0.669 | < 0.001 |
| Eng9   | I perceive a mobile network operator that provide answers to my questions on their products on social media to be a caring brand.        | 0.747 | < 0.001 |
| Eng10  | I judge if a mobile network operator brand is valuable to me or not based on the brand reviews I see on social media.                    | 0.763 | < 0.001 |
| <b>Social media influence (Inf) (Factor 2)</b>       |  |       |         |
| Inf1   | I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media if I have received excellent service from them.                              | 0.532 | < 0.001 |
| Inf2   | I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products.               | 0.546 | < 0.001 |
| Inf3   | I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customer fast internet speed.                                    | 0.414 | < 0.001 |
| Inf4   | I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customers fair tariffs and fees.                                 | 0.711 | < 0.001 |
| <b>Social media trustworthiness (Tru) (Factor 3)</b> |  |       |         |
| Tru1   | I trust the information posted by mobile network operators on their social media platforms.  | 0.828 | < 0.001 |
| Tru2   | Reviews and comments on social media influence my perception about a mobile network provider.  | 0.692 | < 0.001 |
| Tru3   | I would trust a mobile network operator that answers my questions I ask on their social media platforms.                                 | 0.665 | < 0.001 |
| Tru4   | The product reviews I see on social media help me to determine whether a mobile network operator brand is valuable or not.               | 0.523 | < 0.001 |
| <b>Social media exposure (Exp) (Factor 4)</b>        |  |       |         |
| Exp1   | I am loyal to a mobile network operator that exposes me to its product range on social media.  | 0.667 | < 0.001 |
| Exp2   | I follow a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products.                        | 0.560 | < 0.001 |
| Exp3   | I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of a mobile network operator on social media because of the colourfulness of the symbol or logo. | 0.693 | < 0.001 |

|  |   |       |         |
|--|---|-------|---------|
| Exp4   | I will make use of a mobile network provider that shows me how to purchase their products through social media.   | 0.657 | < 0.001 |
| Exp5   | Based on the positive reviews I see on social media, I feel that I get value for money with my mobile network operator.   | 0.812 | < 0.001 |
| <b>Social media cost-effectiveness (Cos) (Factor 5)</b>      |   |       |         |
| Cos1   | I consider myself to be loyal to a mobile network operator that posts all its products on social media because it does not cost me much money to search for information on the mobile network provider. | 0.678 | < 0.001 |
| Cos2   | I trust mobile network operators that provide me with assistance with their service through social media because it does not cost money for me to interact with the operators.                          | 0.713 | < 0.001 |
| Cos3   | I will engage with a mobile network operator on social media if I find information that I need from their social media platform for free.   | 0.665 | < 0.001 |
| Cos4   | I perceive mobile network operators that solve my complaints and queries for free through their social media platforms to be excellent service providers.   | 0.662 | < 0.001 |
| Cos5   | I feel that I get value for my money when mobile network operators allow me to ask brand-related questions for free through their social media platforms.   | 0.736 | < 0.001 |
| <b>Social media perceived usefulness (Pu) (Factor 6)</b>     |   |       |         |
| Pu1  | I will not switch my service provider because my current mobile network operator can quickly solve all my problems through its social media platforms.  | 0.748 | < 0.001 |
| Pu2  | I trust the mobile network operators' product quality that I see on social media platforms.   | 0.807 | < 0.001 |
| Pu3  | When I am looking for a mobile network product on social media, I first look at a particular mobile network provider's social media platform.   | 0.591 | < 0.001 |
| Pu4  | I consider a mobile network operator that responds quickly to my complaints and queries through its social media platforms to be an excellent service provider.   | 0.625 | < 0.001 |
| Pu5  | I perceive a mobile network operator that shares its product promotions with customers through its social media platforms to be a reliable brand.   | 0.615 | < 0.001 |
| <b>Social media-related subjective norms (Sn) (Factor 7)</b> |   |       |         |
| Sn1  | I intend to purchase additional products from the same mobile network operator that was recommended to me by friends through social media.  | 0.597 | < 0.001 |

|  |   |       |         |
|--|---|-------|---------|
| Sn2  | I would recommend a mobile network provider on social media that is involved in community programmes.   | 0.725 | < 0.001 |
| Sn3  | I recognise a mobile network provider's logo, symbol and products because of reviews I have seen on social media platforms.   | 0.763 | < 0.001 |
| Sn4  | I find it easy for me to complete a transaction through a mobile network operator's social media platform.  | 0.812 | < 0.001 |
| Sn5  | The brand reviews and recommendations I get from family and friends through social media about a mobile network operator's product make me feel that I get good value for my money from my mobile network service provider. | 0.824 | < 0.001 |
| <b>Social media ease of use (Eas) (Factor 8)</b> |   |       |         |
| Eas1   | I am loyal to a mobile network operator that makes it easy for me to complete a transaction through its social media platforms.   | 0.596 | < 0.001 |
| Eas2   | I trust mobile network operators whose social media platforms allow customers to easily compare products with competing brands.   | 0.631 | < 0.001 |
| Eas3   | I can easily recognise a mobile network operator among competing operators on social media through its unique symbol or logo.   | 0.607 | < 0.001 |
| Eas4   | I can easily complete my transactions with a mobile network operator on its social media platforms.   | 0.564 | < 0.001 |
| Eas5   | It is easy for me to find information on mobile network operators on social media.  | 0.606 | < 0.001 |
| Eas6   | I can easily compare mobile network operator prices with those of its competitors on social media.  | 0.612 | < 0.001 |
| Eas7   | It is easy for me to decide if the mobile network operator is valuable or not based on the comments I see on social media.  | 0.871 | < 0.001 |

Note.  $\chi^2(909) = 1687.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ; -- indicates the statistic was not calculated due to parameter constraint.

Table 5.16 shows that, except for the observed variable Inf3 (which is part of the social media influence factor) which had a factor loading of 0.414, all other observed variables in the CFA model had high factor loadings ranging from at least 0.5 to 0.9. The p-values of less than 0.05, as portrayed in Table 5.16, show that all the correlations between the observed and latent variables were statistically significant. Consequently, in line with the underlying theories and literature, all the observed variables/parameters were retained.

## Model fit

While CFA is widely accepted as a robust tool for evaluating the pattern of relationships between latent constructs, there are varied views regarding the most appropriate to report its results. That said, Jellison, Roberts, Bowerss, Combs, Beaman, Wayant and Vassrr (2019) and Kline (2015) recommended that a report on the fitness of a CFA model should at least include indices that have diverse measurement properties. Hence the following indices were selected: Chi-square statistic, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and standardised root mean square residual (SRMR). Marcoulides and Yuan (2017) and Kline (2015:28) suggest that, to confirm a good model fit, the chi-square statistic should be  $p < 0.05$ , the CFI should be 0.9 or higher, the RMSEA should be below 0.10 and the SRMR should ideally be less than 0.08 to show that the fitness model does not differ statistically from the data. Worth mentioning is the fact that the cut-off points for some of the indices have changed over time with others recommending a higher cut-off of 0.95 for CFI and TLI (Maree & Pietersen, 2016).

The fit indices which were derived from the tests for the present study are presented in Table 5.17.

**Table 5.17: Fit Indices for the CFA model**

| NFI  | TLI  | CFI  | RMSEA | Chi-square goodness of fit        | SRMR |
|------|------|------|-------|-----------------------------------|------|
| 0.72 | 0.84 | 0.86 | 0.05  | $\chi^2(562) = 977.35, p < 0.001$ | 0.06 |

Note. RMSEA 90% CI = [0.05, 0.06]; -- indicates that the statistic could not be calculated.

The fit indices are presented. Table 5.17 shows that the results of the Chi-square goodness of fit test were significant,  $\chi^2(562) = 977.35, p < 0.001$ , signifying that the model did not adequately fit the data. A caveat regarding interpreting the preceding result is that the Chi square test is affected by the sample size and suggests an imperfect fit if the sample comprises more than 200 elements (Marcoulides & Yuan, 2017; Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008). The CFI was less than 0.90, CFI = 0.86, suggesting that the model is indicative of a poor model fit. The TLI was also less than 0.95, TLI = 0.84, which is indicative of a poor model fit.

However, the RMSEA index was less than 0.08, RMSEA = 0.05, 90% CI = [0.05, 0.06], which is indicative of a good model fit. In addition, the SRMR was between 0.05 and 0.08, SRMR = 0.06, which implies that the model fits the data adequately. As the results of the Chi-square statistics, CFI and TLI indicate poor model fit, but the RMSEA AND SRMR fit statistics indicate

good model fit, the results suggest that the model fit cannot be confirmed absolutely using the available data, though the statistics show an adequate relationship between the variables.

In the next section, inferential tests are discussed.

### **5.2.5 Inferential statistics**

In order to test whether relationships exist between different variables, and if there are statistically significant differences between means of continuous variables across different nominal groups, two statistical techniques, that is (a) independent samples t-Test and (b) analysis of variance (ANOVA), were applied in this study.

On a continuous scale-level dependent variable, the independent samples t-test was employed to see if there was a statistically significant difference between two sets of respondents (e.g., males against females). The p-value is calculated using the t statistic, which is calculated using the degrees of freedom and the difference between the mean values of the two categories (i.e., significance level). A significant result means that the observed test statistic rejects the null hypothesis that no significant differences exist between the mean scores of two groups, implying that significant differences do exist.

The ANOVA is a statistical method for determining differences in a continuous scale-level dependent variable based on a single independent variable (s). If the independent variable(s) has more than two categories and the ANOVA reveals statistical significance, pairwise comparisons (also known as post-hoc tests) are used to find the paired differences.

#### **5.2.3.10T-test results**

Two-tailed independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to examine whether the mean scores of selected social media factors influencing brand equity (social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms) were significantly different between the Male and Female categories of Gender. The detailed outcomes are presented in 5.3.3.1.1.

##### **5.2.5.1.1 T-test results by gender**

Two-tailed independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to examine whether the mean scores of selected social media factors influencing brand equity were significantly different between the Male and Female categories of Gender. The T-test results for gender are presented in Table 5.18.

**Table 5.18: T tests results for Gender**

| Social media type    |        | Group Descriptive statistics |                |                 | t-test for Equality of Means |         | Effect size |
|----------------------|--------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---------|-------------|
| Gender               |        | Mean                         | Std. Deviation | Mean Difference | T-statistic                  | p-value | Cohen's d   |
| Engagement           | Male   | 38.57                        | 5.70           | 1.37            | 1.79                         | 0.07    | 0.23        |
|                      | Female | 37.20                        | 6.07           |                 |                              |         |             |
| Influence            | Male   | 16.65                        | 3.43           | 0.50            | 1.26                         | 0.21    | 0.16        |
|                      | Female | 16.16                        | 2.95           |                 |                              |         |             |
| Trustworthiness      | Male   | 13.96                        | 3.12           | 0.64            | 1.60                         | 0.11    | 0.21        |
|                      | Female | 13.33                        | 3.08           |                 |                              |         |             |
| Exposure             | Male   | 18.74                        | 4.19           | -0.12           | -0.26                        | 0.79    | -0.03       |
|                      | Female | 18.86                        | 3.47           |                 |                              |         |             |
| Cost effectiveness   | Male   | 19.24                        | 3.64           | 0.01            | 0.02                         | 0.99    | 0.00        |
|                      | Female | 19.23                        | 3.25           |                 |                              |         |             |
| Perceived usefulness | Male   | 18.38                        | 3.91           | 0.47            | 0.97                         | 0.33    | 0.12        |
|                      | Female | 17.91                        | 3.75           |                 |                              |         |             |
| Subjective norms     | Male   | 18.50                        | 3.29           | 0.33            | 0.74                         | 0.46    | 0.09        |
|                      | Female | 18.17                        | 3.50           |                 |                              |         |             |
| Ease of use          | Male   | 26.31                        | 4.83           | 0.48            | 0.74                         | 0.46    | 0.10        |
|                      | Female | 25.83                        | 5.11           |                 |                              |         |             |

Note: Equal variances are assumed (based on the F test of the homogeneity of variances); The values in italics are significant at 1%, 5% and/or 10% level.

The result of the two-tailed independent samples t-test results for all social media factors were not significant based on an alpha value of 0.05. However, based on an alpha value of 0.1, only engagement has a p-value that is less than 0.07, therefore statistically significant. This finding suggests the mean score of engagement was significantly different between the Male (mean=38.57, standard deviation=5, 70) and Female (mean=37.20, standard deviation=6.07) categories of gender. Compared to females, male respondents demonstrated a stronger perception of the effects of social media engagement on brand equity.

### **5.2.3.11 Analysis of variance (ANOVA)**

ANOVA was used to assess if there were any statistically significant differences in the perceptions of respondents on social media factors (social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms) across different categories of age, frequency of use, network, qualification, occupation, and income. Similar to the t-test, the p-value is used to interpret the significance of the ANOVA. The most common significance level is 0.05 (5%). Thus, if the p-value is less than 0.05 the conclusion is that there are significant differences among the groups being



compared at the 5% significance level. An ANOVA is valid if the groups have equal variances. Levene’s test of homogeneity of variances is used to assess the existence of equal variances across groups of an independent variable. In cases where the group variances are not equal, a robust Welch test statistic is used to test for the mean differences. When statistically significant differences are observed, additional analysis (post-hoc test called the Tukey HSD test) is done to determine which particular groups are different.

### 5.3.3.2.1 ANOVA results for age

ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences across groups in the perceptions of the effects of social media factors (social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms) on brand equity. The ANOVA was examined, based on a significance level of 0.05. The results presented in Table 5.19 shows the ANOVA results for age.

**Table 5.19: ANOVA results for Age**

| Social media factors | Age groups | Group descriptive statistics |                | Tests of Homogeneity of Variances |         | Test of Equality of Means |         | Effect Sizes |
|----------------------|------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|--------------|
|                      |            | Mean                         | Std. Deviation | Levene Statistic                  | p-value | F statistic               | p-value | Eta-squared  |
| Engagement           | 18 to 25   | 37.36                        | 5.97           | 1.67                              | 0.14    | 0.73                      | 0.60    | 0.01         |
|                      | 26 to 33   | 37.86                        | 6.75           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | 34 to 41   | 38.14                        | 5.76           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | 42 to 49   | 37.67                        | 4.09           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | 50 to 57   | 41.43                        | 3.55           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | 58 to 65   | 38.67                        | 2.31           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
| Influence            | 18 to 25   | 15.96                        | 3.15           | 1.33                              | 0.25    | 1.95                      | 0.09    | 0.03         |
|                      | 26 to 33   | 16.76                        | 3.29           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | 34 to 41   | 17.09                        | 2.41           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | 42 to 49   | 17.67                        | 2.50           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | 50 to 57   | 15.86                        | 2.04           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | 58 to 65   | 18.67                        | 1.53           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
| Trustworthiness      | 18 to 25   | 13.95                        | 3.04           | 1.92                              | 0.09    | 2.94                      | 0.01    | 0.05         |
|                      | 26 to 33   | 12.98                        | 3.66           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |

|                             |                 |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                             | <b>34 to 41</b> | 11.97 | 2.47 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>42 to 49</b> | 13.44 | 1.81 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>50 to 57</b> | 13.57 | 2,07 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>58 to 65</b> | 13.00 | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Exposure</b>             | <b>18 to 25</b> | 18.68 | 3.77 | 0.57 | 0.72 | 0.88 | 0.49 | 0.01 |
|                             | <b>26 to 33</b> | 19.22 | 3.56 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>34 to 41</b> | 19.09 | 3.22 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>42 to 49</b> | 17.78 | 3.31 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>50 to 57</b> | 19.57 | 2.57 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>58 to 65</b> | 22.00 | 3.46 |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Cost effectiveness</b>   | <b>18 to 25</b> | 19.27 | 3.20 | 0.63 | 0.68 | 0.37 | 0.87 | 0.01 |
|                             | <b>26 to 33</b> | 19.24 | 3.58 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>34 to 41</b> | 18.91 | 3.74 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>42 to 49</b> | 19.56 | 2.51 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>50 to 57</b> | 20.57 | 2.94 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>58 to 65</b> | 20.33 | 3.06 |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Perceived usefulness</b> | <b>18 to 25</b> | 17.67 | 3.87 | 1.53 | 0.18 | 1.74 | 0.13 | 0.03 |
|                             | <b>26 to 33</b> | 18.32 | 3.46 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>34 to 41</b> | 19.20 | 3.77 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>42 to 49</b> | 19.56 | 2.79 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>50 to 57</b> | 19.71 | 1.25 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>58 to 65</b> | 18.67 | 1.53 |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Subjective norms</b>     | <b>18 to 25</b> | 18.40 | 3.65 | 2.69 | 0.02 | 1.89 | 0.14 | 0.01 |
|                             | <b>26 to 33</b> | 17.86 | 3.24 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>34 to 41</b> | 18.00 | 2.86 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>42 to 49</b> | 18.78 | 3.07 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>50 to 57</b> | 19.29 | 1.11 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                             | <b>58 to 65</b> | 17.67 | 0.58 |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Ease of use</b>          | <b>18 to 25</b> | 26.03 | 5.24 | 1.89 | 0.10 | 1.24 | 0.29 | 0.02 |

|                 |       |      |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------|-------|------|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>26 to 33</b> | 26.19 | 4.23 |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>34 to 41</b> | 26.14 | 4.48 |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>42 to 49</b> | 24.78 | 4.76 |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>50 to 57</b> | 26.57 | 2.44 |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>58 to 65</b> | 19.33 | 1.53 |  |  |  |  |  |

Note: For the significant test results of homogeneity of variances, the Welch statistic is used, which is a robust test of equality of means; the values in italics are significant at 1%, 5% and/or 10% level.

The results presented in Table 5.19a shows that statistically significant differences across age groups were noted for only one social media factor, i.e., trustworthiness. The main effect of the age variable was statistically non-significant for the other seven social media factors. The finding infers that some categories of age had different perceptions regarding the effects of trustworthiness on brand equity. Additional tests were carried out to identify those particular age groups.

Pairwise comparisons Post Hoc tests (Tukey HSD) were conducted for all significant effects based on a significance level of 0.05. The results of the Multiple Comparisons Post Hoc Tests - Tukey HSD (Age) are presented in Table 5.20.

**Table 5.20: Multiple Comparisons Post Hoc Tests - Tukey HSD (Age)**

| <b>Social media factor</b> | <b>Age group</b> |                 | <b>Mean Difference (I-J)</b> | <b>p-value</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Trustworthiness</b>     | <b>18 to 25</b>  | <b>34 to 41</b> | 1.97                         | 0.01           |

The results presented in Table 5.19b are statistically significant and therefore suggest that for the main effect of Age, the mean for the 18 to 25 group (mean=13.95, standard deviation =3.04) was significantly larger than the mean score for the 34 to 41 group (mean= 11.97, standard deviation=2.47). This indicates that individuals in the 18-to-25-years age group demonstrated stronger perceptions of trustworthiness as a determinant of brand equity compared to respondents in the 34-to-41-years age group.

#### 5.3.3.2.2 ANOVA results for frequency of use

ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in respondents' perception of the effects of social media factors on brand equity (social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms) based on frequency of use. The ANOVA results for frequency of use are presented in Table 5.21.

**Table 5.21: ANOVA results for Frequency of use**

| Social media factors    | Frequency of use | Group descriptive statistics |                | Tests of Homogeneity of Variances |         | Test of Equality of Means |              | Effect Sizes |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|
|                         |                  | Mean                         | Std. Deviation | Levene Statistic                  | p-value | F statistic               | p-value      | Eta-squared  |
| Engagemen<br>t          | Daily            | 37.93                        | 6.02           | 160                               | 0.19    | 3.39                      | <i>0.02</i>  | 0.03         |
|                         | Weekly           | 36.24                        | 5.26           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Monthly          | 37.83                        | 7.22           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Never            | 29.50                        | 2.52           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
| Influence               | Daily            | 16.46                        | 3.04           | 0.64                              | 0.59    | 1.53                      | 0.21         | 0.02         |
|                         | Weekly           | 15.74                        | 3.39           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Monthly          | 15.00                        | 3.16           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Never            | 15.25                        | 1.50           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
| Trustworthi<br>ness     | Daily            | 13.50                        | 3.06           | 1.35                              | 0.26    | 1.19                      | 0.31         | 0.01         |
|                         | Weekly           | 13.21                        | 3.47           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Monthly          | 15.08                        | 2.39           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Never            | 13.00                        | 3.46           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
| Exposure                | Daily            | 19.06                        | 3.60           | 0.14                              | 0.93    | 3.92                      | <i>0.01</i>  | 0.04         |
|                         | Weekly           | 18.00                        | 3.48           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Monthly          | 18.83                        | 4.20           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Never            | 13.50                        | 3.11           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
| Cost<br>effectiveness   | Daily            | 19.38                        | 3.36           | 0.50                              | 0.68    | 0.81                      | 0.49         | 0.01         |
|                         | Weekly           | 18.50                        | 3.36           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Monthly          | 18.92                        | 3.03           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Never            | 18.75                        | 4.79           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
| Perceived<br>usefulness | Daily            | 18.30                        | 3.69           | 0.51                              | 0.68    | 2.44                      | <i>0.06</i>  | 0.02         |
|                         | Weekly           | 17.26                        | 3.85           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Monthly          | 16.17                        | 4.49           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Never            | 15.75                        | 2.99           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
| Subjective<br>norms     | Daily            | 18.38                        | 3.43           | 0.75                              | 0.52    | 1.34                      | 0.26         | 0.01         |
|                         | Weekly           | 18.00                        | 3.59           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Monthly          | 17.58                        | 4.03           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Never            | 15.25                        | 2.50           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
| Ease of use             | Daily            | 26.17                        | 5.04           | 0.21                              | 0.89    | 2.62                      | <i>0.051</i> | 0.03         |
|                         | Weekly           | 24.45                        | 4.89           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Monthly          | 26.92                        | 4.68           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |
|                         | Never            | 21.25                        | 3.77           |                                   |         |                           |              |              |

Note: For the significant test results of homogeneity of variances, the Welch statistic is used, which is a robust test of equality of means; the values in italics are significant at 5%.

The results of the ANOVA presented in Table 5.20a revealed significant differences for the social engagement, social media exposure, and ease of use factors only as indicated by the p-values which are equal to or less than 0.05. This means that respondents who differed in their frequency of use of social media differed in the perceptions of the effects of social engagement and social media exposure on brand equity. The main effect of the frequency of

use variable was statistically non-significant for the other six social media factors. Further analysis was performed to identify the nature of the differences across categories of frequency of use.

Tukey HSD Post Hoc tests were performed on social media engagement and social media exposure based on a significance level of 0.05 in order to identify the paired differences of the categories' frequency of use. The results are presented in Table 5.22.

**Table 5.22: Multiple Comparisons Post Hoc Tests - Tukey HSD (Frequency of use)**

| Social media factor | Frequency of use |       | Mean Difference (I-J) | p-value |
|---------------------|------------------|-------|-----------------------|---------|
|                     | Daily            | Never |                       |         |
| Engagement          | Daily            | Never | 8.43                  | 0.03    |
| Exposure            | Daily            | Never | 5.56                  | 0.01    |

The results for the post-hoc tests in the case of social media engagement presented in Table 5.20b are statistically significant and therefore suggests that the mean for daily use (mean=37.93, standard deviation =6.02) was significantly larger than the mean score for never (mean= 29.50, standard deviation=2.52). This indicates that respondents who were daily users of social media demonstrated stronger perceptions of social media engagement as a determinant of brand equity to respondents who never used social media.

The pairwise comparisons mean scores for social media exposure presented in Table 5.20b also suggest significant differences between daily users of social media and those who never accessed it, as shown by the p-value of 0.01. Specifically, the mean score for daily (Mean=19.06, standard deviation =3.60) was significantly larger than the one for never (mean=13.50, standard deviation=3.11). Hence, the daily users of social media exhibited stronger beliefs in the influence of social media exposure on brand equity, compared to non-users.

#### 5.3.3.2.3 ANOVA results for network provider

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to ascertain whether there were significant differences on respondents' perceptions of the effects of selected social media factors on brand equity (social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms) based on network provider. The results presented in Table 5.23.

**Table 5.23: ANOVA results for Network**

| Social media factors | Network | Group descriptive statistics |                | Tests of Homogeneity of Variances |         | Test of Equality of Means |             | Effect Sizes |
|----------------------|---------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|
|                      |         | Mean                         | Std. Deviation | Levene Statistic                  | p-value | F statistic               | p-value 47/ | Eta-squared  |
| Engagement           | Telecel | 38.5                         | 5.98           | 0.42                              | 0.74    | 2.90                      | <i>0.04</i> | 0.03         |
|                      | NetOne  | 39.2                         | 5.40           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Econet  | 37.1                         | 6.05           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Other   | 41.7                         | 7.71           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
| Influence            | Telecel | 17.2                         | 2.53           | 1.06                              | 0.37    | 1.31                      | 0.27        | 0.01         |
|                      | NetOne  | 16.4                         | 3.22           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Econet  | 16.2                         | 3.07           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Other   | 14.5                         | 4.42           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
| Trustworthiness      | Telecel | 13.9                         | 2.74           | 2.93                              | 0.03    | 0.41                      | 0.75        | 0.00         |
|                      | NetOne  | 13.7                         | 2.25           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Econet  | 13.4                         | 3.29           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Other   | 14.3                         | 3.01           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
| Exposure             | Telecel | 18.6                         | 4.59           | 1.61                              | 0.19    | 0.09                      | 0.97        | 0.00         |
|                      | NetOne  | 18.7                         | 3.36           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Econet  | 18.8                         | 3.68           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Other   | 19.3                         | 4.13           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
| Cost effectiveness   | Telecel | 20.0                         | 3.38           | 0.48                              | 0.70    | 0.59                      | 0.62        | 0.01         |
|                      | NetOne  | 19.2                         | 3.27           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Econet  | 19.1                         | 3.40           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Other   | 20.3                         | 2.88           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
| Perceived usefulness | Telecel | 19.3                         | 3.30           | 0.15                              | 0.93    | 1.82                      | 0.14        | 0.02         |
|                      | NetOne  | 18.7                         | 3.38           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Econet  | 17.8                         | 3.87           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Other   | 16.8                         | 4.71           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
| Subjective norms     | Telecel | 19.2                         | 3.69           | 1.11                              | 0.35    | 1.67                      | 0.17        | 0.02         |
|                      | NetOne  | 19.0                         | 2.71           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Econet  | 18.1                         | 3.56           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Other   | 17.2                         | 4.36           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
| Ease of use          | Telecel | 27.6                         | 4.89           | 1.03                              | 0.38    | 0.93                      | 0.43        | 0.01         |
|                      | NetOne  | 25.3                         | 5.75           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Econet  | 25.9                         | 4.83           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |
|                      | Other   | 25.8                         | 6.85           |                                   |         |                           |             |              |

Note: For the significant test results of homogeneity of variances, the Welch statistic is used, which is a robust test of equality of means; the values in italics are significant at 1%, 5% and/or 10% level.

The results presented in Table 5.23 shows that the ANOVA revealed significant differences for the social engagement factor only as indicated by the p-values of 0.04. This means that respondents who accessed social media using different network providers differed in their perceptions of the effects of social engagement on brand equity. The results showed

statistically non-significant differences in mean scores across networks for the other seven social media factors.

A pairwise comparison of the mean scores of social media engagement based on the network used by the respondents was done and the results are presented in Table 5.24.

**Table 5.24: Multiple Comparisons Post Hoc Tests - Tukey HSD (Network)**

| Social media factor | Network |        | Mean Difference (I-J) | p-value |
|---------------------|---------|--------|-----------------------|---------|
|                     | NetOne  | Econet |                       |         |
| Engagement          |         |        | 2.135                 | 0.098   |

A pairwise comparison of the mean scores of social media engagement based on network used by the respondents suggest that the differences were not significant at the 0.05 level. However, the differences are statistically significant if the 0.1 or 10% level of significance is applied. In that case, the mean score of social media engagement for NetOne (mean=39.2, standard deviation=5.40) is significantly larger than the one for Econet (mean=37.1, standard deviation=6.05). Therefore, for engagement, the significant difference is between the respondents using the Netone and Econet network users.

#### 5.3.3.2.4 ANOVA results for respondents' educational qualifications

ANOVA was performed to assess if there were significant differences in respondents' perception of the effects of social media factors on brand equity (social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms) based on respondents' educational qualifications. The ANOVA results for qualification are presented in Table 5.25.

**Table 5.25: ANOVA results for Qualification**

| Social media factors | Qualification       | Group descriptive statistics |                | Tests of Homogeneity of Variances |         | Test of Equality of Means |         | Effect size |
|----------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|-------------|
|                      |                     | Mean                         | Std. Deviation | Levene Statistic                  | p-value | F statistic               | p-value | Eta-squared |
| Engagement           | Degree              | 36.83                        | 6.99           | 1.48                              | 0.20    | 1.56                      | 0.17    | 0.03        |
|                      | Diploma             | 37.57                        | 5.20           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
|                      | Certificate         | 37.66                        | 5.67           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
|                      | Secondary education | 39.10                        | 6.19           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
|                      | Primary education   | 35.54                        | 4.96           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
|                      | No formal education | 34.67                        | 7.53           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
| Influence            | Degree              | 16.26                        | 3.23           | 1.83                              | 0.11    | 1.90                      | 0.11    | 0.03        |
|                      | Diploma             | 16.41                        | 2.85           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |

|                      |                     |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|----------------------|---------------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                      | Certificate         | 15.64 | 3.40 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Secondary education | 16.90 | 2.87 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Primary education   | 17.62 | 1.45 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | No formal education | 15.50 | 2.59 |      |      |      |      |      |
| Trustworthiness      | Degree              | 13.14 | 3.60 | 1.72 | 0.13 | 0.41 | 0.84 | 0.01 |
|                      | Diploma             | 13.66 | 2.88 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Certificate         | 13.68 | 3.04 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Secondary education | 13.58 | 3.13 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Primary education   | 13.54 | 2.15 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | No formal education | 12.50 | 1.87 |      |      |      |      |      |
| Exposure             | Degree              | 18.88 | 3.90 | 1.63 | 0.15 | 0.55 | 0.74 | 0.01 |
|                      | Diploma             | 18.97 | 3.58 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Certificate         | 18.32 | 4.03 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Secondary education | 19.18 | 3.32 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Primary education   | 19.38 | 2.63 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | No formal education | 18.83 | 0.98 |      |      |      |      |      |
| Cost effectiveness   | Degree              | 19.25 | 3.42 | 0.77 | 0.57 | 1.94 | 0.09 | 0.03 |
|                      | Diploma             | 19.53 | 3.12 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Certificate         | 18.76 | 3.69 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Secondary education | 19.22 | 3.05 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Primary education   | 21.62 | 2.75 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | No formal education | 18.17 | 2.32 |      |      |      |      |      |
| Perceived usefulness | Degree              | 17.03 | 4.68 | 3.16 | 0.01 | 2.60 | 0.03 | 0.04 |
|                      | Diploma             | 18.24 | 3.24 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Certificate         | 17.67 | 3.56 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Secondary education | 19.23 | 3.68 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Primary education   | 19.08 | 2.69 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | No formal education | 17.83 | 1.47 |      |      |      |      |      |
| Subjective norms     | Degree              | 17.62 | 4.03 | 2.17 | 0.06 | 1.24 | 0.29 | 0.02 |
|                      | Diploma             | 18.47 | 3.60 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Certificate         | 18.20 | 3.12 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Secondary education | 18.95 | 3.51 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | Primary education   | 18.23 | 1.74 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                      | No formal education | 16.67 | 1.75 |      |      |      |      |      |
| Ease of use          | Degree              | 25.77 | 5.88 | 2.24 | 0.05 | 0.54 | 0.75 | 0.01 |
|                      | Diploma             | 26.56 | 4.13 |      |      |      |      |      |



|  |                            |       |      |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|----------------------------|-------|------|--|--|--|--|--|
|  | <b>Certificate</b>         | 25.70 | 5.00 |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | <b>Secondary education</b> | 26.12 | 5.42 |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | <b>Primary education</b>   | 25.00 | 4.02 |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | <b>No formal education</b> | 24.00 | 2.68 |  |  |  |  |  |

Note: For the significant test results of homogeneity of variances, the Welch statistic is used, which is a robust test of equality of means; the values in italics are significant at 1%, 5% and/or 10% level.

Results presented in Table 5.22a shows that at 0.05 level of significance, the ANOVA results demonstrated significant differences for the perceived usefulness variable only, as shown by the p-value of 0.03. However, significant differences were not for the cost effectiveness variable at the 0.1 level of significance. The results infer that respondents with different levels of educational qualifications differed in the perceptions of the effects of cost effectiveness and perceived usefulness on brand equity. For the other six social media factors, the main effects of the educational qualification variable were not statistically significant.

Post-hoc tests were performed to identify the nature of the differences across categories of respondents' educational qualifications. The results of the post-hoc tests for qualification are presented in Table 5.26.

**Table 5.26: Multiple Comparisons Post Hoc Tests - Tukey HSD (Qualification)**

| <b>Social media factor</b>  | <b>Qualification</b> |                            | <b>Mean Difference (I-J)</b> | <b>p-value</b> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Cost effectiveness</b>   | <b>Certificate</b>   | <b>Primary education</b>   | -2.86                        | 0.05           |
| <b>Perceived usefulness</b> | <b>Degree</b>        | <b>Secondary education</b> | -2.20                        | 0.01           |

The results of the post-hoc tests presented in Table 5.22b suggest that, for the cost effectiveness variable, the significant difference in mean score is between the respondents with certificate and respondents with a primary education as the highest educational qualifications. To be specific, holders of certificates had a stronger perception of the effects of cost effectiveness on brand equity compared to those respondents who indicated a primary education only.

Regarding perceived usefulness, the significant difference is between the respondents with a degree and respondents with a secondary education as the highest qualification. Those respondents with secondary education only demonstrated stronger perceptions (mean score=19.23) of the effect of perceived usefulness on brand equity than degree holders' respondents (mean score 17.03).

### 5.3.3.2.5 ANOVA results for respondents' occupation

ANOVA was carried out to test if there were significant differences in respondents' perception of the effects of social media factors on brand equity (social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms) based on respondents' occupation. ANOVA results for occupation are presented in Table 5.27.

**Table 5.27: ANOVA results for Occupation**

| Social media factors | Occupation        | Group descriptive statistics |                | Tests of Homogeneity of Variances |         | Test of Equality of Means |         | Effect Sizes |
|----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|--------------|
|                      |                   | Mean                         | Std. Deviation | Levene Statistic                  | p-value | F statistic               | p-value | Eta-squared  |
| Engagement           | Student           | 37.84                        | 6.44           | 2.47                              | 0.06    | 0.36                      | 0.78    | 0.00         |
|                      | Unemployed        | 36.73                        | 6.80           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | Self-employed     | 37.78                        | 5.55           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | Formally employed | 37.65                        | 5.43           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
| Influence            | Student           | 15.94                        | 3.53           | 3.93                              | 0.01    | 2.80                      | 0.04    | 0.02         |
|                      | Unemployed        | 15.98                        | 3.59           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | Self-employed     | 16.23                        | 2.66           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | Formally employed | 17.13                        | 2.38           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
| Trustworthiness      | Student           | 13.63                        | 3.40           | 0.90                              | 0.44    | 0.09                      | 0.97    | 0.00         |
|                      | Unemployed        | 13.48                        | 2.82           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | Self-employed     | 13.41                        | 3.02           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | Formally employed | 13.48                        | 2.99           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
| Exposure             | Student           | 18.55                        | 3.91           | 3.72                              | 0.01    | 4.73                      | 0.00    | 0.04         |
|                      | Unemployed        | 17.63                        | 4.23           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | Self-employed     | 19.01                        | 3.63           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | Formally employed | 19.87                        | 2.40           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
| Cost effectiveness   | Student           | 19.13                        | 3.51           | 0.51                              | 0.67    | 1.46                      | 0.23    | 0.01         |
|                      | Unemployed        | 18.61                        | 2.99           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | Self-employed     | 19.27                        | 3.55           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | Formally employed | 19.92                        | 3.05           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
| Perceived usefulness | Student           | 18.44                        | 3.71           | 0.76                              | 0.51    | 1.38                      | 0.25    | 0.01         |
|                      | Unemployed        | 17.13                        | 3.75           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | Self-employed     | 18.03                        | 4.19           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |
|                      | Formally employed | 18.17                        | 3.19           |                                   |         |                           |         |              |

|                         |                          |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Subjective norms</b> | <b>Student</b>           | 18.67 | 3.64 | 0.92 | 0.43 | 2.10 | 0.10 | 0.02 |
|                         | <b>Unemployed</b>        | 17.40 | 3.67 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                         | <b>Self-employed</b>     | 18.00 | 3.37 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                         | <b>Formally employed</b> | 18.75 | 3.07 |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Ease of use</b>      | <b>Student</b>           | 26.46 | 5.40 | 0.45 | 0.72 | 1.44 | 0.23 | 0.01 |
|                         | <b>Unemployed</b>        | 24.73 | 5.30 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                         | <b>Self-employed</b>     | 26.14 | 4.56 |      |      |      |      |      |
|                         | <b>Formally employed</b> | 25.68 | 4.86 |      |      |      |      |      |

Note: For the significant test results of homogeneity of variances, the Welch statistic is used, which is a robust test of equality of means; the values in italics are significant at 1%, 5% and/or 10% level.

Table 5.27 shows that at 0.05 level of significance, the ANOVA results demonstrated significant differences for the social media influence and exposure variables only as shown by the p-values of 0.04 and 0.00 respectively. Thus, the results for the other six social media factors were statistically non-significant. The outcome suggests that respondents from different occupational categories differed in their perception of the effects of social media influence and exposure on brand equity.

Post-hoc tests were performed to identify the nature of the differences across categories of respondents' occupation. The findings of the post-hoc tests for occupation are summarised in Table 5.28.

**Table 5.28: Multiple Comparisons Post Hoc Tests - Tukey HSD (Occupation)**

| <b>Social factor</b> | <b>media</b>      | <b>Occupation</b>        | <b>Mean Difference (I-J)</b> | <b>p-value</b> |
|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Influence</b>     | <b>Student</b>    | <b>Formally employed</b> | -1.20                        | 0.09           |
| <b>Exposure</b>      | <b>Unemployed</b> | <b>Formally employed</b> | -2.24                        | 0.01           |

The findings of the post-hoc tests summarised in Table 5.28 infer that, for the social media influence variable, the significant difference in mean score is between students and formally employed respondents. Specifically, formally employed respondents had a stronger perception of the effects of social media influence on brand equity compared to respondents who went through primary education only.

Regarding social media exposure, the significant difference is between unemployed and formally employed respondents. The formally employed respondents demonstrated stronger perceptions (mean score=15.94) of the effect of social media exposure on brand equity than the unemployed respondents (mean score 17.13).

### 5.3.3.2.6 ANOVA results for respondents' income

ANOVA was carried out to ascertain whether there were significant differences on respondents' perceptions of the effects of selected social media factors on brand equity (social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms) based on respondents' income. The ANOVA results for income are presented in Table 5.29.

**Table 5.29: ANOVA results for Income**

| Social media factors | Income           | Group descriptive statistics |                | Tests of Homogeneity of Variances |         | Test of Equality of Means |         | Effect size |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|-------------|
|                      |                  | Mean                         | Std. Deviation | Levene Statistic                  | p-value | F statistic               | p-value | Eta-squared |
| Engagement           | less than \$2000 | 37.22                        | 6.01           | 0.20                              | 0.94    | 1.17                      | 0.32    | 0.02        |
|                      | \$2001-3000      | 37.95                        | 5.92           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
|                      | \$3001-4000      | 37.16                        | 6.25           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
|                      | \$4001-5000      | 40.05                        | 5.15           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
|                      | Above \$5000     | 37.43                        | 6.57           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
| Influence            | less than \$2000 | 16.10                        | 3.20           | 0.15                              | 0.96    | 1.27                      | 0.28    | 0.02        |
|                      | \$2001-3000      | 16.36                        | 2.88           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
|                      | \$3001-4000      | 16.91                        | 3.40           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
|                      | \$4001-5000      | 16.91                        | 2.60           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
|                      | Above \$5000     | 15.50                        | 2.80           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
| Trustworthiness      | less than \$2000 | 13.62                        | 2.95           | 2.59                              | 0.04    | 1.30                      | 0.28    | 0.01        |
|                      | \$2001-3000      | 13.44                        | 3.67           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
|                      | \$3001-4000      | 13.48                        | 3.17           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
|                      | \$4001-5000      | 14.18                        | 2.06           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
|                      | Above \$5000     | 12.57                        | 2.95           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |
| Exposure             | less than \$2000 | 18.23                        | 3.76           | 0.35                              | 0.84    | 1.84                      | 0.12    | 0.02        |
|                      | \$2001-3000      | 19.53                        | 3.23           |                                   |         |                           |         |             |

|                      |                  |       |      |      |      |      |             |      |
|----------------------|------------------|-------|------|------|------|------|-------------|------|
|                      | \$3001-4000      | 19.09 | 4.05 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | \$4001-5000      | 19.55 | 3.19 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | Above \$5000     | 19.00 | 3.75 |      |      |      |             |      |
| Cost effectiveness   | less than \$2000 | 18.93 | 3.48 | 1.19 | 0.32 | 2.12 | <i>0.08</i> | 0.03 |
|                      | \$2001-3000      | 19.23 | 3.12 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | \$3001-4000      | 20.53 | 3.34 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | \$4001-5000      | 19.27 | 2.21 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | Above \$5000     | 18.68 | 3.80 |      |      |      |             |      |
| Perceived usefulness | less than \$2000 | 17.84 | 3.66 | 0.87 | 0.48 | 0.77 | 0.54        | 0.01 |
|                      | \$2001-3000      | 18.56 | 3.60 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | \$3001-4000      | 18.05 | 3.88 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | \$4001-5000      | 18.64 | 3.59 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | Above \$5000     | 17.36 | 4.84 |      |      |      |             |      |
| Subjective norms     | less than \$2000 | 18.12 | 3.39 | 1.17 | 0.32 | 0.60 | 0.66        | 0.01 |
|                      | \$2001-3000      | 18.70 | 3.80 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | \$3001-4000      | 18.52 | 3.53 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | \$4001-5000      | 18.05 | 2.80 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | Above \$5000     | 17.68 | 3.61 |      |      |      |             |      |
| Ease of use          | less than \$2000 | 25.81 | 5.31 | 1.71 | 0.15 | 0.88 | 0.48        | 0.01 |
|                      | \$2001-3000      | 26.16 | 5.03 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | \$3001-4000      | 25.57 | 5.02 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | \$4001-5000      | 24.77 | 4.93 |      |      |      |             |      |
|                      | Above \$5000     | 27.25 | 3.42 |      |      |      |             |      |

Note: For the significant test results of homogeneity of variances, the Welch statistic is used, which is a robust test of equality of means; the values in italics are significant at 1%, 5% and/or 10% level.

Table 5.29 shows that there were no statistically significant differences observed at the 0.05 level. However, significant differences were noted for the cost-effectiveness variable only as shown by the p-value of 0.08. This means that respondents from different income categories

differed in their perceptions of the effects of cost-effectiveness on brand equity. The results showed statistically non-significant differences in mean scores across income groups for the other seven social media factors. Post-hoc tests were performed to ascertain the nature of the differences.

Pairwise comparisons Post Hoc tests (Tukey HSD) were conducted for all significant effects based on a significance level of 0.05. The results are presented in Table 5.30.

**Table 5.30: Multiple Comparisons Post Hoc Tests - Tukey HSD (Income)**

| Social media factor | Income           |              | Mean Difference (I-J) | p-value |
|---------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------|
|                     | less than \$2000 | \$3001- 4000 |                       |         |
| Cost effectiveness  |                  |              | -1.603                | 0.047   |

The results presented in Table 5.30 are statistically significant and therefore suggest that for the main effect of income, the mean for those respondents who earn less than \$2000 was significantly less than the mean score for the group which earned between \$3001- 4000. This indicates that individuals in the higher income category demonstrated stronger perceptions of cost-effectiveness as a determinant of brand equity compared to those in the lower income group.

In the next section, issues of reliability and validity are discussed.

## **5.3 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

In the current study, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was done in order to determine construct validity and reliability and to access the underlying structure of the scales. The CFA was performed on the data set prior to conducting the inferential analysis to confirm the validity of the continuous scale variables to determine whether there were data set variables with regards to what respondents considered to be the social media factors that influence their brand equity. The reliability and validity done for this study are discussed in the following section.

### **5.3.1 Validity issues**

In this study, content, construct, and discriminant validity of the research instrument were tested.

#### **5.3.1.1 Content validity**

To ensure content validity in this study, the researcher sought the input of experts in the field of study (the supervisors) when designing the questionnaire. Prior to conducting the actual fieldwork, the questionnaire was pilot tested using a conveniently selected sample of

respondents. Relevant changes were then made to the instrument, based on the outcome of the pilot study.

### 5.3.1.2 Construct validity

In the current study, construct validity was safeguarded through the use of the statistical techniques in the form of t-tests and factor analysis and the use of a pre-validated questionnaire. The CFA was done to ensure validity of the scales. Confirmatory factor analysis enhanced the identification of the social media factors that influence consumer brand equity of the mobile network operators. The factor analysis loadings were discussed in section 5.3.2.

### 5.3.1.3 Discriminant validity

While different techniques of measuring discriminant validity exist in the statistics literature, the inter-construct correlation matrix approach was used in this study. The Inter-construct correlation matrix is presented in Table 5.31.

**Table 5.31: Inter-construct correlation matrix**

|                      |                     | Engagement | Influence | Trustworthiness | Exposure | Cost effectiveness | Perceived usefulness | Subjective Norms | Ease of use |
|----------------------|---------------------|------------|-----------|-----------------|----------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Engagement           | Pearson Correlation | 1          |           |                 |          |                    |                      |                  |             |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     |            |           |                 |          |                    |                      |                  |             |
|                      | N                   | 306        |           |                 |          |                    |                      |                  |             |
| Influence            | Pearson Correlation | .479**     | 1         |                 |          |                    |                      |                  |             |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000       |           |                 |          |                    |                      |                  |             |
|                      | N                   | 306        | 306       |                 |          |                    |                      |                  |             |
| Trustworthiness      | Pearson Correlation | .396**     | .402**    | 1               |          |                    |                      |                  |             |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000       | .000      |                 |          |                    |                      |                  |             |
|                      | N                   | 306        | 306       | 306             |          |                    |                      |                  |             |
| Exposure             | Pearson Correlation | .492**     | .503**    | .422**          | 1        |                    |                      |                  |             |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000       | .000      | .000            |          |                    |                      |                  |             |
|                      | N                   | 306        | 306       | 306             | 306      |                    |                      |                  |             |
| Cost effectiveness   | Pearson Correlation | .433**     | .422**    | .367**          | .572**   | 1                  |                      |                  |             |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000       | .000      | .000            | .000     |                    |                      |                  |             |
|                      | N                   | 306        | 306       | 306             | 306      | 306                |                      |                  |             |
| Perceived usefulness | Pearson Correlation | .468**     | .413**    | .324**          | .515**   | .476**             | 1                    |                  |             |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000       | .000      | .000            | .000     | .000               |                      |                  |             |
|                      | N                   | 306        | 306       | 306             | 306      | 306                | 306                  |                  |             |

|  |                     |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |     |
|--|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----|
|  | N                   | 306    | 306    | 306    | 306    | 306    | 306    |        |     |
| Subjective Norms   | Pearson Correlation | .503** | .370** | .420** | .516** | .462** | .638** | 1      |     |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   | .000   | .000   | .000   | .000   | .000   |        |     |
|  | N                   | 306    | 306    | 306    | 306    | 306    | 306    | 306    |     |
| Ease of use  | Pearson Correlation | .266** | .218** | .382** | .463** | .372** | .385** | .425** | 1   |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   | .000   | .000   | .000   | .000   | .000   | .000   |     |
|  | N                   | 306    | 306    | 306    | 306    | 306    | 306    | 306    | 306 |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). |                     |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |     |

Table 5.25 shows that all inter-construct correlations were less than 0.7, confirming discriminant validity. This means that the social media factors measured in the study were different from each other and that each factor represented unique phenomena.

### 5.3.1.4 Reliability

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test whether or not the items used to measure the variables in the questionnaire all measured the same variable. The coefficients were calculated for the following variables: social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms. Cronbach's alpha coefficients range from 0 to 1, and values closer to 1 represent greater reliability (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:238). In this study, the coefficients were evaluated using the guidelines for interpreting the acceptable levels of reliability, as suggested by Maree and Pietersen (2016:174). The coefficients are presented in Table 5.32.

**Table 5.32: Cronbach alpha**

| Variables/Factors    | Number of Items | Cronbach's alpha | Strength   |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------|
| Engagement           | 10              | 0.757            | Acceptable |
| Influence            | 4               | 0.734            | Acceptable |
| Trustworthiness      | 4               | 0.649            | Moderate   |
| Exposure             | 5               | 0.708            | Acceptable |
| Cost effectiveness   | 5               | 0.713            | Acceptable |
| Perceived usefulness | 5               | 0.698            | Moderate   |
| Subjective norms     | 5               | 0.699            | Moderate   |
| Ease of use          | 7               | 0.802            | Good       |

As can be seen from Table 5.32, the reliability indicators for the eight social media factor variables were acceptable and, therefore, appropriate for further tests. It can be concluded that the Likert-type scale questions in the research instrument were both reliable and valid as the results indicated Cronbach's alpha values of above 0.6. The results obtained from the



factor analyses and reliability test shows that participating mobile network consumers identified eight factors (social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms) as social media factors that would influence their brand equity of the mobile network operators. The results confirm the results of the descriptive statistics conducted for question 7, which also indicated that these eight social media factors would have an influence on the value attached by the consumers to a mobile network operator business, products, and services.

In the next section, a summary of the presentation and analysis of the study findings is provided.

## **5.4 SUMMARY**

In the current chapter, the research objectives and design were highlighted. The chapter focused on the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the study findings. The findings were discussed in line with the research objectives. The chapter presented data gathered from the consumers of the mobile network operator products in Harare Province of Zimbabwe. The chapter presented the broad findings obtained from the study and these include the demographic profiles of the respondents, their age groups, occupations, and net income levels. Tables and graphs were used to present the findings. The chapter also discussed the consumers' access to social media through mobile data. The range of results of the consumers' responses on the social media factors that influence brand equity were established. Overall, the social media engagement had the highest mean score of 37.60 and the least was trustworthiness with a mean score of 13.51. Exploratory factor analysis was first done as a preliminary test to identify the relationship between the observed variables (social media factors) and their underlying latent construct(s). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model was conducted to determine whether the latent variables (Social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media perceived usefulness, social media subjective norms and social media ease of use) adequately describe the data. Maximum likelihood estimation was performed to determine the standard errors for the parameter estimates. Standardised factor loading values ranges from -1 to 1, and shows the strength of the relationship between the indicator variable and latent variable. In this study, all the items had satisfactory and statistically significant factor loadings of more than 0.4. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used to test whether or not the items used to measure a variable all measure the same variable. The coefficients were calculated for the following variables: social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure,

social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms. The reliability indicators for the eight variables were acceptable and, therefore, appropriate for further tests.

Two statistical techniques, that is (a) independent samples t-Test and (b) analysis of variance (ANOVA), were applied in this study. Two-tailed independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to examine whether the mean scores of selected social media factors influencing brand equity (social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms) were significantly different between the Male and Female categories of Gender. ANOVA was used to assess if there were any statistically significant differences in the perceptions of respondents on social media factors (social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media exposure, social media cost effectiveness, social media ease of use, social media perceived usefulness and social media subjective norms) across different categories of age, frequency of use, network, qualification, occupation, and income.

The next chapter addresses the conclusions and recommendations of the study based on the findings in Chapter 5.

# CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The study sought to determine the social media factors that influence brand equity in the mobile network industry in Zimbabwe, as discussed in chapter 1. The literature reviewed provided a detailed discussion on social media as well as the impact of social media on business (chapter 2) while chapter 3 discussed brand equity and its components. The research methodology adopted in the study was discussed in Chapter 4. The findings from the questionnaires were presented, analysed, and interpreted in line with the research objectives in chapter 5. In this chapter, the research objectives are addressed, conclusions made from the findings and recommendations arising from the results of the study are discussed. The current chapter also highlights the contribution of the study to the mobile network industry in Zimbabwe in promoting brand equity through social media. The limitations of the study are also discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter.

## 6.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective for this study was to determine the social media factors that influence the brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe. In order to achieve the set objectives for the study, empirical research needed to be carried out. In the next section, conclusions generated from the study are discussed.

## 6.3 CONCLUSIONS IN RESPECT OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This section discusses the conclusions drawn from each of the objectives.

### ***6.3.1 Secondary research objectives***

In order to achieve the primary research objective, secondary research objectives were formulated. Nine secondary objectives were formulated. Each objective is highlighted again, and a conclusion supported by the results discussed in chapter 5 is presented for each of the secondary objectives.

#### ***6.3.1.1 Secondary objective: To determine if social media engagement influences brand equity of mobile network operators.***

The analysis of the research results provided in chapter 5 (section 5.3.1.3.1, table 5.4) indicates that social media engagement, such as customer service and responding to consumer queries through social media, is an element that can lead to brand loyalty. The

results are supported by 82.36% (n=252) of the respondents who indicated that they would be loyal to a mobile network operator who responds to their queries on their social media platforms. A significant number of respondents (79.74%, n=244) agreed that they were likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who provides good customer service through their social media platforms. These statements with the two highest percentage of responses imply that the respondents could become loyal to a mobile network operator that offers them good customer service and assistance on social media. The conclusion that can be made from the study is that social media engagement influences brand equity of mobile network operators. The result is supported by research findings of Wirtz et al. (2013), Zheng et al. (2015), and Poorrezaei (2016), who indicated that brand engagement leads to positive brand loyalty, which is usually manifested in the form of consumers endorsing the brand on social media. Allows for active interaction of the individuals and businesses with their consumers. Satisfied consumers tend to spread good messages about a social media platform and unsatisfied consumers spread negative word of mouth about the social media platform and its features (Qin, 2020:340; McClure & Seock, 2020; Abdullar & Siraj, 2016:38). The results thus indicate the objective to determine if social media engagement influences brand equity of mobile network operators was achieved. Social media has the ability to connect businesses, people, build relationships and maintain contacts through real time communication has lured many social media users who want to follow events, news and people and to share content. The results shows that social media allow businesses and users to click, share, retweet, and comment on social media messages.

***6.3.1.2 Secondary objective: To determine if social media influence, influences brand equity of mobile network operators.***

The analysis of the research results provided in chapter 5 (section 5.3.1.3.2, table 5.5) indicates that the overwhelming majority of respondents 83.66% (n=256) indicated that they would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customer fast internet speed. A further 82.03% (n=251) of the respondents agreed that they would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products. These statements primarily link to the quality of the product and service received. The result indicate that individuals would recommend on social media a mobile network operator that provides quality product and service received, make use of mobile network providers' social media platform to provide feedback and opinions which influence the opinions of other individuals. The result can lead to the conclusion that social media influence is important in providing consumers with feedback and consumers' recommendations may influence other consumers' choice of products. The results are in agreement with Wang and Sun (2016) who argue that social media allow businesses and users to connect to many other

users, complement the needs of the users, allowing users to perform many functions like uploading, downloading and commenting on visual and audio content on the social media platform. Social media platforms allow users to connect to many other users, complement the needs of the users, allowing users to like, comment, share, review and recommend products to others on social media (Mohd-Sulaiman & Hingun, 2020:540). Based on the results, it would seem that mobile network operators may consider developing and sharing with consumers on social media brand related information that allow users to recommend best service and products of the operator to others through the social media.

### ***6.3.1.3 Secondary objective: To determine if social media trustworthiness influences brand equity of mobile network operators.***

The analysis of the research results provided in chapter 5 (section 5.3.1.3.3, table 5.6) indicates that the slightly above half of the respondents, 58.17% (n=178) indicated that they do not trust the information posted by mobile network operators on their social media platforms. Also, slightly above half of the respondents 57.19% (n=175) indicated that they would trust a mobile network operator that answers the questions they ask on their social media platforms. The results shows that social media trustworthiness is low, and this can lead to the conclusion that social media users generally do not trust mobile network operators' information they see on social media. The results show that when consumer trust of the social media platform is low, the consumers may also lack trust of the business information they see on social media. However, that when consumers trust a social media platform, they may be more inclined to believe the mobile network operator's social media content they see on social media and may also make inquiries about the brand. According to Vizard (2016), trust is widely recognised as a crucial component of human social relationships, and many consumers have little or no trust in brand information that they see on firms' social media platforms. One of the reasons why customers do not use a company's social media platforms is a lack of trust in the way personal data is handled (Kleine-Kalmer, 2016). Kleine-Kalmer (2016) goes on to say that most social media studies have overlooked the problem of trust. Consumers do not accept social media as a reliable source of information about products and services, according to Mangold and Faulds (2009). When users trust the social media platform, they may be impressed by the social media content, make inquiries, and make conversions (Sanmamed et al., 2017:204). Also, when social media users trust the social media platform based on comments and reviews, they get from trusted individuals and family, they are bound to act according to the comments they get (Abdullar & Siraj, 2016:41). But when the trust is low, social media users' attitude will also mean lack of trust in the business. Based on the results, it would seem that mobile network operators can consider looking at ways and means by which to win the trust of SM users. The mobile network operators may provide information that

is true and to respond to social media user reviews and comments of the brands on social media, in order to gain the trust of their consumers.

**6.3.1.4 Secondary objective: To determine if social media exposure influences brand equity of mobile network operators.**

The analysis of the research results provided in chapter 5 (section 5.3.1.3.4, table 5.7) indicates that social media exposure, such as providing product information, allowing users to follow the mobile network operator on social media and allowing product reviews through social media is an element that can lead to positive brand association, consumer loyalty to the brand and perceived good brand value. The finding is supported by 77.77% (n=238) of the respondents who indicated that they would follow a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products. The result shows that many respondents find social media useful in providing them with product information from the mobile network operators. Consumers use the mobile network operator's social media platform to get information about the products, not only provided by the brand but also provided by other users. The result can lead to the conclusion that social media exposure is important in building brand equity in the mobile network operators' consumers since consumers can recommend the brand to other users on social media. Findings are supported by Alotaibi et al., (2016:62) who argue that the exposure on social media can cut across the demographic variables like age, gender and sex and this can allow businesses to expose their content to users and connects them through sharing of content on the business, its products, services and brands. Exposure as a social media factor can cut across the demographic variables like age, gender and sex which can allow social users to be exposed to content that connects them and allows sharing of emotional responses (Ebrahim, 2020:288; Alotaibi, Ramachandran, Kor & Haseinian-Far, 2016:62). Based on the results, it would seem that mobile network operators may consider providing product information, offer best products and provide consumer feedback to their questions and reviews through social media to increase consumer exposure to the brand.

**6.3.1.5 Secondary research objective: To determine if social media cost-effectiveness influences brand equity of mobile network operators.**

The analysis of the research results provided in chapter 5 (section 5.3.1.3.5, table 5.8) indicates that social media cost-effectiveness, such as providing product information, responding to brand-related questions, solving consumer complaints and queries for free through social media is an element that can lead to increased perceived brand value and brand loyalty. The results show that 75.16% (n=230) of respondents indicated that they

perceive mobile network operators that solve their complaints and queries for free through their social media platforms to be excellent service providers. The result indicates that respondents value a mobile network operator that uses social media to attend to their complaints and queries. Another high percentage, 74.18% (n=227) of respondents indicated that they feel that they get value for their money when mobile network operators allow them to ask brand-related questions for free through their social media platforms. The result shows that the respondents like a mobile network operator that enables them to be assisted by the mobile network operator, cost free, through the social media. The results further showed that consumers become loyal to a mobile network operator that does not cost the consumers much money to search for information on the mobile network provider and its products through the social media. The result can lead to the conclusion that social media cost effectiveness influences brand equity since consumers can access product information and receive assistance through social media in an affordable manner. Findings are in agreement with Segal (2019:1), who argues that social media is always available 24 hours a day and seven days a week, is less expensive to use and there is no payment of advertising channel. The cost effectiveness factor refers to the cost of using the platform, its extent of reach and leads the platform is capable of generating (Sanmamed et al. 2017:204). Users tend to prefer a social media platform that allows them to perform desired actions affordably. Based on the results, it would seem that mobile network operators may use social media that can be accessed in an affordable manner by the consumers to share product information and provide consumer service.

***6.3.1.6 Secondary research objective: To determine if social media perceived usefulness influences brand equity of mobile network operators.***

The analysis of the research results provided in chapter 5 (section 5.3.1.3.6, table 5.9) indicates that social media perceived usefulness such as sharing brand information and quick response to consumer complaints and queries through social media is an element that can lead to increased brand value and loyalty. From Table 5.9, it is clear that 69.94% (n=214) of the respondents indicated that they would consider a mobile network operator that responds quickly to their complaints and queries through its social media platforms to be an excellent service provider, while 67.97% (n=208) of the respondents agreed that they perceived a mobile network operator that shares its product promotions with customers through its social media platforms to be a reliable brand. The results show that the respondents like a mobile network operator that uses social media to solve their problems and share information on their products. The results indicate that respondents find useful product information, perform many functions, such as online buying, recommending the products and making product reviews on

social media platforms of mobile network operators. It can be concluded that social media usefulness is important in building brand equity among the mobile network operators' consumers since consumers can reshare and recommend the product information with other users. Findings are supported by Segal (2019:1), who argues that the business may also make social media useful in its marketing of its products by posting trending issues, topics and brands that promote products and generate sales as well as promoting customer referrals. Perceived usefulness implies that the social media is judged on its worth in society in terms of the functions that it allows the society to perform (Matikiti et al., 2017:3). The more functional a social platform is, the more useful it can become in society. Based on the results, it would seem that mobile network operators may consider using social media to promote products by giving product information and customer service so that the consumers can easily access the information.

**6.3.1.7 Secondary research objective: To determine if social media subjective norms influence brand equity of mobile network operators.**

The analysis of the research results provided in chapter 5 (section 5.3.1.3.7, table 5.10) indicates that the overwhelming majority of respondents showed that they would recommend the brand that is involved in community programmes to family and friends on social media. It is clear from table 5.10, that 68.30% (n=209) of the respondents indicated that they would recommend a mobile network provider on social media that is involved in community programmes. The result shows that respondents value a mobile network operator that undertakes corporate social responsibility programmes to assist the community. The results further indicate that the consumers would buy products reviewed and recommended to them by family and friends through social media. It can thus be concluded from the research that social media subjective norms influence brand equity of mobile network operators since the reviews and recommendations by friends and family, done through social media, can increase brand awareness and increased demand for the brand. Subjective norms may impact on the continuation of behaviours, such as social media acceptance, liking of products and brands, sharing the content on social media and commenting on the products. The results are consistent with Wang and Sun (2016) who argue that because social media interactions are accessible to others, social media platforms expose customers to other people's influences. Individuals who engage in social media activities want to meet the expectations of other members of the community, as well as their followers. Friends and society exert social pressure on them to join and participate in the brand-related community (Girona & Korgaonkar, 2014; Muntinga et al., 2011). According to Wang and Sun (2016), social media has an impact on customers' deliberate engagement behaviour. Individuals tend to adjust their



attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs to their social environment, which is why other customers have an influence on them (Bolton et al., 2013). Friendship, social support, and discovering others with similar interests and behaviours can all be met by virtual brand communities (Martinez-López, Anaya-Sánchez, Aguilar-Illescas, & Molinillo, 2016). Sometimes social expectations, beliefs, values may force users to conform to specific social behaviours that may influence the use, choice, frequency of use and adoption of social media platforms. Based on the results, it would seem that mobile network operators may encourage the sharing of information, brand reviews and recommendations to family and friends through social media.

**6.3.1.8 Secondary research objectives: To determine if social media ease of use of social media influences brand equity of mobile network operators.**

The analysis of the research results provided in chapter 5 (section 5.3.1.3.8, table 5.11) indicates that ease of use of social media, such as allowing easy completion of transactions through social media is an element that can lead to brand trust, association and loyalty. The results show that 70.59% (n=216) of the respondents indicated that they are loyal to a mobile network operator that makes it easy for them to complete a transaction through its social media platforms. The statement refers to loyalty to a mobile network operator. The result shows that consumers trust and like a mobile network operator that allows them to complete transactions on social media. The results further showed that social media make it easy for the consumers to compare products, prices and identify the business among competing brands on social media. This can lead to the conclusion that ease of use of social media influences brand equity of mobile network operators since the availability of product information and completing transactions on social media can increase product awareness and consumer loyalty to the brand. Findings are in line with the argument by Matikiti et al. (2017:3) who argue that the ease of use of the social media platform may influence the frequency of use and even the number of users the platform attracts. Users tend to like a platform that offers a variety of functions but allowing those functions to be carried out easily without technical hurdles (Matikiti, Mpinganjira & Roberts-Lombard, 2017:3). Based on the results, it would seem that mobile network operators may use social media platforms that offers a variety of functions, such as placing orders online and downloading product catalogues and allowing those functions to be carried out easily without technical hurdles. The ease of use of the social media platform may further influence the consumers, regardless of age and level of education, to retweet, share videos, and images comfortably, thereby further promoting the business and its brands.

**6.3.1.9 Secondary research objectives: To determine if there are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of selected social media attributes across categories of various demographic variables.**

- The research findings, as discussed in chapter 5 (section 5.3.3.1.1), indicated that the mean scores of social media engagement was significantly different between the male and female respondents. This finding suggests the mean score of engagement was significantly different between the Male (mean=38.57) and Female (mean=37.20) categories of gender. The result indicate that compared to females, male respondents demonstrated a stronger perception of the effects of social media engagement on brand equity. The result can lead to the conclusion that male consumers have a stronger perception of the effects of social media engagement on brand equity. These results seem to be consistent with the outcome of previous research which revealed that men are much more motivated in adopting new technology and actively participate on social media more than women (Ali et al., 2019).
- The analysis of the study results provided in chapter 5 (section 5.3.3.2.1), indicated that perceptions of truthfulness as a determinant of brand equity among the 18 to 25 age group and the 34 to 41 age group was different. for the main effect of Age, the mean for the 18 to 25 group (mean=13.95) was significantly larger than the mean score for the 34 to 41 group (mean= 11.97). The mean for the 18 to 25 group was significantly larger than the mean score for the 34 to 41 group. The results can lead to the conclusion that the consumers in the 18 to 25 age group have stronger perceptions of truthfulness of information found on social media about the brand as a determinant of brand equity compared to consumers in the 34 to 41 age group.
- Furthermore, the analysis of the study results provided in chapter 5 (section 5.3.3.2.4) on the perceptions on the effects of cost effectiveness on brand equity, a comparison between holders of certificates and those who went through primary education only, the study revealed that the mean score was higher between the respondents with certificates and respondents with a primary education as the highest educational qualifications. Those respondents with secondary education only demonstrated stronger perceptions (mean score=19.23) of the effect of perceived usefulness on brand equity than degree holders' respondents (mean score 17.03). The results can lead to the conclusion that consumers who are holders of certificates have a stronger perception of the effects of cost effectiveness on brand equity compared with those who went through primary education only. These results refute previous findings by Kapil and Roy (2014) which concluded that educational background does not have a significant impact on the perceived usefulness of social media in financial decision-

making. The study findings further indicated that there was significant difference between the respondents with a degree and respondents with a secondary education as the highest qualification. The conclusion is that consumers with secondary education only have stronger perceptions of the effect of perceived usefulness on brand equity than degree holders.

- The analysis of the study results provided in chapter 5 (section 5.3.3.2.5), indicated that for the social media influence variable, the significant difference in mean score was between students and formally employed respondents. Specifically, formally employed respondents had a stronger perception of the effects of social media influence on brand equity compared to students. The formally employed respondents demonstrated stronger perceptions (mean score=15.94) of the effect of social media exposure on brand equity than the unemployed respondents (mean score 17.13). The results can lead to the conclusion that formally employed consumers have a stronger perception of the effects of social media influence on brand equity compared to students. Regarding social media exposure, the results indicated that the formally employed respondents demonstrated stronger perceptions of the effect of social media exposure on brand equity than the unemployed.
- The analysis of the study results provided in chapter 5 (section 5.3.3.2.6) indicated that on the main effect of income, the mean for those respondents who earned less than \$2000 was significantly less than the mean score for the group which earned between \$3001- 4000. The results can lead to the conclusion that consumers in the higher income category have stronger perceptions of cost-effectiveness as a determinant of brand equity compared to those in the lower income group.

#### **6.3.1.10 Secondary research objectives: To identify areas for further study**

Further studies can be done to focus on testing the relationship between brand equity and each of the social media factor and also to test the influence of the social media factors on brand equity. Future research can also be conducted on a larger sample. Future research can test the factors in a different industry context, as well to see if the same factors influence brand equity in different industries.

Conclusions from the secondary objectives were required to achieve the primary objective. In the next section, the primary objective is discussed, how the primary objective was achieved, and the conclusions made are discussed.

#### **6.3.2 Primary research objective**

The primary objective of the study (outlined in Chapter 1, section 1.6) was to determine the social media factors that influence the brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe.

Factor analysis was an important part of the study as it directly related to identifying and confirming social media factors that can influence brand equity. An analysis of the factor loadings of the items on the social media factor variables was carried out. The EFA (as described in chapter 5 section 5.3.2.1) was an important aspect of the study as it validated the items that were to be used for the CFA. EFA essentially explored, from the data, to see what factors were formed from the set of data. The factor loadings of all the measuring items were inspected. Each factor had a number of items that loaded into the factor as indicated in table 5.13. The factors that loaded in the EFA reflected the factors identified in the theory. The content of the items that loaded into the eight factors was related to brand equity elements which are brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, perceived value, and perceived product quality.

Exploratory factor analysis was performed for 45 observed variables using manual selection to determine the number of factors to retain with varimax rotation. The results show that items in each of the social media factor variables indicated in Table 5.14 clearly had a compact factor structure, as shown by the relatively high factor loadings. All the items exceeded the rule of thumb minimum threshold of 0.4. Thus, all the measuring items had satisfactory and statistically significant factor loadings. All the items in the EFA were retained for further validation in CFA.

The CFA, through significant factor loadings, together with the reliability analysis using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, confirmed the single factors and the respective observed variables for each factor. The CFA model in this study consisted of all latent and observed variables that include social media engagement, social media influence, social media trustworthiness, social media cost-effectiveness, social media perceived usefulness, social media-related subjective norms, and social media ease of use. Table 5.16 presents the standardised factor loadings and significance levels for each parameter in the CFA model. All the social media variables in the CFA model had high factor loadings ranging from at least 0.5 to 0.9. The p-values of less than 0.05, as portrayed in Table 5.16, show that all the correlations between the observed and latent variables were statistically significant. Consequently, in line with the underlying theories and literature, all the observed social media factors were retained.

The results in chapter 5 indicate that the model cannot be absolutely confirmed but do show an adequate relationship between the variables. The research confirmed the factors of engagement, influence, trustworthiness, exposure, cost effectiveness, perceived usefulness,

subjective norms and ease of use as social media factors that influence the brand equity of mobile network operators. As such, it can be concluded that the primary objective, to determine the social media factors that influence the brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe was achieved. In the following section, the discussion focuses on the recommendations to the mobile network operator industry in Zimbabwe who use social media to promote their brands.

## **6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In light of the study findings in chapter 5 and conclusions drawn in the preceding section, the following recommendations to mobile network operators in Zimbabwe are made.

- Understanding consumers' motivations to follow or interact with a brand on social media is important to the mobile network operators that want to engage with their consumers and provide them with valuable content on social media. Simply following or liking a social media brand page by a consumer is not necessarily the same as contributing to that brand page or sharing brand content. Consumer motivations behind following a brand on social media or liking the content on social media are not the same. Brands may therefore allow and encourage consumers to like, comment and give their opinions on their social media platforms. Brand promotions can be posted on social media platforms to increase engagement and increase the number of followers on the social media platform. Promotional campaigns can be in the form of a sales offer, discount, free gifts, competitions, and games. The mobile network operators' social media platforms may post various entertaining, visually stimulating, and enjoyable content to appeal to social media users. This can be achieved by creating games, videos and interesting applications and content that might draw their consumers' interest.
- Consumers tend to rely on the mobile network operators' social media pages for information about the business, products and services, not only as shared by the mobile network operators but also shared by other users of social media (the consumers). The exchange of product reviews is valued by the consumers as indicated in the research findings. With consumers' behaviour being influenced by social media, mobile network operators can make it possible for consumers to connect with multiple users on their social media platforms. Mobile network operators may encourage consumers to like, share comment and give their opinions on social media. Additionally, the mobile network operators can consider being active in stimulating the participation and giving feedback on questions or issues that are raised during the interaction process. Mobile network operators may consider social media sites that

contain consumer generated feedback, comments, testimonials, sharing and reviews which all influence the brand value in the eyes of the consumers as well as consumers' willingness and desire to be identified with the mobile network operators and its brands.

- The mobile network operators may look at ways of improving respondents' trust of social media and content they see on social media. As such, the mobile network operators can consider the use of social media platforms that the consumers trust and also instil consumer trust in the social media campaigns, based on comments and reviews they give to the consumers on social media. The mobile network operators may use social media influencers and brand ambassadors to endorse the brands and reinforce information they share on the social media platforms to increase consumer trust of information they post. Also, the mobile network operators can consider providing brand profiles on social media and allow followers to ask questions and respond to the consumers' questions quickly to build consumer trust. Brand trust increases customers' willingness to choose and buy that particular brand first.
- Consumers seek to be part of a community with similar norms to fit within a group. The mobile network operators may encourage and support social media users and their discussion forums within the businesses' social media page. Encouraging and supporting consumers on social media helps consumers to develop relationships with others who share similar interests and promotes the exchange of information about the mobile network operator, brand products, services, and experiences. The strategy does not only incentivise the participation, but also the consuming of social media content. Consumers may feel part of the group by only being associated with the brand through a like.
- The internet presents consumers with the chance to develop and generate social media content. As a result, the consumers are gaining more power over what and how information is distributed and used on the internet. The mobile network operators may consider being available on many social media platforms to make themselves more visible and may attract customers to the business and products. The business and products shared through the social media stays forever and customers may keep on referring to the content. Social media thus influences consumers' memory of the mobile network operator and its products. Strong brand memory and associations increases the sales, helps to retain customers, lure new clients and reduces cases of customer switching to rival brands in the market.
- Through improved knowledge of the social media factors and customer knowledge and their needs, mobile network operators can achieve brand differentiation and deliver precisely what the customer wants. The mobile network operators can consider

creation of content that suits the targeted customers that engage them, and this positions a brand better in the market. Creation of social media content helps the mobile network operators to adapt, design and develop social media content specifically targeted to specific ages, gender, occupations, and income levels on social media sites. The factors influence the generation of the social media content and the development of visually appealing content in the form of images, photographs, and videos to increase the consumers' brand awareness and associations.

- The mobile network operators may consider providing positive feedback, support, comments, and reliable systems on their social media platforms to help build user (consumer) trust of the mobile network operator and its products. The social media platforms may be informative to attract high traffic of users and allow the user to upload, download and comment on visual and audio content on the social media platforms. The consumers become familiar with the brand. Customer familiarity with a brand make them favour a particular product and create customer loyalty to the product and brand.
- The mobile network operators may promote exclusive social media campaigns that allow the consumers (users) to interact directly with the fan page and other consumers. The mobile network operators may also make social media useful in marketing its products by posting trending issues, topics and brands that promote products and generate sales, as well as promoting customer referrals. Social media creates a high level of customer awareness of the brand. Customer awareness of the brand can create a superior advantage for the mobile network brand in the market, which can lead to loyalty of customers and profitability.

In the next section, the study's contribution to the mobile network operator sector in Zimbabwe is discussed.

## **6.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO THE MOBILE NETWORK OPERATOR INDUSTRY IN ZIMBABWE**

The results obtained in the study have shed some light on the social media factors that influence the brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe. The study gives a thorough examination of the social media factors based on literature and supported by empirical evidence.

Engagement, influence, exposure, trustworthiness, simplicity of use, cost effectiveness, perceived utility, and subjective norms were identified as social media elements in the study.

These characteristics have an impact on the mobile operators' brand equity in terms of consumer awareness, brand loyalty, brand association, and perceived quality of their products and services. Understanding the social media elements aids mobile network operators in comprehending how these factors influence the number of social media users who visit their platforms, as well as their usage patterns and frequency. These social media factors should be considered by mobile network operators when generating social media content, according to the findings of this study.

The study also contributes to the mobile network industry by providing recommendations on how the mobile network operators can improve their brand social media content in order to better service Zimbabwean consumers. The social media factors might assist mobile network operators in designing social media campaigns that reference to the business, brand, product or service. The mobile network operators can consider designing trustworthy social media content that influences consumers' brand choice and exposes consumers to the brand. The mobile network operators may capitalise on the identified social media factors to choose the social media tool that tells their stories, generates online content and engages its customers through official social media platforms. Mobile network operators can consider placing emphasis on creating brand value through social media on platforms that are commonly used by the consumers in Zimbabwe to increase consumer awareness, loyalty, perceived value, association with their businesses and brands. The mobile network operators may include social media in their media channel considerations and communication agenda since the social media tools enhance deeper interactions with consumers. Stronger consumer brand equity leads to stronger commitment to the mobile network provider. Therefore, the mobile network operators may consider building and maintaining brand equity on social media and also, manage consumer feedback on social media.

In the next section, limitations of the study are discussed.

## **6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The following limitations to the study were observed;

- Non-probability convenience sampling was employed for this study. The sampling technique made it difficult to find the right person to talk to and some individuals were unwilling to be involved in the survey. As the convenience sampling technique relies on consumers availability and willingness to participate, it was time consuming to obtain the adequate sample size.
- A descriptive research design was adopted in the study. The absence of a variable measuring brand equity in the survey instrument made it impossible to test the



relationship between brand equity and each of the social media (correlation analysis) and also test the influence of the social media factors on brand equity (regression analysis). Further studies can be done using correlation analysis and regression analysis to cover this gap in the current study.

- In addition, respondents residing in the nine provinces of Zimbabwe other than Harare did not take part and therefore the study was not geographically representative of Zimbabwe.
- Further, respondents were not representative of the different age groups as there were no respondents under the age of 18 or older than 65. People in those age groups were excluded from the study but they also use social media to interact with the mobile network operators.
- The study did not account for mobile network users who are not on social media platforms but could still influence the brand equity of the mobile network operators in Zimbabwe.
- Respondents could fail to interpret the research questions and such **respondent errors** could affect the outcome of the study. (See 4.3.5.3).
- The mobile network consumers' responses could be **biased** towards a particular mobile network operator, products, and brands. (See 4.3.5.3).
- **Non-response error** could happen when respondents fail to participate in the study, give incomplete information or fail to complete the whole questionnaire. (See 4. 3.5.3).
- **Sampling errors may occur.** Since the study involved many respondents, it was difficult to come up with a sampling frame and this might affect the sampling technique in choosing the number of people to take part in the study. (See 4.3.5.3).

In the next section, a summary of the chapter is highlighted.

## 6.7 SUMMARY

The chapter concludes the study, which sought to determine the social media factors that influence the brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe. The purpose of the study was to identify the social media factors that influence the brand equity of mobile network operators. The chapter addressed the research objectives and drew a conclusion on the primary objective and a conclusion on each secondary objective. All the conclusions were based on the evidence as indicated in the study findings. Recommendations to the mobile network operator industry in Zimbabwe were suggested and the contributions of the study to the mobile network industry highlighted. The chapter then concluded by highlighting the limitations of the study. The study does not provide conclusive results representative of

Zimbabwe. However, the results of the study can influence the use of social media in promoting consumer-based brand equity.

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# **APPENDIX A: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

**REF 2019\_MRM\_013**

## **COVER LETTER - QUESTIONNAIRE – DETERMINING THE SOCIAL MEDIA FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE BRAND EQUITY: A CASE OF MOBILE NETWORK OPERATORS IN ZIMBABWE**

Dear Prospective participant,

You are invited to participate in a survey conducted by Matema Simbarashe Cowen under the supervision of Ms S.M. Kallier-Tar and Prof Cant, senior lectures in the Department of Marketing and Retail Management towards a Masters' of Commerce Degree in Business Management at the University of South Africa.

The questionnaire you have received has been designed to determine the social media factors that influence brand equity: a case of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe. You were selected to participate in this survey because you form part of the consumers of the mobile network operators' goods and services in Harare Province.

By completing this questionnaire, you agree that the information you provide may be used for research purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings. It is anticipated that the information we gain from this questionnaire will help us to better understand the the social media factors that influence brand equity of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe.

You are, however, under no obligation to complete the questionnaire and you can withdraw from the study prior to submitting the questionnaire. The questionnaire is developed to be anonymous, meaning that we will have no way of connecting the information that you provide to you personally.

If you choose to participate in this survey, it will take no more than 30 minutes of your time. You will not benefit from your participation as an individual; however, it is envisioned that the findings of this study will contribute towards the body of knowledge of the social media factors that influence brand equity of mobile network.

We foresee the following consequences in completing the survey: We need 30 minutes of your time to participate in the survey. The researcher(s) undertake to keep any information provided

herein confidential, not to let it out of our possession and to report on the findings from the perspective of the participating group and not from the perspective of an individual.

The records will be kept for five years for audit purposes where after it will be permanently destroyed. Hard copies will be shredded and electronic versions will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the device the information is stored on. You will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the survey.

The research was reviewed and approved by the UNISA Department of Marketing and Retail Management Ethics Review Committee. The primary researcher, Matema Simbarashe Cowen, can be contacted during office hours at 263 772 364 820 or [simbacmatema@gmail.com](mailto:simbacmatema@gmail.com). The study leader, Ms Kallier-Tar can be contacted during office hours at 012 429 3758 or [kallism@unisa.ac.za](mailto:kallism@unisa.ac.za).

You are making a decision whether or not to participate by continuing to the next page. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time prior to completing the questionnaire.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr Engelbrecht, Marianne at 012 429 4502 or email [engelm1@unisa.ac.za](mailto:engelm1@unisa.ac.za).

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (please print)

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname.....(please print)

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

**Consent for participation in an academic research study**

**Department of Marketing and Retail Management**

**DETERMINING THE SOCIAL MEDIA FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE BRAND EQUITY: A CASE OF MOBILE NETWORK OPERATORS IN ZIMBABWE.**

Dear Prospective participant

My name is MATEMA SIMBARASHE COWEN, a student in the Department of Marketing and Retail Management studying towards a Master's degree at the University of South Africa. I am inviting you to participate in a study entitled DETERMINING THE SOCIAL MEDIA FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE BRAND EQUITY: A CASE OF MOBILE NETWORK OPERATORS IN ZIMBABWE. You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a consumer of Mobile Operators products in Zimbabwe. The study involves measuring the social media factors that influence brand equity and will take approximately 15 minutes for you to complete. Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential. All information provided by the respondent will be kept confidential and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give for the study.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study or to be informed of the final research findings, please contact MATEMA SIMBARASHE COWEN on +263 772 364 820, email address [simbacmatema@gmail.com](mailto:simbacmatema@gmail.com).

Respondent's signature

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Resp. no.

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  |  |
|--|--|

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### DETERMINING THE SOCIAL MEDIA FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE BRAND EQUITY: A CASE OF MOBILE NETWORK OPERATORS IN ZIMBABWE

Dear respondent

Thank you for your willingness to complete the social media factors and brand equity survey. The survey should not take more than 15 minutes to complete. This is an anonymous and confidential survey.

Please answer all the questions by encircling or ticking the relevant option. There are no right or wrong answers.

#### SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

##### QUESTION 1

Do you have a mobile phone?

|     |   |    |   |
|-----|---|----|---|
| Yes | 1 | No | 2 |
|-----|---|----|---|

If Yes, go to question 2

If No, thank you for your time.

##### QUESTION 2

Do you have access to social media?

|     |   |    |   |
|-----|---|----|---|
| Yes | 1 | No | 2 |
|-----|---|----|---|

If Yes, go to question 3

If No, thank you for your time.

##### QUESTION 3

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Younger than 18 | 1 |
| Between 18-25   | 2 |
| Between 26-33   | 3 |
| Between 34-41   | 4 |
| Between 42-49   | 5 |
| Between 50-57   | 6 |

Please indicate your age group

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Between 58-65 | 7 |
| Above 65      | 8 |

**If you are younger than 18 years, thank you for your time**

**If older than 65, thank you for your time**

**If you are between 18 and 65 years, please proceed to question 4.**

#### **QUESTION 4**

Please indicate how often you use your mobile phone network to access social media.

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| Daily   | 1 |
| Weekly  | 2 |
| Monthly | 3 |
| Never   | 4 |

#### **QUESTION 5**

Please indicate which of the following mobile network operators you make use of to access social media platforms. (Mark all the applicable options)

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Telecel Zimbabwe | 1 |
| Netone Zimbabwe  | 2 |
| Econet Zimbabwe  | 3 |
| Other (specify)  | 4 |

#### **QUESTION 6**

Which of the following social media tools do you access through the mobile phone network (mobile data)? (Mark all the applicable options)

| <b>Social media tool</b> |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Facebook                 | 1 |
| Instagram                | 2 |
| Snap chat                | 3 |
| Twitter                  | 4 |
| Pinterest                | 5 |

|           |    |
|-----------|----|
| Google+   | 6  |
| YouTube   | 7  |
| LinkedIn  | 8  |
| Tumblr    | 9  |
| Reddit    | 10 |
| Quora     | 11 |
| Blogger   | 12 |
| Vimeo     | 13 |
| WordPress | 14 |

## SECTION B: SOCIAL MEDIA FACTORS AND BRAND EQUITY

### QUESTION 7

Indicate your level of agreement, on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree), with each of the following statements regarding the **social media factors that influence the brand equity** (how you value and perceive the brand) of mobile network providers.

|     |   | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Unsure | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-----|---|-------------------|----------|--------|-------|----------------|
|     | <b>Engagement</b>   |                   |          |        |       |                |
| 7.1 | I trust a mobile network operator that uploads product related videos on its social media platforms.                          | 1                 | 2        | 3      | 4     | 5              |
| 7.2 | I will ask questions to a mobile network operator on social media if I require assistance with their service.                 | 1                 | 2        | 3      | 4     | 5              |
| 7.3 | I am likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who provides good customer service through their social media platforms. | 1                 | 2        | 3      | 4     | 5              |
| 7.4 | I am likely to be loyal to a mobile network operator who responds to my queries on their social media platforms.              | 1                 | 2        | 3      | 4     | 5              |
| 7.5 | I trust advertisements of mobile network operators that I see on social media platforms.                                      | 1                 | 2        | 3      | 4     | 5              |
| 7.6 | I can easily recognise my mobile network operator on social media platforms.  | 1                 | 2        | 3      | 4     | 5              |



|      |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|      |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7.7  | I can easily recognise a mobile network operator because of their interaction with me on social media platforms.                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.8  | I perceive a mobile network operator that provides good customer service on social media to be a good brand.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.9  | I perceive a mobile network operator that provide answers to my questions on their products on social media to be a caring brand. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.10 | I judge if a mobile network operator brand is valuable to me or not based on the brand reviews I see on social media.             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|      | <b>Influence</b>  |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7.11 | I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media if I have received excellent service from them.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.12 | I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products.        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.13 | I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customer fast internet speed.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.14 | I would recommend a mobile network operator on social media that offers customers fair tariffs and fees.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|      | <b>Trustworthiness</b>  |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7.15 | I trust the information posted by mobile network operators on their social media platforms.                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.16 | Reviews and comments on social media influence my perception about a mobile network provider.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

|      |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7.17 | I would trust a mobile network operator that answers my questions I ask on their social media platforms.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.18 | The product reviews I see on social media help me to determine whether a mobile network operator brand is valuable or not.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|      | <b>Exposure</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7.19 | I am loyal to a mobile network operator that exposes me to its product range on social media.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.20 | I follow a mobile network operator on social media that focuses on providing the customer with the best products.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.21 | I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of a mobile network operator on social media because of the colourfulness of the symbol or logo.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.22 | I will make use of a mobile network provider that shows me how to purchase their products through social media.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.23 | Based on the positive reviews I see on social media, I feel that I get value for money with my mobile network operator.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|      | <b>Cost effectiveness</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7.24 | I consider myself to be loyal to a mobile network operator that posts all its products on social media because it does not cost me much money to search for information on the mobile network provider. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.25 | I trust mobile network operators that provide me with assistance with their service through social media because it does not cost money for me to interact with the operators.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.26 | I will engage with a mobile network operator on social media if I find information that I need from their social media platform for free.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

|      |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7.27 | I perceive mobile network operators that solve my complaints and queries for free through their social media platforms to be excellent service providers.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.28 | I feel that I get value for my money when mobile network operators allow me to ask brand-related questions for free through their social media platforms.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|      | <b>Perceived usefulness</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7.29 | I will not switch my service provider because my current mobile network operator can quickly solve all my problems through its social media platforms.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.30 | I trust the mobile network operators' product quality that I see on social media platforms.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.31 | When I am looking for a mobile network product on social media, I first look at a particular mobile network providers social media platforms.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.32 | I consider a mobile network operator that responds quickly to my complaints and queries through its social media platforms to be an excellent service provider. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.33 | I perceive a mobile network operator that shares its product promotions with customers through its social media platforms to be a reliable brand.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|      | <b>Subjective norms</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7.34 | I intend to purchase additional products from the same mobile network operator that was recommended to me by friends through social media.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.35 | I would recommend a mobile network provider on social media that is involved in community programmes.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.36 | I recognise a mobile network provider's logo, symbol and products because of reviews I have seen on social media platforms.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

|      |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7.37 | I find it easy for me to complete a transaction through a mobile network operator's social media platform.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.38 | The brand reviews and recommendations I get from family and friends through social media about a mobile network operator's products make me feel that I get good value for my money from my mobile network service provider. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|      | <b>Ease of use</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7.39 | I am loyal to a mobile network operator that makes it easy for me to complete a transaction through its social media platforms.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.40 | I trust mobile network operators whose social media platforms allow customers to easily compare products with competing brands.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.41 | I can easily recognise a mobile network operator among competing operators on social media through its unique symbol or logo.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.42 | I can easily complete my transactions with a mobile network operator on its social media platforms.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.43 | It is easy for me to find information on mobile network operators on social media.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.44 | I can easily compare a mobile network operator prices with those of its competitors on social media.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.45 | It is easy for me to decide if the mobile network operator is valuable or not based on the comments I see on social media.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## SECTION C: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

### QUESTION 8

Please indicate which gender you identify with

|      |   |        |   |
|------|---|--------|---|
| Male | 1 | Female | 2 |
|------|---|--------|---|

**QUESTION 9**

Please indicate your highest qualification

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Degree              | 1 |
| Diploma             | 2 |
| Certificate         | 3 |
| Secondary education | 4 |
| Primary education   | 5 |
| No formal education | 6 |

**QUESTION 10**

Please indicate your occupation

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Student           | 1 |
| Unemployed        | 2 |
| Self-employed     | 3 |
| Formally employed | 4 |

**QUESTION 11**

Please indicate your net income level (including scholarship, grants, and allowances) in Zimbabwe Dollar (\$)

|                           |          |
|---------------------------|----------|
| <b>Less than \$2000</b>   | <b>1</b> |
| <b>Between 2001-3000</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Between 3001- 4000</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Between 4001-5000</b>  | <b>4</b> |
| <b>Above 5000</b>         | <b>5</b> |

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

## APPENDIX B: UNISA ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



### UNISA DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING AND RETAIL MANAGEMENT ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date 4 December 2019

Dear Mr Matema Simbarashe Cowen

**Decision: Ethics Approval from  
2019 - 2022**

NHREC Registration # : (if  
applicable)

ERC Reference # :  
2019\_MRM\_013

Name: Mr Matema Simbarashe  
Cowen

Student #: 50346229

Staff #: N/A

**Researcher(s):** Mr M S Cowen, +263 772 364 820, 50346229@mylife.unisa.ac.za

**Supervisors(s):** Ms SM Kallier-Tar, 012 429 3758, kallism@unisa.ac.za

Prof MC Cant, 012 429 2381, cantmc@unisa.ac.za

**Working title of research:**

Determining the social media factors that influence brand equity: a case of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe

**Qualification:** Postgraduate degree

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa Department of Marketing and Retail Management Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for 3 years.

*The **low risk application** was **reviewed** by the Department of Marketing and Retail Management Ethics Review Committee on 29 November 2019 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:



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Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Department of Marketing and Retail Management Research Ethics Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. Minor changes suggested by the committee be amended on the Form 1.

**Note:**

The reference number **2019\_MRM\_013** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Signature

Ethics member for the Department of Marketing and Retail Management ERC

**E-mail: jwild@unisa.ac.za**

**Tel: (012) 429-2381**



Signature

Executive Dean: College of Economic and Management Sciences

**E-mail: mogalmt@unisa.ac.za**

**Tel: (012) 429-4805**

URERC 25.04.17 - Decision template (V2) - Approve

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# APPENDIX C: STATISTICIAN CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

REF 2019\_MRM\_013

## Statistician Confidentiality Agreement

**Dissertation title - Determining the social media factors that influence brand equity: a case of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe**

I, **DUDUZILE NDLOVU**, the statistician, has been hired to assist with data analysis and processing.

I agree to -

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher*.
2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the *Researcher* when I have completed the research tasks.
4. after consulting with the *Researcher*, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).
5. other (specify).

DUDUZILE NDLOVU



12/12/2019

.....  
**(Print Name)**

**(Signature)**

**(Date)**

*Researcher*

MATEMA SIMBARASHE COWEN



1/12/2019

**(Print Name)**

**(Signature)**

**(Date)**



# APPENDIX D: RESEARCH ASSISTANT CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

REF 2019\_MRM\_013

## Research Assistant Confidentiality Agreement

### A. INSTRUCTIONS

---

Please read through the entirety of this form carefully before signing.

Electronic signature is not valid for this form. After completing the required fields, please print and sign this form. After this form has been signed by the research assistant, it should be given to the principal researcher of the research study. The principal researcher will keep a copy of the *Research Assistant Confidentiality Agreement* for his records.

### B. CONFIDENTIALITY OF A RESEARCH STUDY:

---

Confidentiality refers to how information is handled and maintained in a trusting relationship with the expectation that it will not be disclosed to others in ways that are inconsistent with the original disclosure (the consent form) without permission. Name, date of birth, age, sex, address, and choice of answers to research questions are examples of confidential information belonging to human subjects in a research project.

You will have access to confidential information about the research study as a research assistant. Many participants have only disclosed information to investigators after the chief researcher guaranteed them that their information would be kept private. As a result, maintaining complete confidentiality is critical when performing this research project. As a research assistant, you will be expected to follow the guidelines outlined below. *Please read these expectations carefully before signing this form.*

### C. EXPECTATIONS FOR A RESEARCH ASSISTANT

---

In order to maintain confidentiality, I agree to:

1. Maintain the confidentiality of all research information supplied with me (e.g., flash drives, notes, transcripts, data, etc.) by not discussing or sharing it verbally or in any format with anyone other than the study's lead researcher;

2. Ensure the security of research information while it is in my possession. This may include:
  - Keeping and protecting all documents and/or data related to the research study;
  - Keeping all the printed documents and/or data related to the research study in a secure location such as a locked filing cabinet;
3. Not make copies of documents and/or data related to the research study unless specifically instructed to do so by the principal researcher;
4. Give all research information/data and research participant information/data back to the principal researcher upon completion of my duties as a research assistant;
5. After discussing it with the principal researcher, destroy all research information that cannot be returned to the principal researcher upon completion of my duties as a research assistant.

---

**Name of Research Assistant:** MURIMA MEMORY

**Title of Research Study:** Determining the social media factors that influence brand equity: a case of mobile network operators in Zimbabwe

**Name of Principal Researcher:** MATEMA SIMBARASHE COWEN



By signing this form, I indicate that I have read, comprehended, and agree to follow the above-mentioned research assistant requirements. I promise to maintain confidentiality while executing my obligations as a research assistant, and I understand that failing to do so could result in legal action.



**Signature of Research Assistant**

12/12/2019

**Date**

MURIMA MEMORY

Print Name

# APPENDIX E: EDITOR'S CONFIRMATION

## CONFIRMATION OF PROOFREADING

This serves to confirm that I have proofread this thesis and have made the necessary corrections, suggestions, and emendations:

### **DETERMINING THE SOCIAL MEDIA FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE BRAND EQUITY: A CASE OF MOBILE NETWORK OPERATORS IN ZIMBABWE**

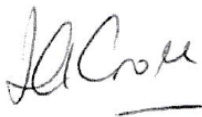
by

**SIMBARASHE COWEN MATEMA**

I have been proofreading articles, Honours, Masters and Doctoral dissertations, research reports and theses for the past 14+ years for, *inter alia*, the following institutions: University of the Witwatersrand; GIBS; University of Cape Town; Milpark; Mancosa; University of KwaZuluNatal; University of Johannesburg; Unisa; Tshwane University of Technology; Stellenbosch; Henley Business School, Regenesys, University of Pretoria and, more recently, the Da Vinci Institute.

I have also undertaken proofreading for publishers, such as Oxford University Press, Knowledge Resources and Juta & Company, companies, institutions and non-governmental organisations.

I have a major in English, and excellent knowledge of Afrikaans.



Jennifer Croll

BA(Wits); H.Dip.Lib. (UCT); B.Tech.(LIS), B.Inf.Sc.(Hons)(Unisa); MM(Research), MM(Strategic Marketing)(Wits).

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Mobile: 072-351-7997

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> December 2021